

Highland Park Environmental Commission
Meeting of June 19, 2002
Minutes

Present: Michael Rosenberg, Jonathan Abrahams, Arnold Henderson, Laurel Kornfeld, Wendy Rosen, Councilwoman Elsie Foster Dublin
Absent: Loren Muldowney, Anthony Puniello
Guests: ShayMaria Silvestri, David Younge

1. The meeting was called to order at 8:20 PM.
2. The minutes of the May 15, 2002 meeting were unofficially approved due to lack of a quorum at the beginning of the meeting, with one correction: Item 6d) should read “deer have eaten an entire layer of shrubs at the Rutgers Ecological Preserve” rather than “at the Native Plant Reserve.”
3. Correspondence
 - a) We received 7 copies of a new ANJEC publication titled “Acting Locally: Municipal Tools for Environmental Protection”. Commission members were each given a copy, and copies are being sent by ANJEC to the Mayor and Planning Board. Additional copies are available from ANJEC at \$10 each.
4. Site Plans. There were no site plans to review.
5. Old Business
 - a) Account for Environmental Contributions. The borough has set up an account for environmental contributions. We need more information on the details of the account. Elsie will look into this. Borough CFO Nick Tresante will know the account number and whether it is part of the municipal system or is an independent fund to which people can make charitable contributions.
 - b) Open Space Inventory and Plan. Arnold and Loren made some revisions to the plan and delivered it to the Master Plan Review Committee. The Committee discussed their difficulty in getting information for the maps. The Meadows area is mapped as “public vacant,” a designation distinct from “dedicated parkland” and “open space” two other terms used to describe undeveloped lands. The Committee has a map of the quarter mile radius that should ideally surround every park. They included several of our suggestions in their report, including the idea of creating a park on Cleveland Avenue. There is also the possibility of putting playing fields on the Midland Ross site. The three vacant lots on Cleveland Avenue could be connected to extensions from residential areas on Harrison Avenue. We will consider adding this suggestion to our open space plan. There is also an open lot for sale near Irving School and another one next to the school. Arnold suggested we add sentences to the plan regarding suggestions made by the Committee. Our goal is to get the open space plan endorsed by the Governing Body, which probably will not happen until after the Master Plan revision is completed. There will be another public meeting on the revision after it is drafted. We need to distribute the open space plan to the Mayor and Council, Borough Administrator, and Planning Board. Laurel

suggested we also put the plan on the Commission's web site. The "wish list" of open spaces in town that we would like to save, which was requested by the county, is late. Freeholder Camille Fernicola informed Laurel that it will be in on Monday, June 24.

- c) Trail Grant. We need the project to correspond to DEP's multi-user trail category. Marsha Shiffman of Orth Rogers looked at the area at the end of the bikeway and the path to DPW so she can prepare an estimate as to how the trail will be done. The main element is the drainage question. Arnold and Elsie will look at the area with Bruce Koch. When we have the necessary information, Arnold will contact DEP saying we were able to bring the project into the multi-user category. Our deadline for completing the project has been extended to the end of November. We might hire someone to do the plantings even if the actual trail is completed in-house. Additionally, we have a General Permit 17 for trail maintenance for our proposed rustic trail around the Meadows. These permits are usually good for five years. The current grant money cannot be used for this project because this is not a multi-purpose trail. The Commission voted unanimously to apply for a non-multi-purpose trail grant next year to work on this trail.
- d) Greenway Environmental Education Center. The working group on the Center met and selected MKW and Associates as the landscape architectural firm to do this project. Elsie will give us copies of MKW's proposal. A contract is currently being drafted with the firm, which the Borough Attorney will review.
- e) Route 18 Extension Plant Rescue. Everything rescued has been replanted at the Native Plant Reserve. A wildflower area was created at the NPR under the trees near the river. Several red cedars have been planted along the edge of the woods.
- f) Environmental Commission Web Site. Our Annual Reports from previous years and minutes of the 2002 meetings should be added to the web site. Wendy recommended we inform the schools about the web site and said she will email the science teachers and principals of each school about it. She will follow this email up with a reminder when school starts in September. We also discussed asking the schools to post notice of the site on their bulletin boards. Arnold said he put thin bookmark shaped announcements of the web site in the library. Laurel will contact the Chamber of Commerce about linking with our site. Elsie informed us that the borough's web site, which will be interactive, should be up in November. The address of our site is <http://www.leoraw.com/hpenv>.

6. New Business

- a) Information About Borough Events. Elsie is working on ways to better inform people of what is happening in the borough and has spoken with local houses of worship about putting notice of borough events in their bulletins and newsletters. As part of this project, she will give them notice of the Environmental Commission web site.
- b) Riverfront Restoration. Laurel contacted ANJEC about ecological restoration of riverbanks, and they will send her this information. She will bring it to our next meeting so we can consider passing it on to the county regarding the Donaldson Park improvements. Arnold said he informed Ralph Albanir of areas in Donaldson and Johnson Parks that need trees and added that Ralph has applied for assistance from the New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT) to fund this.
- c) Cedar Lane Bike Path. The bike path ends before River Road. DOT plans to redo the intersection of Cedar Lane and River Road, and when this is done, they will put in the remainder of the bikeway.

- d) Ausonia Apartments Cell Towers. There is concern about the potential impact of the towers' weight on the building. Elsie reported that she brought this concern to the Zoning Board. Arnold recommended the Zoning Board consult the borough's construction office about the carrying capacity of the building for its current load. Mike said this concern should be brought up as public comment at a Zoning Board meeting.
- e) Arnold wrote a letter at the request of a representative of the Middlesex County Improvement Authority (MCIA), who is working with Borough Planner Susan Blickstein, supporting Highland Park's application to DOT for pedestrian and traffic improvements on River Road. We discussed several options for improving safety on that street. Among them are placing a button at the Harrison Avenue intersection, which pedestrians could press to light up the crosswalks, and using a programmable traffic light at the Harrison intersection that becomes flashing yellow during non-rush hours. However, the second option would not help the Cleveland or Walter Avenue intersections and would likely create a traffic backup at Cleveland Avenue. Elsie reported that the borough's Pedestrian and Traffic Safety Committee is working on recommendations for River Road. She suggested we contact Councilwoman Ricketts, since Kim is liaison for public safety. The Environmental Commission should stay involved with this project.

7. The meeting adjourned at 10:13 PM. The next meeting will be on Wednesday, July 17 at 8 PM in Borough Hall.