

Highland Park Environmental Commission
Meeting of September 18, 2002
Minutes

Present: Michael Rosenberg, Jonathan Abrahams, Arnold Henderson, Laurel Kornfeld, Loren Muldowney, Wendy Rosen, Councilman Gary Minkoff
Absent: Anthony Puniello

1. The meeting was called to order at 8:25 PM.
2. The minutes of the July 17, 2002 meeting were approved with one correction: Item 2 should read that the minutes of the June 19, 2002 meeting were approved.
3. Correspondence
 - a) We received a copy of the list of properties the borough sent to the county Freeholders for inclusion as potential open space purchases in the county master plan on open space, along with a cover letter from the Mayor to Freeholder Director David Crabel. The list also contains an attachment document with information on the land parcels from our NRI.
 - b) We received copies of a brochure for coastal stakeholders titled "Coastal Zone Boundaries," published by the DEP Office Policy, Planning, and Science. We will place a copy of this brochure in the environmental folder in the library.
4. Site Plans
 - a) Morgan Lincoln Group, LLC
26 Lincoln Avenue
Docket No.: #183-23-02
Block and Lot: B-183, L-23

This is a proposal to build four attached townhouses on land that is currently vacant. The dimensions of the property are 100 X 155 X 114 X 100. The proposal includes 8 parking spaces. The application is before the Zoning Board for a C variance and D1 use variance; it does not include a site plan. A variance is being requested because the property is zoned for offices, and the applicant wants to build residential units.

Comments: Preserve the two pine trees in front of the property, and be sure all lighting is fully shielded. Additional landscaping should also be provided.

- b) Barry Levinson & Marcia Levinson
419 Becker Street
Docket No.: #85-26/27-02
Block and Lot: B-85, L-26, 27

The applicant is proposing to build a 2-1/2-story addition and a deck in back of a house on a 50 X 100 foot lot. Two variances are being sought—one for rear yard setback and one for maximum lot coverage. Borough ordinance mandates a maximum lot coverage of 30%; the applicant seeks to go to 31%.

Comments: Landscaping should be provided, especially to replace plants lost in the construction. Also, all outdoor lighting should be fully shielded.

5. Old Business

- a) Trail Grant Status Report. This project will resurface the trail by DPW and add plantings and drainage. We have a letter from Larry Miller of DEP dated August 13 granting official approval for the project. The next step is to contract with a company to do the work. We do not need to do formal bidding for this—all we need to get are three quotes. Arnold suggested contacting Thonet Associates as well as Bill Young of the NJ Native Plant Society, who might know of someone who could do this work. Loren and Carol Avelsgaard of the Shade Tree Advisory Committee are working as a subcommittee on this project, and they will pursue the quotes as well as come up with specs on the desired length and width of the trail. Arnold made several suggestions including a two-tier split rail fence to keep people from inadvertently going down the slope, planting of vines along the fence, and plantings along the stream. The project is scheduled for completion by the end of November, but we will likely need to request a time extension from DEP. Since this is a longstanding grant, that should not be a problem. Gary recommended we have the solicited companies draw up an estimated work schedule along with their quotes. The grant calls for the borough to match 20% of the grant with in-kind services. We are not yet sure what these services will be, but some options include diggings and watering of plants.
- b) Greenway Environmental Education Center. The current vision is for an outdoor landscaped setting with a small adjacent pavilion. The borough has contracted with MKW to do the landscaping and with Kevin Wolfe to design the pavilion. We have a total of \$300,000 for the landscaping and design, which leaves \$50,000 for the remaining council rings at the other sites. Gary recommended we have Kevin Wolfe provide two versions of plans for the pavilion—one with restrooms and one without them. We could have an open building with a restroom at the end or put a restroom in the pumphouse. Arnold said it is still unclear whether renovations will be done to the pumphouse although he recommended that they be done by Kevin Wolfe. He added that although a single unisex bathroom would be less expensive, Green Acres policy may not allow this. The main features of the Center will be signs conveying a continuous look, an adjacent bench, and bulletin boards to showcase environmental teaching materials. The actual plan has not yet been discussed in public and needs a public review. Mike suggested having the designers present their plans at a public meeting once those plans are completed. Gary said that one concern with this idea is that the designers charge hourly rates for such services. The MKW contract does have a provision for public meetings, he added, and MKW just submitted a revised contract finalizing what needs to be done. The Wolfe contract has not yet been written. Gary informed us that on Sunday, October 13 at 10 AM, he and a group of people will visit the Native Plant Reserve to view the site from a maintenance perspective. He said that approval of both contracts should be on the Council's agenda shortly and suggested holding a ceremonial ground breaking at the site. Mike recommended we hold such a ceremony around Earth Day next spring.
- c) ANJEC Award. We submitted an application for an ANJEC Environmental Achievement Award for our web site.

- d) Buck Woods/Gabrielle Estates. Jack Morris submitted a second development application for this site on Feb. 27, 2002, but it remains incomplete. Anne Barron sent the Commission a letter informing us that she has contacted DEP, and that they will return to do another wetlands determination for the area. She added that the map DEP previously used is inaccurate. Loren confirmed that she heard that the topographic map of the site does not conform to what is on the ground, but none of us is sure which map is being referred to. Mike thinks it probably is the USGS Quad Map. In her letter, Anne suggested we write DEP asking to be notified when they visit so we can have Commission members present then. Mike will find out whom to contact and write a letter. We also plan to research if and when a permit was issued to place the spring on the site into a pipe. Laurel will look at record books of the Zoning and Planning Boards from 1978-1980 for any mention of such a permit.
- e) Donaldson Park—Proposed Changes. Several representatives of the Commission and Shade Tree Committee met with Ralph Albanir, walked with him around the park, and provided comments. Ralph will now revise the plan to incorporate these comments. Arnold reported that Ralph took note of the idea of relocating the skating rink to the general area of the ball fields. The borough will now need to see the revised plan. Schoor DiPalma will do the actual work. Laurel brought a U.S. Department of Agriculture publication she obtained from ANJEC on "Riparian Forest Buffers", which she felt might be helpful in providing guidance to the county on ecological restoration of riverfronts. Arnold will put a copy of this booklet in the library in our land use section.
- f) Environmental Commission Web Site. The executive summary of our Open Space Plan and the plan's final chapter on recommended action are now posted on the site. Arnold also posted a copy of the borough's open space wish list sent to the county as a news item. Jon said contacts from the web site are going to him, and Gary suggested we might want to create a free web-based email account as a holding address for contacts from the site. Arnold recommended that one representative each from the Commission and from the Shade Tree Committee be designated to check and respond to emails from the site. Jon also said he can no longer convert Word documents to PDF files, which needs to be done to place the minutes of our 2002 meetings on the site. Loren agreed to work on this. Gary informed us that Borough Administrator Richard Kunze is working on the borough web site and said that a beta site will soon be available. The borough is participating in a pilot program that allows us to develop a web site for free. Jon will work with Gary on the issue of connecting our site with that of the borough.

6. New Business.

- a) Annual DEP Matching Grant Program. We received notice of these grants and a copy of the application, which is due December 1. These grants require a 100% cash match by the borough. Gary said he knows of a teacher interested in doing a recycling education program—a project that would qualify for one of these grants. Such a project could include signage and literature. Wendy recommended we do this in coordination with the school system and added that we should distinguish between reducing, reusing, and recycling, emphasizing that reducing is the best option. People also need to be educated to buy recycled products. Arnold advised that an educational campaign about recycling would need a real target and goal at the end. Gary suggested we choose a pilot group, such as a specific grade in the school system, and concentrate our resources on that

group. We will invite the teacher as well as Recycling Coordinator Linda Monte to one of our upcoming meetings for further discussion. Loren offered an alternative suggestion, which is to survey utility use in town. This could be a springboard toward an action plan focusing on conservation. Mike will work with Loren on this. Mike also suggested we review a list of matching grants DEP awarded in previous years.

- b) Statewide Livable Communities Grant. We received information about this DEP grant, which provides funding to upgrade and maintain open space, parks, and playgrounds. The deadline to apply is September 30. Arnold reported that Borough Planner Susan Blickstein is looking at parks that need work and said he will contact her, and let her know that we are willing to help. If she is applying for one of these grants, Arnold suggested we write a letter of support.
- c) Shade Trees. The Shade Tree Committee is pursuing a grant to continue pruning the older trees in town. People who have dead trees should contact Linda Monte about having them removed. The Shade Tree Committee gave Richard Kunze a list of trees to use as replacements for those that died. The borough will try to get as many trees as possible replanted during the fall season.
- d) Recreational Trails Grants for the Meadows. We will apply for a \$15,000 grant to put recreational trails in the Meadows area. The idea is to blaze trails and clear out the lower area already designated as open space. Loren and Carol Avelsgaard will work on resubmitting the grant application for trails that do not require paving. However, we will have to finish the first trail (the one by DPW) before being eligible for awarding of a second grant.
- e) ANJEC Conferences. Laurel gave Gary a brochure on upcoming ANJEC conferences titled "Using the Municipal Master Plan and State Planning Process to Protect Local Resources," which will be held on October 10 and November 13. Gary made copies of the brochure for Councilman Steve Buzbee and Planning Board Chair Alan Kluger. We also noted that the annual ANJEC Congress will be held on Friday, October 18 at Rutgers University's Busch Campus. Although we are not part of the ANJEC workshop plan, we may have enough money in our budget to cover the cost of those who want to attend these workshops.
- f) Alternative Energy and Downtown Revitalization. Gary said the borough is interested in incorporating alternative energy use into its downtown revitalization strategy. There is a lot of money available for such a project through the Community Reinvestment Act. This idea is only in the exploratory stage now, but there will be public meetings on it in the future.

7. The meeting adjourned at 11:00 PM. The next meeting will be on Wednesday, October 16, 2002, at 8 PM in Borough Hall.