

Highland Park Environmental Commission

Meeting of February 19, 2003

Minutes

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

1. The meeting was called to order at 8:15 PM.
2. The minutes of the January 15, 2003 meeting were approved.
3. Correspondence
 - a) We received a letter sent to all borough organizations informing us that Highland Park will celebrate its 100th birthday in 2005. The borough has formed a Centennial Commission, which will sponsor cultural events and activities for children. The borough would like all borough organizations to participate. Wendy commented that the Environmental Commission could do activities focusing on the Raritan River and our land resources in town.
 - b) We received a postcard from ANJEC informing us that the DEP's Office of Environmental Services (OES) program is in danger of being cut and urging us to write letters to Governor McGreevey and DEP Commissioner Bradley Campbell arguing against cutting this program.
 - c) Justine Bumby sent a letter urging the borough to give priority to purchasing the remaining undisturbed land adjacent to the Rutgers Ecological Preserve as well as the Castle and Parker Home properties if assistance is available from either the county, the state, the federal government or private sources. She also sent this letter to the Mayor, Council, and Borough Attorney. Note: Parker Home plans to expand; the Gatekeeper's house will be saved, but the barn will be removed by J. Seward Johnson, who is planning to move it to his farm.
 - d) The Middlesex County Department of Planning, Solid Waste Management sent a report to the Borough Clerk informing us about a new paper recycling center in Edison located on Meadow Road off Woodbridge Avenue. The contractor/purchaser of this property is Garden State Recycling. The new center plans to recycle 200 tons of paper per day.

4. Site Plans
 - a) Jeffrey and Audrey Roderman
201 Riverview Avenue
Docket No.: #30-3,4-03
Block and Lot: B-30, L-3 & 4

The applicant wants to put a six-foot fence along the perimeter of a 100 X 100-foot property at the corner of Riverview and South Second Ave. to replace an existing fence. A variance is being sought because the limit for a fence is six feet in the backyard and four feet in the side yards. No Comments.

- b) Mary Miller
209 Raritan Avenue
Docket No.: #162-26-03
Block and Lot: B-162, L-26

The applicant is seeking a use variance for this property, which is located in the Central Business District. It is currently zoned for medical offices on the first floor and residential on the second floor. The applicant proposes to change the first floor to a handicapped-accessible residence. All work for this project is interior. No Comments.

5. Old Business
 - a) Trail Grant. Loren reported that we have two bids from landscape architects, each for \$2,000. The two companies are Schlesinger Associates and Tim Marshall Associates. We still do not

have a bid from Bill Young, who is the only landscape architect willing to both design and build the trail. The bids are for path design, locating plants, estimate of materials, cost of construction, and supervision of the contractors. This last point is crucial because the slope of the area makes it vulnerable to erosion. Richard Kunze and Steve Barnes have ideas on how to address this issue. Richard also suggested that DPW could be the contractor for much of the work. Loren and Carol Avelsgaard suggested DPW build a split-rail fence. Steve Barnes may be willing to work pro bono to decide the type and number of plants while volunteers and DPW employees could do the actual plantings. We also may want to run a hose for watering. Richard will meet with Bruce Koch to look at three possible alternatives for this project. One is to get a bid from Bill Young for the whole thing. The second is to have one of the other companies or Steve Barnes design and supervise DPW in doing the work. The third choice is to have Steve Barnes design the trail and then split the work between DPW and CME Associates. Carol and Loren will now recommend one of the bids to Richard. This is a \$15,000 grant with a 20% borough match, so we will have to document everything DPW does. We can also count Steve Barnes' work as well as Loren's and Carol's as in-kind contributions. The entire project must be completed by the end of July.

- b) Master Plan. Revisions to the draft Master Plan will be discussed at a Planning Board meeting February 20, at 7:30 PM. The Planning Board will present the revised version of the Master Plan. We are unsure as to whether a Planning Board meeting scheduled for February 27 will be the official Master Plan public hearing. Laurel will email Planning Board Chair Alan Kluger, asking him if February 27 will be the official hearing and if not, when the official hearing will be held.
- c) Environmental Education Center. MKW broke down the \$500,000 budget for the project. They are budgeting \$50,000 for professional-type signs of the kind used at nature centers. The plan is for 18 of these signs to be located at six stations, each with three alternatives to change with the seasons. This amount is a bit high, and Arnold recommended it be revised. Gary suggested we allocate a certain amount of money for signs and see what we can get for that. We want the signs to be user-friendly, durable, weather-resistant and graffiti-resistant.

6. New Business

- a) Middlesex County Proposed Improvements for the Intersection of River Road and Cedar Lane. We reviewed a site plan with five different options for this project. Option one is no changes. Option two is widening the existing turn and creating a handicapped-accessible corner. Option three is to widen River Road in the Highland Park direction by adding an extra lane. Option four creates an island on River Road following the turn from Cedar Lane as a traffic-calming device. Option five widens River Road by cutting parts of the Rutgers Ecological Preserve. The Commission will send a letter to County Engineer John Reiss, expressing our concerns about these options. In the letter, which Arnold will write, we will request clarification on the details of the options and a possible presentation on the project to the Planning Board. We will also ask that we be kept informed on the status of this project. The letter will state that the choice of which option to pursue should be governed first by issues of pedestrian safety, then by environmental protection, and then by traffic flow. We do not want to see a wall built around the corner of the bikeway along Cedar Lane and desire to maintain trail access into the Rutgers Ecological Preserve. In alternatives that remove trees, especially at the edge of the Rutgers Ecological Preserve, we want minimal cutting of trees and replacement equal to the number cut. Options three, four, and five should have a companion traffic study done before being implemented. Arnold will talk to Planning Board Chair Alan Kluger to find out if he would like a presentation to the Planning Board on this.
- b) Stream Walks and Cleanups. Arnold reported that Julie Hajdusek of Water Watch is arranging for two stream walks in Highland Park and for Water Watch to do a cleanup of the Crowells Road stream. Mike suggested the Commission sponsor a stream walk and cleanup for Earth Day. Community volunteers could do the light cleanup, and convicts could separately do the heavy cleanup. Gary suggested the Commission provide a list of work that needs to be done along our various streams.

- 7. The meeting adjourned at 10:15 PM. The next meeting of the Environmental Commission will be on Wednesday, March 19, 2003 at 8 PM in Borough Hall.