

**Highland Park Environmental Commission**  
Meeting of March 19, 2003  
Minutes

Present: Michael Rosenberg, Arnold Henderson, Laurel Kornfeld, Wendy Rosen,  
Councilman Gary Minkoff  
Absent: Jonathan Abrahams, Loren Muldowney, Anthony Puniello  
Guests: Jessica Johnson and Beth Hartmaier of the NJ Watershed Ambassadors Program,  
Julie Hajdusek, Gabor Grunstein, and Stephanie Hauck and Inga Karelkova of a Rutgers  
Anthropology class that is studying Highland Park

1. The meeting was called to order at 8:10 PM.
2. The minutes of the February 19, 2003 meeting were approved.
3. Guests attending the meeting and Commission members introduced themselves. Jessica Johnson and Beth Hartmaier distributed a flyer about a March 29 training the NJ Watershed Ambassadors Program is doing on how to do biological assessments of streams. Since this day is not good for many Commission members, Jessica and Beth said they could arrange another training for us on a different day. The training could be for children from third grade and up and adults. Wendy will notify the schools about this possibility.
4. Correspondence
  - a) Middlesex Water Company sent a notice that they are applying for a DEP permit to establish the boundaries of freshwater wetlands as part of their planning a new water line through Johnson Park and Cedar Lane.
  - b) The East Coast Greenway, a group that is establishing a trail from Maine to Florida, sent an announcement of their ongoing activities. Highland Park has a piece of this greenway in Johnson Park and part of the Rutgers Ecological Preserve.
  - c) Keep America Beautiful sent information about its Annual Great American Cleanup, which is taking place from January-May of this year. The group has a program for businesses to get their names printed on bags, which are then used in the cleanups.
  - d) Middlesex County sent a copy of a resolution passed by the Freeholders approving the county open space plan. The letter did not include a copy of the plan.
  - e) We received a copy of a borough Green Acres resolution approving the search for funding to purchase Buck Woods.
  - f) Green Acres sent notice that they are extending their local government funding application deadline to April 1, 2003.
5. Site Plans
  - a) Carl Pray and Mary Forsberg  
317 Denison Street  
Docket No.: #159-20-03  
Block and Lot: B-159, L-20  
The applicant seeks to build a two-story addition to one side of a house on a 50 X 150-foot lot. A variance is being requested for side-yard setback. No Comments.
  - b) RLG, LLC  
30 South Fifth Avenue  
Docket No.: #36-9-03  
Block and Lot: B-36, L-9  
The applicant is constructing a two-story addition to the rear of a house and proposing to convert the first floor to a medical office while leaving the second floor residential. This house is adjacent to the

Stop and Shop parking lot. The application does not specify what variance is being sought. It does state that the applicant is putting in a seepage pit for runoff.

Comments: We encourage the preservation and enhancement of the landscaping in view of the loss of natural land. The drainage plan is good. We recommend the applicant check to assure that the capacity is adequate. The applicant should preserve existing trees and replace any that are removed.

## 6. Old Business

- a) Stream Walks. Beth and Jessica reported that they walked the stream in the far southeast corner of Donaldson Park from the corner of Crowells Road and Donaldson Street to the river. They brought copies of data sheets they made along with GIS maps showing contaminated sites. They did a biological assessment of the stream with sanding nets, digging up sediment and tree debris that had fallen into the river and looking for insects in the larval stage. Their overall rating of the stream was a 6, meaning poor quality. They recommend cleanups by residents and educating residents not to dump waste in the stream. We will keep copies of Beth's and Jessica's stream report. Stephanie recommended we get NJ PIRG involved in cleanups while Arnold said Waterwatch is involved through Jessie Roehrich. Julie reported that Hazmat said the orange substance in the stream is iron deposits from the soil. Our goal for this area is to have a walkable trail. Arnold already placed blue tags along the sites best for walking. Gabor questioned whether the soil at the stream is contaminated from the landfill, which wasn't capped properly. Wendy suggested we hold a stream walk at this site to build awareness about it, but since we are unsure about the extent of the contamination, Arnold said we should hold off doing this until the site is cleaned and do stream walks in other parts of town. Julie recommended that Commission members research which streams are suitable for such walks and then plan a series of walks at these sites. Beth suggested we have Waterwatch do chemical testing of our streams. Waterwatch already tested for dissolved oxygen and sedimentation at one of our streams, Arnold reported.
- b) Trail Grant Status Report. Arnold, Loren, and Carol Avelsgaard of the Shade Tree Advisory Committee will meet with Borough Administrator Kunze on March 20 to determine how to hire a contractor for this project. Loren drew a schematic of the trail along the edge of Donaldson Park, which Rich and Gary reviewed. Gary gave Rich requests to clear the sight lines and place heavy boulders to keep traffic out. The salt containment facility will be on the DPW site, so there needs to be some site plan configuration. Arnold reported that we have material specifications from one person and that Loren will give us the various price bids. Bill Young is willing to do the work, but his bid is higher than that of the others. If we have enough low cost labor and money left over, Arnold suggested we do plantings along the bikeway.
- c) Environmental Education Center. The Committee is working with the designers on this. The main issue is where to put the parking.. On Earth Day, April 22, there will be a Groundbreaking Ceremony for the Center, time TBA. Also, Arnold reported that the Shade Tree Committee will soon organize work days at the Native Plant Reserve.
- d) Buck Woods/Green Acres. We have until April 1 to apply to Green Acres for funding to purchase Buck Woods. There will be a fact-finding meeting on this by Richard Kunze and members of Save Open Space. We can also apply for funding from the County Open Space Advisory Board. Laurel will inquire whether applications are currently available for this funding.
- e) Environmental Web Site. The 2002 Commission minutes are now up on the site.. Arnold put new photos of the river on the site. We will also put a photo of Commission members published in ANJEC Report on the site. This photo is of our receiving an award for the web site at the October ANJEC Congress.
- f) Salt/Sand Containment. Gary reported that he is meeting on March 20 with Richard Kunze, DPW Superintendent Lloyd Young, and Borough Engineer Bruce Kaplan to discuss the next

steps. This is funded in the borough's capital budget. The goal is to have a structure ready for the next snow season. Gary will send a copy of the plan to Gabor to review.

- g) Plans for the Intersection of River Road and Cedar Lane. There are two projects involved here. One is the reconstruction of the River Road-Cedar Lane intersection. The other project is the water line being planned along Cedar Lane. The existing utilities in Johnson Park are now being surveyed. This needs to be known before any determination is made for where to put the new water line. We do not have sufficient information on this yet to comment.
- h) Master Plan. The next Planning Board meeting is on March 27. The draft Master Plan will be discussed then, but this is still not the official public hearing. Copies of the latest revision will be issued before this meeting. We need to make sure the Ecological Preserve stays zoned for conservation and carefully monitor what is done at the Meadows. A possible compromise for the Meadows suggested by Arnold could be to zone just the wooded area for conservation. The central landfill area is currently used for construction material staging. We could put plantings there in between major uses for construction staging. DPW could have a permanent spot in the middle of the landfill.

## 7. New Business

- a) Archeological Survey of Proposed Water Line Site. A Phase I archeological survey of the proposed new Middlesex Water Company raw water supply pipeline was conducted by John Millner. A few test pits were dug for the survey. Findings show a perched water table held up by a layer underneath. No additional archeological studies will be done. The water line will cover a 60-inch wide area and be 1.5 meters in diameter. We discussed this as an opportunity to re-vegetate the area with native species.
- b) DEP Big Map. Mike reported that the DEP web site has the "big map" in which parks and areas zoned conservation are red. Our stream corridors and the Rutgers Ecological Preserve are yellow, which means develop if you want, but take precautions. The likely reason they are yellow is that they are zoned residential. Gabor and Jessica reported that public comments are being accepted through the end of March. Gabor also explained that the DEP map is not the same as the state's official map. The state wants to redo its map to conform with the DEP one.
- c) Street Fair. The Street Fair will be on Sunday, April 27 from 12-5 PM. The Shade Tree Committee will have a fundraising plant sale and needs extra space, so they are moving their table to a new location. Several people are making birdhouses to sell. The money from these will be used for plantings. Wendy suggested we also have people build bat houses, and she will contact Nathan Imm about this. Gabor has handouts we can distribute at the fair. Julie, Gabor, Wendy, and Laurel volunteered to sit at our table. Shade Tree will be near a parking lot, where they will display the plants—either in the old Senior Center parking lot or that of Unity Bank.
- d) Snow Removal. Gary said he and Richard Kunze are studying the snow removal plans of various places that receive large snowfalls. He reviewed an outline of a 12-point plan to enhance what the borough does in the way of snow removal and ice control. The goal is to broaden the borough's overall strategic plan regarding Public Works, so its operations are consistent with the Green Community Designation we are seeking. Arnold suggested reviewing the Community Forestry Management Plan for ideas on this.

- 8. The meeting adjourned at 10:30 PM. The next meeting will be on Wednesday, April 9, 2003 (rescheduled from April 16 due to Passover) at 8 PM in Borough Hall.