

Highland Park Environmental Commission
Meeting of April 9, 2003
Minutes

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

1. The meeting was called to order at 8:30 PM.
2. The minutes of the March 19, 2003 meeting were approved
3. Correspondence: None
4. Site Plans
 - a) Sammy Stevens
213 Woodbridge Avenue
Docket No.: #121-10-03
Block and Lot: B-121, L-10

The applicant is a tenant in a residential building proposing to enclose the front porch and convert it to accommodate clients for psychic readings. No new construction is proposed. No Comments.

- b) Estela & Brian De la Cruz
305 Wayne Street
Docket No.: #161-31-03
Block and Lot: B-161, L-31

The applicant proposes to convert a garage to a recreation room. The construction removes one of the two parking spaces on the property, so the applicant must apply to the Zoning Board for a bulk variance. No Comments.

- c) Dorothy Chrinko
1132 Raritan Avenue
Docket No.: #96-12-03
Block and Lot: B-96, L-12

The applicant is proposing to construct a new two-story single-family three-bedroom home fronting on Amherst Street. The dimensions of the property fronting Amherst are 50 X 70, meaning the construction will not meet the minimum lot size of 50 X 100. The applicant is therefore seeking a rear-yard variance, two side-yard variances, a variance for maximum lot coverage and a variance for maximum lot width.

Comments: Minimum lot size requirement should be enforced.

- d) George and Maria Heibel
115 Benner Street
Docket No.: #14-22-03
Block and Lot: B-14, L-22

The applicant proposes to build a two-story addition to a single-family home on a 50 X 150 property. The addition will include a kitchen on the first floor and a bedroom and bathroom on the second floor. Variances are being sought for side-yard setback and maximum impervious coverage. With the new construction, the property will have 47% impervious coverage while the maximum allowed by the zoning ordinance is 40%.

Comments: Maximum impervious coverage permitted should be enforced.

e) Susan and Gregory Berman
27 South Third Avenue
Docket No.: #31-8-03
Block and Lot: B-31, L-8

The proposal is to build a two-and-a-half story addition to a home on a 50 X 150 lot. A D-1 side yard variance is being sought. No Comments.

f) Yeshiva Shaarei Tzion
24 Washington Avenue
Docket No.: #127-18-21-03
Block and Lot: B-127, L-18-21

The proposal is to build two-single family homes, each on a vacant 50 X 100 lot. The applicant is requesting a subdivision. An addendum was submitted with this application.
No Comments.

g) Frances Parker Memorial Home
443 River Road
Docket No.: #189-3-03
Block and Lot: B-189, L-3

On a 5.82-acre vacant property, the applicant proposes to construct a three-story 27,000 square foot assisted living facility, a 21,000 square foot community center, and 96 parking spaces. Variances are being requested for side yard setback, height in both feet and number of stories, and minimum distance between buildings. Included with the application are a Traffic Impact Study and a Stormwater Management Report.

Comments: An Environmental Impact Statement and Tree Replacement Plan are required. An infiltration basin would be greatly preferred to a detention structure. A large share of the parking should be on a permeable surface. We recommend the applicant consider underground parking. Because of the proximity to Raritan Landing, we recommend an archeological survey be done. For lighting, the applicant should consider dark-sky certified light fixtures, which narrow their illumination cones downward. All lights should not be run all night long. Also, avoid light spill to the forest. Are there areas where path lights can be used instead of tall lights? We recommend the applicant consider native alternatives for proposed plantings. Near buried utilities, within the eight-foot distance, smaller shrubs would be preferable to lawn.

5. Membership Issues

- a) Laurel was re-appointed as a Commission member.
- b) Wendy is resigning but will continue her environmental education activities.
- c) Loren prefers to be an alternate Commission member.

6. Old Business

- a) Trail Grant Status Report. Loren and Carol met with borough CFO Nick Trasente, Arnold, borough engineer Bruce Koch, and DPW superintendent Lloyd Young in a meeting arranged by Richard Kunze. They refined what DPW could do as their 20% in-kind contribution. They also sent another request for an estimate to Bill Young based on these changes. Today, the committee received Bill Young's bid to both design and build the trail. Schlesinger Associates and Tim Marshall Associates have also submitted bids, but only for the design work. Loren and Carol will review these bids and decide on a landscape architect within the next few days. Arnold recommended we pick up relevant information from Ruth Bowers and Steve Barnes.
- b) Environmental Education Center. MKW has presented its latest plans to the Council. The official groundbreaking ceremony will be held on April 22. The borough is applying for a Green

Acres development grant to put solar panels on the building. The panels are photo-voltaic and serve as skylights. This solar addition will cost \$50,000-\$60,000.

- c) Buck Woods. Arnold reported that Richard Kunze said that in order to apply for Green Acres funding to purchase this site, the borough would need to have the property appraised.
- d) Environmental Web Site. Jon put the correct Annotated List of Health Ordinances on the site.
- e) Salt/Sand Containment. The borough is moving forward on purchasing a salt dome. Gary met with Lloyd, Rich Kunze, and Bruce Koch on this. They now need to decide where on the DPW site to place it. The dome will take up more room than the salt/sand pile. Lloyd wants to put the dome on the south side of the property next to the bikeway, but this is not a good spot. The dome is expected to arrive in the summer or fall.
- f) Plans for the Intersection of River Road and Cedar Lane. Mike contacted the county engineer to find out the status of this project and found out that the plans will be further revised. We will still have the opportunity to comment on the latest revision.
- g) Middlesex Water Company New Water Line. This line will be used to pump water from the Delaware-Raritan Canal to the company's Edison treatment plant. For the lower part of the line, the company will disturb the land near the pond in Johnson Park. Since they are stripping out the vegetation anyway, we will ask them to put in new vegetation that is compatible with a swamp-like atmosphere.

7. New Business

a) The BIG Map. Mike went online and made copies of sections of the BIG map. The whole state is divided into red, yellow, and green areas. Red sites are those recommended for conservation. Yellow means a site can be developed, but those developing it should proceed with caution. Green areas are those on which the state will support development. The deadline for comments on the BIG map has been extended to April 25. The state will then revise the map and hold a formal public comment period in May. Arnold recommended we send comments in favor of changing the designation of the Rutgers Ecological Preserve from its current yellow to red since it is zoned conservation. The Buck Woods ravine is also currently portrayed in yellow although the borough zoned the bottom part of it conservation. The lower meadows should also be red. We need to find out what the criteria are for putting sites into red. For example, does red apply to all Green Acres sites including tot lots, or is it reserved only for natural areas? We want to argue that local open space should be shown in red. Mike will discuss this with Planning Board chair Alan Kluger. Arnold will obtain a copy of our expanded Green Acres list. Laurel will call ANJEC to find out the specific procedures for comments on these issues.

b) Street Fair. The Commission will have a table at the street fair. The table will be located in front of the Stop and Shop parking lot and next to the Shade Tree Advisory Committee. STAC is trying to get some of the parking stalls blocked off so that plants can be displayed there. We will display site plans, pamphlets and brochures. STAC will give away white pine and red oak saplings. Most of the shrubs they are selling are perennials. A portion of the funds from the sale will go to the borough's tree account. STAC is taking advance orders for plants, and people can pick them up at the fair.

- 8. The meeting adjourned at 11:35 PM. The next meeting will take place on Wednesday, May 21, 2003 at 8 PM in Borough Hall.