

Highland Park Environmental Commission

Meeting of May 21, 2003

Minutes

Present: Michael Rosenberg, Arnold Henderson, Laurel Kornfeld, Loren Muldowney,
Councilman Gary Minkoff
Absent: Jonathan Abrahams, Anthony Puniello, Wendy Rosen
Guests: Gabor Grunstein, Stacy Ho of the Stonybrook Millstone Watershed Organization,
Leora Wenger, Eugene Young

1. The meeting was called to order at 9:15 PM.
2. The minutes of the April 9, 2003 meeting were approved with one correction: In Item 6e), we removed the sentences regarding the sand/salt containment structure reading, "Arnold recommends putting it in the middle of the landfill, which is currently used as a construction staging area. However, this is far from DPW."
3. Correspondence: None
4. Site Plans
 - a) Evan Brownstein
6 North Second Avenue
Docket No.: #173-33-03
Block and Lot: B-173, L-33
The applicant, Beamsdorfer Art Gallery, is seeking a use variance to create office space on the first floor of the building. The existing structure is being subdivided to include an office area.
No Comments.
 - b) Gustavo De La Cruz
217 Dennison Street
Docket No.: #16-39-03
Block and Lot: B-16, L-39
The applicant proposes to construct a new rear 18 X 20-foot deck and to remove blacktop and concrete in both the rear and front of the house and under the deck. There are several pre-existing conditions. Existing impervious coverage is 83%. Under this proposal, the maximum lot coverage would increase from 39-46%. The applicant is seeking variances for minimum side yard setback, maximum lot coverage, and maximum impervious coverage.
Comments: It is not clear what the applicant is proposing to do. The dimensions of what they plan to remove are not shown. We prefer decking to pavement per square foot on an equal area basis. If approval is granted, as stated in page 5 of the application, the applicant should be required to remove the blacktop in the rear and front of the home and under the deck.
 - c) Mee Hanna Choi
318 Cleveland Avenue
Docket No.: #169-36-03
Block and Lot: B-169, L-36
The applicant, AMD Dental Manufacturing, Inc., is seeking a use variance to park three trailers in their parking lot. The property is zoned part commercial and part residential. Parking trailers are not permitted in this zone. The parking lot is already paved.
No Comments.
 - d) CME Associates and Middlesex County—Johnson Park Improvements
Johnson Park
Block 185, L-4,5,8, and 10 in Highland Park

The proposal is for the construction of \$3.6 million in improvements to existing county park. CME and Middlesex County are applying to DEP for the necessary permits.

Project Description: The project involves the construction of improvements to Johnson Park, consisting of the dredging of two ponds and the construction of two pond public access platforms, an emergency spillway, rehabilitation of two pond spillways, stream cleaning and bank stabilization, two point discharges, a pedestrian bridge, parking improvements, pedestrian walkways, and landscaping.

Comments: Efforts should focus on restoring the natural stream-like conditions. Restore the natural-like curves of the stream to allow continuous flow (which discourages mosquitoes). Create broad vegetated sides to provide habitat. Avoid mowing to the stream edge. These streams would complement the ponds as natural features of the park. Doing this will also reduce the sediment load to the ponds. The way we protect the river bank is crucial to the health of the river and the park as a habitat. Consider more environmentally friendly stream stabilization with vegetation instead of a hard surface. Note: Our comments will be sent to Ralph Albanir of the County Parks Department, CME Associates, and the Piscataway Environmental Commission.

5. Old Business

- a) Francis Parker Memorial Home. The first Zoning Board meeting to address this application was Monday night, May 19. The hearing will continue on June 16, which will be a special Zoning Board meeting to discuss this application. So far, the Board only got through testimony of the administrator of the home and the architect. Parker does seem willing to consider our ideas regarding the application.
- b) Sand/Salt Containment. Gary, Bruce Koch, Richard Kunze, Lloyd Young, and Nick Trasente had a follow-up meeting. They are looking at various sites for the structure and sorting out the particulars. The issue is balancing the environmental need and the new stormwater regulations with what is affordable for the borough and operationally viable. Some money has already been bonded for this. The goal is to get the structure purchased and to put it up as soon as possible.
- c) Environmental Web Site. The borough web site is basically done and should be up soon. On our site, new items include photos and text about the groundbreaking ceremony at the Native Plant Reserve, the Street Fair, and the Crowells Creek cleanup including pictures of the site looking clean. Laurel emailed Jon an updated version of the Board of Health Annotated List of Health Ordinances to place on the site.
- d) IPM. Gary suggested the goal be to integrate IPM with the borough's Green Community concept. IPM is one component of a whole green approach. Implementation of an IPM program on public grounds is something for which DPW is responsible. Gary suggested forming a working group of people from various constituencies to research IPM and pesticide use, find best practices, and from that lay out a framework for a strategic plan. Arnold suggested we need one person who really knows this issue, such as an IPM professor. IPM is a philosophy that needs to be taught. It can be taught free to DPW workers. The Shade Tree Advisory Committee has an agreement with Cook College through which the borough can send volunteers pro bono to classes. Cook likely has a course on IPM. Gary agreed that DPW employees need to be brought up to date on best practices. On other issues, such as snow removal, this is already being done through the Cook Roads Scholar program. There are also indoor pesticide issues such as cleaning supplies used in borough buildings. Some hospitals are now using green cleaning supplies. The working group will explore all of these issues.
- e) BIG Map. The whole process regarding this map has now been delayed until the fall because no one liked the map as it was. It will not appear in the May issue of NJ Register as originally planned.

6. New Business: None

7. The meeting adjourned at 11:05 PM. The next meeting of the Environmental Commission will take place on Wednesday, June 18, 2003 at 8 PM in Borough Hall.