

Highland Park Environmental Commission
Meeting of September 17, 2003
Minutes

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

1. The meeting was called to order at 8:15 PM.
2. The minutes of the July 16, 2003 meeting were approved.
3. Correspondence
 - a) We received an invitation to a meeting of the New Jersey Committee for the East Coast Greenway on September 6 in Newark. This date is already past.
4. Site Plans
 - a) Sandra Abraham
132 Harper Street
Docket No.: # 17-32-03
Block and Lot: B-17, L-32

This is a 50 X 178 single-family home in which the applicant is proposing a small addition to square off the existing building. She is seeking a C variance because the property is very narrow, and the existing side yard is non-conforming. No Comments.

- b) Jose Comacho
223 Valentine Street
Docket No.: # 29-20-03
Block and Lot: B-29, L-20

The applicant is seeking to finish the third floor in a two-and-a-half story house on a 40 X 100-foot property. He is proposing to renovate the front porch and expand the attic space, adding a bedroom, office, and bathroom. He must apply to the Zoning Board for height and bulk variances. No Comments.

- c) Linda Diamond
122 Graham Street
Docket No.: # 19-8-03
Block and Lot: B-19, L-8

The applicant seeks to add an 18 X 24-foot deck to a home on a 50 X 100-foot lot. She is seeking bulk variances for rear-yard setback, maximum lot coverage, and maximum impervious coverage. Impervious coverage with the deck will increase from 37%-45%. No Comments. Note: Laurel will review sections 17-18 of the Borough Code to find out if a deck currently counts as impervious coverage.

- d) Bruce and Carla Herniter
410 Becker Street
Docket No.: # 84-9-03
Block and Lot: B-84, L-9

The applicants propose to expand a 9 X 7-foot deck to a 9 X 17-foot deck to fit the new dimensions of their home. The deck addition cuts into the side yard setback. There are several pre-existing issues, and the applicants are also seeking a variance for minimum off street parking. No Comments.

e) Gary Panichella
808 Raritan Avenue
Docket No.: # 87-5-03
Block and Lot: B-87, L-5

The applicant seeks to convert the building from a fraternal institution to a personal fitness center with the name Studio 808. He is proposing a new façade, a mounted sign, lighting and a new entrance area. The property has a pre-existing non-conforming condition of no off street parking. The applicant must apply to the Planning Board to change the building's use. Comments: Shield outdoor lighting to prevent off-site light spillage and upward light spillage. The lighting has to conform to our lighting ordinance.

f) Richard Spector
325 Felton Avenue
Docket No.: # 27-5, 6-03
Block and Lot: B-27, L-5, 6

The applicant is proposing to install a new asphalt driveway. The current driveway is stone, and the lot is 50 X 100 with a single family home. He is applying for a bulk variance for maximum impervious coverage.

Comments: Consider alternatives to asphalt such as bricks, pavers, or other permeable material.

g) Jeffrey and Linda Urbach
406 South First Avenue
Docket No.: # 10-8-03
Block and Lot: B-10, L-8

The applicant is proposing to construct a rear one-story addition to a single family home on a 35 X 100-foot property. The addition will be built over an existing patio. The lot has a pre-existing non-conforming width of 35 feet, and the applicant is therefore seeking two side yard setback variances. The existing side yard setbacks are not being changed.
No Comments.

5. Old Business

- a) Francis Parker Memorial Home. The opponents' testimony began at the last Zoning Board meeting. Mr. Kaplan is questioning the need for the retaining wall and the height of the building. The next meeting is on September 22. Parker is also asking for a height variance. The Zoning Board says they do not have to review every aspect of the plan as the Planning Board would do. The Environmental Commission has so far sent two sets of comments—one in May and one in July. These were not read into the proceedings although they should be in the site plan record.
- b) Trail Grant Status Report. Final drawings have been received from Schlesinger Associates. A total of \$1,500 was spent on their services. A DPW work crew cleared the brush at the site several weeks ago. They also moved the large dumpster at the corner of the DPW property. DPW has a mark up showing the location of the large gas line on the property. The materials for the DPW portion of the work have all been ordered. Loren reported that she is still trying to get estimates from landscape architects for putting in the plants. Approximately \$8,000 is available for the landscape contractor. The current goal is to make sure DPW does their part, which is the

critical part. They have agreed to dig trenches for one of the tree planting areas and put in topsoil. We also want them to install the fence, which will be split rail cedar. One problem is that fall is a busy time for DPW. We have until the end of November to complete this project.

- c) Greenway/Environmental Education Centers. No additional action has been taken. Arnold brought photos from a Wisconsin arboretum he visited during the summer, which show the types of plantings that can be done at such sites.
- d) Red's Marina Cleanup. Mike reported that during the last month, the county removed all debris at the site, tore down the building, removed the trailers, and also removed the sunken barge in the river. County workers also brought in clean topsoil and hydro seeded it. It is still unclear what the county will do regarding landscaping at the site. Arnold suggested that as part of our greenway, that we put in native plantings and a nature trail at this location.
- e) Raritan River Dredging Project. Laurel obtained a copy of the county's feasibility study on potential dredging of the river, and Mike will make several copies. The New Brunswick Environmental Commission will discuss this report and county plans to dredge the river at its September 23 meeting. Arnold recommended we advocate for a no wake zone for the area from the Route 27 bridge to the Route 1 bridge and that we seek reformation of the river on our terms, meaning maintaining a narrow channel with sand bars and mud flats. Mike noted that we would need to become familiar with the environmental benefits of sandbars if we decide to advocate having them. Arnold said there are eight endangered and threatened species that have been seen by the Audubon Society in Donaldson Park and reported to the DEP. The Donaldson Park improvement plans we saw two years ago said there were no endangered or threatened species reported there.
- f) Buck Woods. There have been emails going around town discussing ways to get funds to purchase Buck Woods and estimating how much the purchase would cost. Arnold suggested that a non-profit group might be in a position to pursue Green Acres money to buy this property. Laurel questioned whether the Fund for Highland Park might be interested in raising money for this and will look into it. Mike said he has not received a response from Chris Jones at DEP to a letter he sent on June 27 regarding the DEP Letter of Interpretation of wetlands done at this site.
- g) Environmentally Preferred Purchasing. The borough is putting together a committee on purchasing recycled products. The committee's first meeting is tomorrow. Professor Kevin Lyons, who does recycled products purchasing for Rutgers, will be there along with Borough Administrator Richard Kunze.
- h) Environmental Commission Web Site. We have been receiving much spam email lately from the site. Leora made some changes that now make it harder for spammers to get in and send messages.

6. New Business

- a) Arnold received an email from Jeremy Staats, a Rutgers student, informing him that a group in the landscape architecture department is doing a green map of Rutgers. They are marking all parks and open spaces as green and may include Highland Park in their map.
- b) New Jersey PIRG held a cleanup of Buell Brook in the Rutgers Ecological Preserve today.
- c) There is a new intern working to coordinate activities between the borough and the schools for the purpose of sharing resources. She is compiling a list of school and borough facilities to study how both the borough and the schools might schedule programs for maximum use of the facilities. One area where programs might be held is the Native Plant Reserve.

- 7. The meeting adjourned at 10:40 PM. The next meeting will be on Wednesday, October 15, 2003 at 8 PM in Borough Hall.