

Highland Park Environmental Commission

Meeting of May 19, 2004

Minutes

Present: Michael Rosenberg, Jonathan Abrahams, Gabor Grunstein, Arnold Henderson,
Laurel Kornfeld, Councilman Gary Minkoff

Absent: Loren Muldowney

Guest: Mary Ellen Tuccillo

1. The meeting was called to order at 8:23 PM.
2. The minutes of the April 21, 2004 meeting were approved with the following corrections:
 - a) Section 5.g) should read, "Our ordinance says lights should not side spill or up spill."
 - b) Section 5.g), the phrase "good lights and bad lights" should be changed to "desirable and undesirable lights."
 - c) Section 6.a) should read, "the existing one at Donaldson Park" rather than "the exiting one at Donaldson Park."
 - d) Gary Minkoff was not at the meeting and should not be listed as having been present.
3. Correspondence
 - a) The DEP Division of Water Quality sent us a letter, packets and a CD about clean water financing. The mailing includes brochures about the Division's seven financing programs and the types of projects eligible for financing through DEP's Infrastructure Financing Program. The letter noted that there would be an information session on the FFY 2005 Priority System Document on June 9 in the DEP Main Office in Trenton. Gary reported that former Borough Administrator Richard Kunze had begun working on a new Stormwater Management Plan for the borough and that Acting Borough Administrator Nick Trasente is currently working on this. Gary will discuss this issue with the Council's Public Works Committee.
 - b) We received a Public Notice from PSE&G stating that they submitted an application to DEP for a Freshwater Wetlands Statewide General Permit #1 for the purpose of the PSE&G Electric Transmission Rights of Way Network.
4. Site Plans
 - a) Keith Klein
215 Lawrence Avenue
Docket No.: #166-62-04
Block and Lot: B-166, L-62

The applicant is proposing to take down a detached garage in the rear of a single-family home on a 56 X 100-foot lot and add a garage that will be attached to the house.
Comment: We request additional information regarding lot coverage and impervious coverage.
 - b) Robert Barry Silverman
611 Braun Avenue
Docket No.: #79-3-04
Block and Lot: B-79, L-3

The applicant proposes to extend the front porch of a house by 3.5 feet to make the porch even with the front of the house. He is seeking two variances for pre-existing non-conforming side yard setbacks. No Comments.

c) Bruce Nadler
323 Felton Avenue
Docket No.: #27-3-04
Block and Lot: B-27, L-3

The applicant seeks to remove a backyard shed and replace it with a garage. The home is on a 40 X 100-foot lot. He has five variances for pre-existing conditions and is seeking four more. These are as follows:

The maximum lot coverage is now 25%; he wants to go to 37%.

The maximum impervious coverage is now 47%; he wants to go to 58%.

The side yard setback is now 8 feet; he wants to go to 2 feet.

The rear yard setback is now 4 feet; he wants to go to 2 feet.

Comments: We are concerned about maximum impervious coverage and maximum lot coverage, and we recommend they consider a smaller structure and a permeable surface for the driveway. Also, we recommend directing the down spouts to the landscaping or to a dry well.

d) Patricia and Celso Sanchez
147 North 8th Avenue
Docket No.: #132-61, 62, 63-04
Block and Lot: B-132, L-61-63

The applicant seeks to build a second-story addition to a home on a 75 X 100-foot lot. A side yard setback is being sought for the overhang, which will go from 10 feet to 7 feet 10 inches. No Comments.

e) Kenny Song
179 Woodbridge Avenue
Docket No.: #118-4-5 & 7-04
Block and Lot: B-118, L-4, 5, & 7

In this application before the Planning Board, the applicant is requesting a use variance to convert a building from retail to personal services for use as a martial arts training club. No Comments.

f) Morgan Lincoln Group, LLC
26 Lincoln Avenue
Docket No.: #183-23-03
Block and Lot: B-183, L-23

This is a revision to a site plan submitted last year proposing to build several condominiums on a vacant Lincoln Avenue site. The applicant removed one unit from the previous version and is now proposing three units—two units of the same size and one larger unit. In addition to the revised architectural drawing, the applicant did a site runoff drainage analysis and made many changes to the site plan. This area is currently zoned for professional offices. No Comments.

5. Old Business
 - a) Trail Grant Status Report. We received the bill for the landscaping at the trail site, which Gary will pass along to the Department of Public Works (DPW). The trail is now completed. DPW extended the paving of the path around the corner all the way into Donaldson Park. The plantings were completed about one week ago. Arnold will put up signs identifying the plants to make this a nature trail.
 - b) Raritan Riverfront Strategy Plan. Gary reported that the Council advised borough residents concerned about this to contact their county and state representatives since the county and state have jurisdiction over this project. He added that we could keep people informed about public hearings on this matter. Arnold noted that there have been sightings of several threatened and endangered species in the riverfront area and that he has sent this information to the DEP Endangered and Nongame Species program.
 - c) Greenway/Environmental Education Center. MKW has been on hold since January since we are still waiting on additional funding. The Shade Tree Advisory Committee is maintaining the plantings at the Native Plant Reserve. They will schedule workdays on the first and third Sundays of each month beginning in June for planting and pulling weeds.
 - d) Green Community Working Group. Gary reported that the Working Group met several weeks ago. The borough is getting 50 trees through the state's Cool Cities Program. This is a joint program run by the DEP and the Board of Public Utilities (BPU) to quantify the economic benefit of shade trees. Gary also reported that the Working Group is involved in a whole range of projects, many of which he reported on at the April 20 Borough Council meeting. Mike receives the minutes of the Working Group's meetings and will distribute them to Commission members from now on. He will also send us notice of the dates and times of the Working Group's meetings so interested Commission members can attend them.

6. New Business
 - a) New Stormwater Regulations. Gabi will write a letter to both the Planning and Zoning Boards on behalf of the Commission about redirecting down spouts and adding dry wells. The new stormwater regulations will make these very valuable in town.
 - b) County Urban Forestry Program. Arnold reported that the Middlesex County Urban Forestry Program has one \$16,000 grant available for the whole county with a deadline of June 25. The community that gets the grant will have to use volunteers to plant the trees. The Shade Tree Advisory Committee submit an application. Arnold questioned whether we could plant trees at the edge of the landfill. Mike expressed concern that methane gas at the landfill might harm the roots and kill the trees.
 - c) Main Street Planting Day. Laurel reported that on Sunday, May 16, volunteers working for Main Street Highland Park did plantings all along Raritan Avenue. She suggested that in the future, Commission members take part in such events.
 - d) Battery Recycling. Mike questioned whether we could expand the number of collection areas for batteries in the borough. We currently have collection areas at Borough Hall and at the Department of Public Works. Other municipalities have collection areas in their libraries. We will look into doing this. Mike also noted that the county has a program for recycling computers about which some people may not be aware. Arnold said he has pamphlets listing all county recycling programs.

7. The meeting adjourned at 10:40 PM. The next meeting will be on Wednesday, June 16, 2004 at 8 PM in Borough Hall.