

Highland Park Environmental Commission
Meeting of November 17, 2004
Minutes

Present: Michael Rosenberg, Jonathan Abrahams, Gabor Grunstein, Laurel Kornfeld,
Anthony Puniello, Mary Ellen Tuccillo
Absent: Arnold Henderson, Loren Muldowney
Guest: Brian Szura

1. The meeting was called to order at 8:15 PM.
2. The minutes of the October 20, 2004 meeting were approved.
3. Correspondence
 - a) We received a copy of the Middlesex County Planning Board newsletter dated November 10, 2004.
 - b) We received notification from Councilwoman Timmons that the borough is seeking nominations for its annual Martin Luther King, Jr. award.
4. Site Plans: None
5. Old Business
 - a) Greenway/Environmental Education Centers. The mayor reported at the November 16 Council meeting that the borough will go out to bid for the building in January.
 - b) Green Community Working Group. Council passed a resolution on November 16 making Highland Park the lead entity in an environmentally friendly purchasing co-op. Also, the salt dome is now complete and is located at DPW.
 - c) Raritan River Dredging. The county is seeking to dredge from New Brunswick all the way to the bay. The Edison Wetlands Association is submitting comments opposing the dredging. If we want to send comments, we have to write to the Army Corps of Engineers in reference to this project or to the NJDEP Office of Dredging and Sediment Technology. Laurel will contact both the DEP office and the Army Corps to find the name of the people to whom we should send our comments.
 - d) Edison Wetlands Association. Mike met with EWA director Bob Spiegel, who encouraged us to work on turning the municipal landfill below Buck Woods from a brownfield into a greenfield. EWA is working on several other properties in various towns along the Raritan River. Spiegel noted that State funding of up to \$200 million may be made available for such projects. EWA is willing to provide technical expertise for this. Spiegel will send Mike more information on this, and they will put together a proposal together. The first part of such a project would be removal of surface debris. After the clean up, we could put in topsoil and do seeding and planting as well as create a nature trail. Tony noted that once the site

is remediated, we need to get a determination from DEP showing the area is safe for whatever use we choose.

6. New Business

- a) Highland Park Redevelopment Study. We noted that two areas are being looked at in the borough's Determination of Needs redevelopment study. These are sections of Raritan Avenue and sections of Cleveland Avenue. At recent meetings, the borough distributed aerial of photos of the properties selected in the study. Tony explained that the Planning Board's mission in this area is limited. The state sets the criteria determining whether an area qualifies as being in need of redevelopment, and the Planning Board can decide only whether the properties in the study meet those criteria. He added that the study does have an environmental section. Mike noted that the Midland Ross site is not included in the study. There is one landlocked green (undeveloped) area on Cleveland Avenue that is included, and we are curious how this property meets the criteria. The next Planning Board hearing on the study will be on Thursday, November 18 at 7:30 PM. There will also be a redevelopment workshop on Sunday, December 5 from 1-5 PM at the Highland Park High School cafeteria.
 - b) Valley Place Ravine Cleanup. New Jersey Community Water Watch and the Environmental Commission had a successful cleanup on Sunday, November 14 at Valley Place Ravine. A total of about 30 people participated, approximately half of whom were from Rutgers and half Highland Park residents. A lot of trash was removed, and DPW picked it up the next morning.
 - c) DEP Matching Grants. Mary Ellen noted that the deadline to apply for a DEP matching grant is December 15 and questioned whether we would apply for one. Grants can be used for educational purposes. Mike recommended applying for a grant to update the shade tree inventory. This will involve looking at the old inventory and evaluating what has changed since then. An update will also assess the condition of our street trees. DEP funded our original shade tree inventory, so they might be more likely to approve another grant for an update. Mike will talk to Ruth Bowers of STAC about this.
 - d) "Fast Track" Law. We noted that application of this law is temporarily suspended while more study is being done on this issue.
7. The meeting adjourned at 10:00 PM. The next meeting of the Environmental Commission will be on Wednesday, December 15 at 8 PM in Borough Hall.