

Highland Park Environmental Commission
Meeting of January 19, 2005
Minutes

Present: Jonathan Abrahams, Arnold Henderson, Laurel Kornfeld, Mary Ellen Tuccillo,
Councilman Gary Minkoff

Absent: Gabor Grunstein, Loren Muldowney, Anthony Puniello, Michael Rosenberg

Guests: Allan Williams, Erin Mannella

1. The meeting was called to order at 8:15 PM.
2. The minutes of the December 15, 2004 meeting were approved.
3. Correspondence
 - a) We received a memo from Borough Clerk Janet Potenza asking us to send area newspapers our 2005 meeting dates and inform her after the notice is sent. Laurel will take care of this. She will also include the Jan. 2006 meeting.
 - b) We received an announcement from DEP regarding their investigation of a leak at the Getty/Conoco Service Station on Woodbridge Avenue. DEP gave the owner a deadline for conducting soil and groundwater sampling in connection with a possible leak.
 - c) We received a mailing describing other environmental education centers as samples of what we might want to do on River Road.

4. Site Plans

- a) Front Porch Realty
217 South 4th Avenue
Docket No.: # 38-2-04
Block and Lot: B-38, L-2

The applicant proposes to subdivide the lot in order to build a single-family home in the front and either give or sell the rear of the property to Bartle School. Variances are being sought for educational use in a residential zone and for hardship because the owner cannot purchase additional land and the lot has an irregular size.
Comments: Landscape preferably with native species to compensate for lost trees and shrubs.

- b) St. Paul's Church (Addendum)
502 Raritan Avenue
Docket No.: # 40-1-5, 26 & 27
Block and Lot: B-40, L-1-5, 26 & 27

The applicant added drawings to the application, showing inside renovations. No Comments.

- c) Shalin Associates, Inc., t/a P.J.'s Coffee
315 Raritan Avenue
Docket No.: # # 158-42, 25, 24, 50, 51-05
Block and Lot: B-158, L-42, 25, 24, 50 & 51

The applicant is proposing to use the property for a café. A variance is being sought for signage. No Comments.

5. Old Business

- a) Greenway/Environmental Education Center. The Environmental Centers Working Group will meet within the next few weeks with MKW, Gary, Borough Administrator Nick Trasente, and the mayor to review the plans. Gary requested that Arnold give him a list of our top 10 concerns regarding the Center.
- b) Proposed Raritan River Dredging. Arnold distributed two versions of a draft letter he wrote to the Army Corps of Engineers for us to review. We decided that he would revise the second version and coordinate this with Mike and Gary. Mike wants to send the letter by email to meet the deadline and then follow this up with a hard copy. Laurel will send him the email address from which she received Army Corps communication. Arnold noted that there is a question regarding the limits of where the dredging will occur. The most recent Army Corps document shows the dredging going up to the Landing Lane Bridge. However, we understood there will be no dredging upstream of the Albany Street Bridge. The Commission is already on record with the county as supporting a no wake zone. We are unsure as to whether the no wake zone and the shore cleanup/erosion repair are under the jurisdiction of the Army Corps. If they are outside the Army Corps' jurisdiction, we could state in our letter that we hope MCIA will incorporate these into their plans. Laurel will contact the Army Corps to determine which of the two documents we received is the maintenance dredging plan vs. the MCIA plan. She will also email everyone the specific details of the pending DEP permits for this project.
- c) Highland Park Redevelopment Study. The Planning Board hearing continues Thursday, January 20 at 7:30 PM in the Senior/Youth Center. The public comment portion is supposedly closed.
- d) Solar Energy in NJ. Laurel is gathering information from ANJEC for our February meeting.

6. New Business

- a) NJ Community Water Watch Goals for Spring Semester. Erin, who works for Water Watch, reported that the group's goal is to do a campaign directly around Highland Park. They would like to educate the public on the Raritan River and also on its tributaries. They will try to monitor the health of Valley Place Ravine biologically and visually twice a month to determine what types of wildlife are present and whether the cleanliness is being maintained. Water Watch would like to hold two cleanups in the spring semester and wants to work with the Commission to maintain Valley Place Ravine as an attractive open space and raise awareness in town of this area. For Earth Day, their goal is an Earth Week reconstruction project at the Ravine involving the removal of non-native species, planting of native species, addition of benches, and creation and maintenance of trails. A cleanup will be held one week before Earth Day; then on Earth Day, the planting work will be done. Water Watch is also looking to do presentations and lesson plans at PTO meetings.
- b) Green Acres Grant for Entranceway Park. Jennifer Sennick is preparing a Green Acres grant application for plantings at the old limo lot on behalf of Main Street. Green Acres provides an assistance package of grants and loans; we can choose to accept the grant and not the loan. This may also apply to funding for the Environmental Education Center. We are awaiting a letter from Green Acres

with more information on this. One idea being proposed for the gateway park site is a rain garden, which involves putting in plantings that can stand being both very wet and very dry in specific arrangements. Rutgers has two demonstrations of rain gardens at its arboretum; we will contact them for information on rain gardens. Most of the work at this site will be vegetation. A retaining wall also needs to be redone. We noted that the original study of the site recommended further testing of soils. Gary reported that CME Associates is doing a geo-technical study of the site and added that the goal is to have a lot of tree canopy there extending to River Road to deal with the area being a carbon monoxide hot spot.

- c) ANJEC Planning Grants. ANJEC sent an email informing us of planning grants of up to \$20,000 they are making available. If we decide to apply, an appropriate project might be updating our Natural Resources Inventory (NRI). As is, we need to put notice in the NRI of the change in the Cenacle property's status.
- d) Resolution Opposing "Fast Track" Legislation. Laurel brought in a copy of a sample resolution ANJEC is requesting that municipalities adopt opposing implementation of "fast track" legislation signed last summer. We are in a top priority area for planning growth. Commission members questioned whether this state law supersedes our stream corridor and steep slopes protection ordinances. Gary will discuss this with the Council's Public Works Committee. Laurel will email him a copy of ANJEC's draft resolution. She will also look into whether Acting Governor Codey mentioned "fast track" in his State of the State address.

7. The meeting adjourned at 10:15 PM. The next meeting of the Environmental Commission will be on Wednesday, February 16 at 8 PM in Borough Hall.