

Highland Park Environmental Commission
Meeting Minutes of February 16, 2005

Present: Michael Rosenberg, Gabor Grunstein, Arnold Henderson, Laurel Kornfeld, Loren Muldowney, Councilman Gary Minkoff
Absent: Jonathan Abrahams, Anthony Puniello, Mary Ellen Tuccillo
Guests: Anne Barron, Joseph Dunsay, Yelena Dunsay, Erin Mannella, Kara Van Blarcum, Allan Williams

1. The meeting was called to order at 8:07 PM.
2. The minutes of the January 19, 2005 meeting were approved with the following corrections:
 - a) In Item 3b, the correct spelling is “Conoco” not “Conaco.”
 - b) Item 5a should read the “Environmental Center Working Group will work with MKW” instead of “the Green Community Working Group will work with MKW.”
 - c) In Item 5b, remove the sentence regarding Sophie Ettinger.
3. Correspondence—None
4. Site Plans
 - a) Eric and Maria Marshall
237 Benner Street
Docket No.: # 23-26-05
Block and Lot: B-23, L-26
The lot is 45 X 110 feet. The applicants seek to build a shed to replace a smaller original shed that is being torn down. They are asking for a C variance for side yard setback.
No Comments.
 - b) Kenneth Safir
221 North 2nd Avenue
Docket No.: # 164-5-05
Block and Lot: B-164, L-5
The applicant seeks to replace a one-story addition to a 2 ½-story single-family home with a 2-story addition, dimensions 25 X 12. He is seeking a variance for front yard setback. The ordinance requires 20 feet; the existing front yard setback is 12 feet, and the applicant proposes going to 10 feet. Impervious coverage is going from 32-33% but remains within the limit allowed by the ordinance, which is 40%.
Comments: The new addition could allow direct stormwater discharge into the landscaping or lawn as opposed to the street or sidewalk.
 - c) Bor-John, LLC (Addendum)
254 South 7th Avenue
Docket No.: #46-32, 33-04
Block and Lot: B-46, L-32 & 33
The applicant is proposing a four-family dwelling with parking underneath. Variances for maximum building height, maximum lot coverage, and maximum impervious coverage are being sought. Maximum lot coverage allowed is 30%; the applicant is seeking 49%. Maximum impervious coverage allowed is 40%; the applicant is seeking 62%.

Comments: Impervious coverage is excessive. Keep impervious coverage within the limits permitted by the ordinance. If this is built, direct the runoff into landscaping.

d) St. Paul the Apostle Church (Addendum)

502 Raritan Avenue

Docket No.: # 40-1-5, 26 & 37-04

Block and Lot: B-40, L-1-5, 26 & 37

The addendum includes a revised cover sheet, lighting plan, striping plan, signage plan, grading plan and utilities plan. The church is putting in an underground stormwater detention system. The storm sewers from the parking lot are going into the detention basin. No Comments.

5. Old Business

- a) Plans for Environmental Education Center. We received notification from MKW regarding our application to the DEP Land Use Regulation Program for a Waterfront Redevelopment Permit for park improvements at the Native Plant Reserve on River Road. We now have site plans for the building and solar pavilion. The building will be a large room for exhibits and storage. It can be combined with outside space to create room for a larger audience. Both the building and the pavilion are above the DEP flood hazard line. Paths will go into the flood hazard areas. A published request for bids should have appeared in yesterday's newspaper. There will be a walk around the area with the landscape architects and those interested in bidding. The bids received will be opened on March 7. The paths' material will be rolled stone dust that is partially permeable but also firm enough for wheelchairs. There has been some debate on whether the center should be named the "Highland Park Environmental Center" with a subheading "Eugene Young Pavilion" or the "Eugene Young Environmental Center." Gabi suggested we add a logo to the sign, and Arnold recommended a Great Blue Heron. Gabi created a centered sign with a logo on his laptop, and Arnold will email this to the Environmental Center Working Group. The borough envisions starting actual work on the center in April.
- b) Proposed Raritan River Dredging. We clarified the fact that the proposal calls for maintenance dredging going to 10 feet at the bottom area of the river. In our area, the plan goes to 8 feet with an allowance of 2 extra feet if needed. Arnold suggested we contact Middlesex County before dredging starts and suggest they fill in the hole at the foot of Valley Place Ravine. The hole is large and someone could fall in. Utility workers currently cannot reach their easement area except by driving a truck across the hole. Another ideal may be to have one of the utilities fill the hole. The utility companies that may be involved, include PSE&G, MCUA, and Middlesex Water Company.
- c) Highland Park Redevelopment Study. The Planning Board voted to approve the Raritan Avenue section of the study at its January 20 meeting. Discussion and vote on the Cleveland Avenue section are scheduled for the Board's next meeting on Thursday, February 24. Our letter to the Board regarding Cleveland Avenue states that the Army Corps of Engineers has plans to dig a ditch to ease flooding on a lot owned by Amtrak. Between the new law requiring a 50-foot buffer around streams and what the Army Corps would excavate, there may not be any land available for use at this site. We know that this project is being considered, but it is not clear at which stage of the plan that will happen.
- d) Valley Place Ravine. Erin informed us that New Jersey Community Water Watch will hold an information session next Wednesday, February 23, at 8 PM in

the Senior/Youth Center to obtain citizen input on their proposed Valley Place Ravine cleanup. Watch Watch plans to better maintain the trail there, clean the area, and remove non-native plants. They are working with HPHS seniors on this project. DPW is also excited about this. On Sunday, February 20, Water Watch will conduct a stream monitoring training at Valley Place Ravine and will teach the how to identify insects and do both visual and biological monitoring.

- e) Centennial Park. This is the former limousine lot off River Road. The Environmental Commission sent a letter in support of the borough's grant application to Green Acres for this project. The Shade Tree Advisory Committee and the Planning Board also sent letters of support. The concept drawings were sent to Green Acres with the borough's application. We will need the data from the geo-technical study to create an actual plan.
- f) Fast Track Legislation. There are currently two bills to repeal Fast Track—one in the Assembly and one in the State Senate. There appears to be bi-partisan support for repeal. Gary is presenting the Council's Public Works Committee with a draft resolution created by ANJEC opposing Fast Track. Anne gave Gary an alternative draft resolution from the Sierra Club for consideration. Gary will present both drafts to the Public Works Committee. Anne will review both resolutions to make sure all information in them is accurate and up to date. The Commission encourages the Council to pass a resolution supporting Fast Track repeal. We also questioned at what point in the approval process Fast Track comes into play and whether the State ombudsman can overrule a municipality.
- g) Solar Energy in NJ. Laurel reported that ANJEC does not have information on this and that they referred her to the Hackensack School District, which is putting in solar panels, and to the Clean Energy Council at the Board of Public Utilities. She will contact these sources as well as the Northeast Sustainable Energy Association (NESEA) for more information. Mike said he plans to invite Mike Ambrosio to one of our meetings for further discussion of this topic. Anne reported that she attended the RU Sustainable conference where there was some discussion of getting energy from landfills. Since our landfill at Edgeboro has no filling station, this is not an option for Highland Park. Gary noted that every time we buy a piece of equipment, we look at it from an emissions and renewable perspective. We have formed a cooperative for these projects, which Rutgers is administering on a pro bono basis. Cook College undergraduates are helping Deputy Borough Administrator Darrick Green with research on what we buy. Green is providing outreach to other municipalities to arrange for several towns to bid on products simultaneously. If everyone in the coop agrees to buy a product, they all get the benefit of a reduced price.

6. New Business

- a) Street Fair. The Street Fair will be on Sunday, May 22 from 11:30 AM-4:30 PM. Booths are 6 X 10 feet. The Commission will be next to the Shade Tree Committee in front of Stop and Shop.
- b) "Scentennial" Garden. The borough's CDBG application to the state included \$5,000 for this. The Edison Job Corps will provide the labor.
- c) Recycling. Gary reminded us that on March 1, the borough will assume responsibility for recycling. Residents will receive a schedule of recycling dates in the mail. On the south side, Tuesday garbage pickups after Monday holidays will be skipped. By bringing recycling in house, we are saving \$250,000 we would have had to pay to the county. The borough hopes to expand the pool of

recyclable materials at a later date. Gary also noted that the borough is in the process of purchasing a new garbage truck.

- d) Salt Dome. The new salt dome is in. Gary reported that the borough will soon introduce new stormwater ordinances and will get state credit for having the salt dome. The next goal is to stop using sand. Two new trucks were assigned to clean up the most treacherous areas during the last snowstorm. Calcium chloride was used during that storm with great efficiency. Gary also noted that Water Superintendent John Davino said we are cutting down on leaks and water main breaks in town. The new valve systems put in allow localizing of areas that need to be shut off during water main breaks.
- e) Stormwater Ordinances. We need to have a stormwater prevention plan and adopt the appropriate ordinances. Gary reported that as the borough works on the roads, it will replace existing sewer grates with appropriate grates. There will be a cost for doing this. Mike suggested using Gabi as a resource in this area. He also requested that the Commission be kept in the loop on this and that we be provided with a copy of the executive summary when the borough creates a stormwater plan.

7. The meeting adjourned at 10:40 PM. The next meeting of the Environmental Commission will be on Wednesday, March 16 at 8 PM in Borough Hall.