

Highland Park Environmental Commission
Meeting of April 20, 2005
Minutes

Present: Michael Rosenberg, Arnold Henderson, Laurel Kornfeld, Loren Muldowney,
Anthony Puniello, Mary Ellen Tuccillo, Councilman Gary Minkoff
Absent: Jonathan Abrahams, Gabor Grunstein
Guest: Erin Mannella of New Jersey Community Water Watch

1. The meeting was called to order at 8:30 PM.
2. The minutes of the March 16, 2005 meeting were approved.
3. Correspondence
 - a) We received a 2005 schedule of Household Hazardous Waste Drop Off Days from Middlesex County. There will be a total of 7 during the year. We also received notice of the county's Mercury Thermometer Exchange, in which residents can drop off a mercury thermometer and receive a non-mercury thermometer. Exchange days are Saturday, May 7, and Sunday, May 16.

4. Site Plans

- a) Robert and Nancy Marcik
410 South Second Avenue
Docket No.: # 17-6, 7, 9-04
Block and Lot: B-17, L-6, 7, & 9

The applicants are submitting a revised plan to the Planning Board for a minor subdivision. They are requesting a waiver for a soil erosion and sediment control plan. The lot with the existing building is being made non-conforming, and the new lot is conforming. No Comments.

- b) Congregation Ahavas Achim
South First Avenue
Docket No.: # 9-4, 5, 6-05
Block and Lot: B-9, L-4, 5, & 6

The applicant seeks to expand an existing synagogue that has been on this site for 16 years and is seeking five variances—for front setback on South 1st Avenue, number of parking spaces, maximum lot coverage, maximum impervious coverage, and buffer to residential use. The maximum lot coverage allowed is 30%, and the proposal calls for 34.1%. The maximum impervious coverage allowed is 40%; existing is 69.8%, and the proposal calls for 71%. A minimum of 100 parking spaces are required; the proposal reduces the existing number from 42 to 34. A 10-foot buffer to adjacent residential uses is required; the existing and proposed buffer is 3.3 feet. The application is before the Zoning Board because it involves expanding a non-permitted use and reducing a permitted use (residential).

The applicant plans to establish a small pocket park with trees and plantings between the building and most of the property line to the north. From the fence-line to the building, there will be approximately 25 feet of open space with trees and plants.

The applicant plans to remove the adjacent house and build on a small portion of that lot, with the rest of the lot being left as open space. Stormwater drainage pipe calculations were enclosed with the application.

Comments: Because the proposed plan greatly exceeds ordinance requirements for impervious coverage, the applicant can reduce the stormwater runoff at the site by means such as the following: a) using a permeable surface in part of the parking area; b) installation of a dry well. For the outdoor lighting, be sure the wall-mounted lights are shielded properly and the light is directed downward. The Environmental Commission would prefer more native species in the plantings and is willing to work with the applicant on species selection.

5. Old Business

- a) Valley Place Ravine Restoration—New Jersey Community Water Watch. Erin reported that Water Watch observed five or six frogs and two snakes during the cleanup. The frogs were in the ravine. Water Watch will now try to redo the stream monitoring to see if the stream's condition has improved. All who took part in the cleanup did a great job. They created a path by putting wood along the sides. Water Watch will now try to improve the walking path at the bottom. DPW put lime down to address a leak that was found in a pipe. Clean Communities is willing to donate a park bench for placement along the path. We need a sign to mark the entrance, and South Adelaide Avenue resident Anthony Patti has agreed to make a sign if Water Watch will design one. Erin noted that Barton's Nursery in Edison donated about 30 plants for this effort. She said Water Watch has already sent the nursery a thank you letter. Mike will send one on behalf of the Environmental Commission. We need to publicize the fact of the path and the ravine's new look. Laurel suggested putting a notice in the borough's newsletter. Erin said she has before and after pictures, which we will display at the Street Fair. Erin informed us that she will be away between May 31 and September 1 but will be back after September 1. Water Watch will have a summer organizer during that time.
- b) Plans for Environmental Education Center. Borough Council agreed to execute a contract with Tomco Landscaping and Excavation Contractors of Wharton, NJ. They will be doing the construction for a total cost of \$809,000. Certain activities, such as plantings, will not be done by Tomco because they can be done less expensively by someone else.
- c) ANJEC Smart Growth Planning Grant. An application was submitted on April 1 for a grant to create a Green Strategic Plan that would allow for additional community outreach and dialogue on a sustainable, green approach to a wide variety of topics. The plan is for a document that could be used by the Planning Board in land use decisions. This plan will contain a series of recommendations based on results of outreach to boards, commissions, and department heads. It could become a vehicle for providing public information about Environmental Commission concerns. We also discussed the possibility of additional environmental ordinances regarding energy use. Gary said that he and Clint Andrews would try to get Rutgers interns to work on this project.
- d) New Recycling Collection. Mary Ellen recommended that the library have a bin to collect used batteries for recycling since people frequently go there. Gary reported that borough recycling is going well and that a local vendor has provided a dumpster for cardboard and newspapers. We do not yet have a drop off at DPW for co-mingled recyclables, as there is no place to put them. However, residents can drop off cardboard at DPW.

- e) Highland Park Redevelopment Study. Gary questioned whether the Commission might want to invite Councilman Steve Nolan to discuss the environmental aspects of redevelopment. He said that during the next few months, the redevelopment project would be in the information and education-providing mode. We will consider this for a future meeting.
6. New Business
- a) Parker Nursing Home. Mike reported that construction is progressing at the site of the new assisted living facility.
 - b) Shade Tree Advisory Committee Cleanup. STAC will hold a cleanup and work day at the Native Plant Reserve on Saturday, April 30 from 10 AM-12 noon. The work will involve removing weeds and planting 72 native flowers—12 each of six new species. Arnold noted that the borough has contributed two new picnic tables to the site.
7. The meeting adjourned at 10:28 PM. The next meeting will be on Wednesday, May 18, 2005 at 8 PM in Borough Hall.