

Highland Park Environmental Commission
Meeting of July 20, 2005
Minutes

Present: Michael Rosenberg, Jonathan Abrahams, Arnold Henderson, Laurel Kornfeld,
Anthony Puniello, Mary Ellen Tuccillo
Absent: Gabor Grunstein, Loren Muldowney
Guests: Jessica Gentile and Michelle Huang of New Jersey Community Water Watch,
Allan Williams

1. The meeting was called to order at 8:20 PM.
2. The minutes of the June 15, 2005 meeting were approved.
3. Correspondence
 - a) We received a copy of a letter of interpretation to determine the presence or absence of freshwater wetlands and water on Blocks 170/154, Lots 9.01 and 10.01/12 from the DEP Land Use Regulation Program. The applicant was Garlatti Realty. The site inspection showed no freshwater wetlands present on the property.
 - b) We received notice from the DEP about several informational sessions they are holding during August and September on the Green Acres Program and Environmental Infrastructure Financing Program. Tony reported that under the latter program, municipalities can get 50% low interest loans to purchase land for watershed protection if they issue a covenant not to develop that land.
4. Site Plans
 - a) Hermann Borst
108 South 4th Avenue
Docket No.: # 32-6-05
Block and Lot: B-32, L-6

The applicant is before the Planning Board proposing a subdivision, seeking to sell part of his backyard, an area 44 X46 square feet, to his neighbor. His entire property is 200 X 46 square feet with a three-family dwelling.
No Comments.
 - b) Maximum and Co., L.P.
224 South 11th Avenue
Docket No.: # 68-15, 16, 17-04
Block and Lot: B-68, L-15-17

The applicant is seeking approval from the Zoning Board to build a two-story duplex.
No Comments.
 - c) 433 Cleveland Avenue, LLC
433 Cleveland Avenue
Docket No.: # 191-6-05 & 191.01-7.01-05
Block and Lot: B-191, L-6 & B-191.01, L-7.01

This is an application before the Planning Board for a subdivision.

Comments: The applicant should be cognizant of our new stream corridor protection and steep slopes ordinances, the Environmental Commission's Open Space List, and the need for an EIS should any construction be proposed. This is a sensitive area, and we are concerned about its future use. The area serves as a wildlife corridor from the Raritan River and Johnson Park up to parks in Edison. There is also a potential Army Corps of Engineers project that would traverse this property. Consider the implications of the Corps of Engineers' plans—half culvert and half diversion structure—across this property, the new stream corridor and steep slopes ordinances, and the Commission's annotated list of open spaces regarding these properties.

- d) Kaplan and Sons Construction Corp.
433 River Road
Docket No.: # 189-4-05
Block and Lot: B-189, L-4

The applicant is proposing a two-story (7,653 square foot) addition to the Castle on River Road and is seeking a use variance from the Zoning Board. The property's total dimensions are 786 X 825 square feet. A drainage plan including the use of dry wells is included in the application.

Comments: The applicant should consult the borough historians and historic preservation architects to maintain the historic character of the Castle. The property is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

5. Old Business

- a) Plans for Environmental Education Center. There is a construction trailer located at the site, but construction has not yet started. Soil borings were completed and soil samples were collected, but the test results are not yet available. Construction is pending the results of the soil tests.
- b) Valley Place Ravine Workdays. Jessica and Michelle informed us that Water Watch will be having workdays at Valley Place Ravine on July 29 and 30 and two more workdays in August. The July workdays will focus mostly on cleanup, removing invasives, and watering existing plants. There are sections of metal cable that need to be cleared, and DPW has agreed to pick this up. Mike will notify the police about the workdays, and Arnold will put yellow streamers around plants that should not be removed. Arnold will get tools from the Shade Tree Advisory Committee, and the students will try to get tools stored in the Clean Communities Office in Borough Hall. Jessica reported that Home Depot is willing to donate large trash bins for this area. If we get these, we would need to be able to secure them. Mike noted that he and Erin discussed constructing some seating areas along the path, and we questioned whether Home Depot would donate a bench. He also reported that Erin talked to Anthony Patti, a landscaper, about making signs for the area. Anthony has equipment that can cut a sign out of wood. Jessica and Michelle also reported that Water Watch now has a web site with pictures for the Valley Place Ravine project.
- c) Buck Woods Tree Removal. Mike reported that JSM was issued a summons for cutting the trees at Buck Woods and that they have a court date on Tuesday, July 26 at 9 AM. Several Commission members will try to attend.

- d) Sidewalks and Shade Tree Management. The homeowners at 22 Harrison Avenue want to save a large mature tree whose roots are lifting up the sidewalk. Borough officials plan to lift up slabs of concrete there and see what is under it. Arnold said the Shade Tree Advisory Committee will draft a modification of our ordinance describing how a sidewalk should be constructed in order to save trees.

6. New Business

- a) The Route 18 expansion project has started with demolition of the old New Brunswick Police Station and subsurface work near the Paulus Boulevard intersection. Mary Ellen will forward a link to the web site detailing the Route 18 project to all Commission members. The web site will allow us to track the progress of the project.

7. The meeting adjourned at 10:18 PM. The Environmental Commission will not meet in August. The next meeting of the Commission will be on Wednesday, September 21 at 8 PM in Borough Hall.