

Highland Park Environmental Commission
Meeting of March 15, 2006
Minutes

Present: Michael Rosenberg, Jonathan Abrahams, Gabor Grunstein, Arnold Henderson,
Laurel Kornfeld, Councilman Jon Erickson
Absent: Loren Muldowney, Anthony Puniello, Mary Ellen Tuccillo
Guest: Dr. David Ottaviano, Highland Park Superintendent of Schools

1. The meeting was called to order at 8:20 PM.
2. The minutes of the February 15, 2006 meeting were approved with one correction. Item 5f) should read "one idea proposed is to include the borough-owned area at the bottom..." replacing the word "top" with "bottom."
3. Correspondence: None
4. Site Plans
 - a) Lois Lebbing
100 North Second Avenue
Docket No.: # 173-29-06
Block and Lot: B-173, L-29

This is a proposed minor subdivision of the backyard, which will be made into a new lot that will be 5,495 square feet. The remaining lot with the house on it will be 4,600 square feet, which is below the minimum required lot size of 5,000 square feet.
No Comments.

5. Board of Education Presentation by Dr. David Ottaviano. Dr. Ottaviano presented maps illustrating plans for improvements at Irving, Bartle, and the Middle/High School. We are interested in the issues of landscaping, drainage, outdoor lighting, and energy efficiency.
 - a) Bartle School. Improvements at Bartle School include purchasing adjacent land to provide more parking and turning the current parking lot into a ball field. A green area will be put in as well as a new playground area. A new site barrier fence may be installed to prevent lighting from spilling into adjacent homes. A senior landscaping class at Cook College will study the area regarding trees and play structures and present four or five different options. Arnold suggested a recommendation be made to the instructor and class to use native plantings with labels describing what each plant is. Dr. Ottaviano said several semi-permeable plates are being put in to contain runoff. Soil samples from the site have been sent to the Freehold Soils Commission. The interior work in the school involves changing the heating controls to make them more efficient.
 - b) Middle/High School. A cafeteria and common space are being added to the Middle School as well as a first and second floor to a section of the Middle School that has only a third floor. Wayne Street will be opened into a driveway

- leading to a parking lot for up to seven cars. Three large trees will have to be removed along Wayne Street to add sidewalks. This parking area is a low area that collects a lot of water, so a six-foot deep detention basin will be built. It will be surrounded by a six-foot high fence, as required by law. The bottom of the detention basin will allow for infiltration. The maintenance shed will be moved and combined with the hot dog stand by the track. Eighteen parking spaces will be lost in order to create a walking path. Lights are scattered along the parking lot. Dr. Ottaviano said some residents of the area are worried about increased traffic. Arnold suggested planting vines and evergreens around the fence surrounding the detention basin and bending the new sidewalks on Wayne Street in order to preserve the trees. He will obtain information from the Native Plant Society about they types of plants recommended near basins. Gabi recommended placing a small pond at one end of the property with constant standing water and populating it with fish to prevent mosquito infestation.
- c) Irving School. A total of \$10 million is going into bringing the classrooms up to current standards and changing the heating system. A geothermal system is being installed, which includes 25 wells that are each 400 feet deep. These wells will be underneath the play area and will cool the building during the summer. Dr. Ottaviano reported that while geothermal has an initial capital cost for installation, it will pay off over the years. Steam pipes will be removed and replaced with water pipes. One classroom will be added to a presently open area, and a garden area will be rebuilt around it. Parking is being reduced to increase the play area, which will be covered with grass or wood mulch. The current play area in front of the school will be turned into lawn. Parts of South 11th Avenue and Meriland Avenue will become one-way streets. A Cook College class is assisting in design of the new play area.
6. Old Business
- a) Environmental Education Center. Construction is expected to start this week. Rob Lore, an archeologist in town, was interested in whether the area is being studied for the presence of any artifacts worth saving. The environmental assessment done for the site indicated there would not be any such items there. Soil borings were done at the site, and we questioned whether those could be used to determine if there is anything of archeological value in the soil. Arnold said we might be able to determine from the borings when the disturbance of the land took place. The contaminants on the site are several heavy metals. Commission members agreed that we would like to have grass over most of the capping of the contaminated areas.
- b) New Jersey Community Water Watch Valley Place Ravine Restoration. A cleanup is scheduled for Sunday, April 2 at Valley Place Ravine. A second cleanup is scheduled for several areas on Earth Day Saturday, April 22, and Arnold suggested having the Meadows area added as part of that cleanup. Mike will contact Emilie Rabbitt of Water Watch for more information.
- c) Recreational Trail Grant. No new information.

- d) Rezoning of YM-YWHA Property. The Y has requested the borough rezone part of its property for 12-story riverfront residential and sent a draft rezoning ordinance with the request. The Council has sent the request to the Planning Board for a recommendation. The Planning Board will hold a special meeting to discuss this on Thursday, March 30. Mike has already informed the Planning Board that the Environmental Commission is concerned about steep slopes on the property, traffic issues, and public access to the river. Jon Erickson noted the Planning Board may recommend the creation of a new zone, but the Council would have to approve such a change.
- e) Rezoning of Areas Near the Bikeway. Arnold noted that we have a grant for a trail in the lower Meadows. Rezoning some of these areas would connect them to the apartments on Donaldson Street and Crowells Road.
- f) Centennial Park. An environmental study is being done of the area. There is a question of whether an underground storage tank is buried there.
- g) Raritan River Dredging. Middlesex County asked DEP for an extension since today is their deadline to get the work done before fish spawning season.
- h) Forum with Board of Health. The Board of Health has not yet set a new date for the forum on "Keeping an Environmentally Healthy Home for Your Children" but plans to hold it in late April or early May. Laurel will keep the Commission informed on this.

7. New Business

- a) Jon Erickson reported that the Public Works Department made \$30,000 in recycling from March-December 2005. A profit was made on recycling paper and white goods, but the borough lost money on co-mingled recyclables. He also noted that we switched recycling vendors, from Garden State to Colgate.

8. The meeting adjourned at 10:13 PM. The next meeting will be on Wednesday, April 26, 2006 (rescheduled from usual third Wednesday due to Passover) at 8 PM in Borough Hall.