

Highland Park Environmental Commission

Meeting of June 21, 2006

Minutes

Present: Michael Rosenberg, Jonathan Abrahams, Gabor Grunstein, Arnold Henderson,
Laurel Kornfeld, Loren Muldowney, Mary Ellen Tuccillo

Absent: Joan Ehrenfeld, Anthony Puniello

Guest: Allan Williams

1. The meeting was called to order at 8:10 PM.
2. The minutes of the May 17, 2006 meeting were approved.
3. Correspondence
 - a) Received the Year 2005 Recycling Tonnage Report from DPW, which was submitted to NJDEP on April 28. The report contains a list of all the materials that Highland Park recycled last year and the number of pounds of each material recycled. The grand total was 9,617 tons.
 - b) Received a notice from the Municipal Land Use Center at The College of New Jersey informing us of their Green Building Tours for local government representatives. A tour of Neptune Summerfield High School will be in July.
4. Site Plans
 - a) Efreem Gerzberg
459 Lincoln Avenue
Docket No.: # 156-14-06
Block and Lot: B-156, L-14

The applicant is proposing to build a two-story single-family home on a lot of about one and a half acres. Mill Brook surrounds the property on all sides except the front. The application is before the Zoning Board because the borough's stream corridor protection ordinance prohibits new construction in a stream corridor overlay zone. The applicant also proposes to put in a retaining wall within the 50-foot buffer. Comments: We suggest the applicant consider shifting the house to the south and consider putting the garage underneath the house to reduce the footprint. This would move the building footprint into the clear zone and out of the buffer. He should also consider reducing the walkways and patios. The purpose of the stream corridor protection ordinance is to have vegetation compatible with natural corridors along streams. Putting the parking underneath will allow the entire building footprint to remain in the clear zone.

5. Old Business
 - a) Environmental Education Center. The Center is in the process of being built. Arnold is posting photos of new construction on the Environmental Commission's web site every few days. The contractor will remediate the soil within the construction fence by putting down a fabric surface topped with six inches of dirt. We will be able to plant in the berm. Within two days, the concrete should be poured for all the walls. Because the soil remediation cost more money than expected, placement of the solar panels has been postponed until we get more funding. Loren and Gabi are looking into potential new funding sources.
 - b) Donaldson Park Improvements. The work on these is continuing. The dock area is now complete. Work has not yet started around the pond, but the county has

put in a bridge at the low spot near the pond. Plans call for a gazebo to be constructed adjacent to the pond. The county's plans also call for improving the drainage at the ball fields. Arnold reported that the county is discussing placing native vegetation around the pond and river. He recommended buffers be placed around all the park's streams.

- c) Rezoning of Y Property. Mike distributed copies of the comments we submitted to the Planning Board. The June hearing on the rezoning has been postponed because the Borough Planner is not yet ready with his report.
- d) Recreational Trail Grant. Arnold and Don Rish of Public Works looked over some of the land in the Meadows. DPW will provide the labor to clear the trail. Don is working on selecting equipment that will not be destroyed by concrete in the Meadows. We may need someone to remove the concrete blocks before any work on the trail begins. Mike noted that some of the concrete blocks are so big they need to be removed by a truck. We may also have soil contamination at the site similar to that on the site of the Environmental Education Center.

6. New Business

- a) Rutgers Ecological Preserve. Rutgers University's Board of Governors has voted to take a portion of the Preserve and sell it to the football coach so he can build a home there. The site is in Piscataway adjacent to Route 18. It is questionable whether Rutgers is permitted to do this. University officials will have to appear before the Piscataway Planning Board to apply for a subdivision. About 15 years ago, there was a law passed requiring Rutgers obtain permission from the state legislature before selling off any part of the Preserve. Mike noted that the area in question has already been partially cut off from the Preserve by the Route 18 extension. Arnold indicated that we have a map of the Preserve on the Environmental Commission web site. Parts of the Preserve are in Highland Park, and we are concerned about how to prevent this from being done to Preserve land in the borough. We questioned whether the Commission should issue a statement against this and emphasized the need to be vigilant about preventing it from happening here. Arnold said although the zoning of the Piscataway portion will be kept, the university will be allowed to build some facilities there. Gabi questioned whether Rutgers can sell the land to a private individual. Jon suggested the Commission write a letter to State Senator Bob Smith, who heads the Senate Environment Committee. Mike will look into this issue further and contact the Piscataway Environmental Commission. He noted that although this is just one lot, it sets a very bad precedent. Laurel suggested we also contact area environmental groups such as the Edison Wetlands Association, Baykeeper, Sierra Club, and New Jersey Environmental Federation to see what they are doing about this.
- b) Midland Ross and Illuminating Experiences. The Borough Council has directed the Planning Board to determine whether these two Cleveland Avenue properties are in need of redevelopment. Mike noted that most of the contaminated soil has been removed from these sites so the main issue remaining is groundwater contamination. Jon noted that these properties are not currently in conformance with the borough's Master Plan. If a developer decides to put apartments on these sites, the borough would either have to change the Master Plan or make this a redevelopment area. We noted that Honeywell Corp. now owns the Cleveland Avenue property next to River Road.

- 7. The meeting adjourned at 9:55 PM. The next meeting will take place on Wednesday, July 19 at 8 PM in Borough Hall.