

**Highland Park Environmental Commission**  
Meeting of October 18, 2006  
Minutes

Present: Michael Rosenberg, Jonathan Abrahams, Gabor Grunstein, Arnold Henderson  
Absent: Loren Muldowney, Joan Ehrenfeld, Anthony Puniello, Mary Ellen Tuccillo  
Laurel Kornfeld  
Guests: Rosemary Topar of New Jersey Water Watch

1. The meeting was called to order at 8:20 PM.
2. The minutes of the September 20, 2006 meeting were approved.
3. Correspondence  
There was no correspondence.
4. Site Plans:  
Belle View (former Cenacle property)  
Block 190 Lots 4 & 4.01  
411 River Road

The applicant proposes to construct 73 townhouses 189 parking spaces and 6 internal roadways on a 12.7 acre property. The applicant also plans to retain and restore the old historic Johnson House.

Comments:

For stormwater detention basins, the use of concrete on the low-flow channels is undesirable. Alternate materials that provide better filtering and detention are preferred. Was there consideration for making one or both of the basins into permanent ponds?

An archaeological survey should be conducted for this site to determine the presence or absence of historical artifacts.

A variance for impervious coverage was requested. The maximum allowed is 50% and the applicant proposes 54%. This variance should not be granted since the 4% difference can be easily remedied in a number of ways.

Consider eliminating proposed units 1,2,3, and units 11, 12, 13. These short clusters of units by the northeast and southeast corners are questionable, as they would be visible where the present view from adjacent properties is woods. The three unit cluster in the northeast would be more visible from Cedar Lane than the other units.

Vegetative screening along the edges of the property is important. The vegetation should be dense and include evergreens for winter months.

The applicant should submit a tree save plan that keeps more of the mature older trees. The current plan sacrifices most of those toward the center of the site, while saving some along the edges. Saving individual large trees here and there can probably be done without losing units, provided that construction procedures avoid wholesale grading of areas and instead work around trees of value. Will the applicant compensate the borough for mature trees that are proposed for removal?

New plantings should emphasize native species, especially in trees and shrubs. With the Kilmer Woods/Rutgers Ecological Preserve so close, there is a risk of non-native seed and pollen being spread into an area that has so far been well preserved as native woods.

Will there be any pedestrian access between this property and the neighboring properties to the east and south? Such access is desirable to avoid fenced-off enclaves.

Proposed lighting seems to shine out horizontally, and this would be objectionable. Prefer styles that may be visually similar, but have the filament tucked up into the shielding so as to direct the light downward. Unless the light is kept well below the horizontal by such shielding, the light will shine into second floor windows and at certain angles into drivers' eyes.

For areas of the property containing steep slopes, compliance with the Highland Park steep slopes ordinance is required.

## 5. Old Business

- a) Environmental Education Center. Construction is continuing to slowly move forward. The windows should be put in soon. Work on the structures is expected to be completed sometime in late November.
- b) Water Watch Projects. Rosemary Topar introduced herself as this year's new Water Watch coordinator. They are interested in scheduling more waterway cleanups in Highland Park and in marking of storm drains.
- c) Donaldson Park Improvements. Phase 1 of the project costing 2.3 million dollars is expected to be completed by the end of this month. The Middlesex County Board of Freeholders authorized bidding for phase 2 of park improvements. Construction of Phase 2 is expected to begin this winter and be completed by next fall. Phase 2 will include 4 new baseball fields, renovated tennis and basketball courts and new bathrooms. Roadways will be modified and the pedestrian walking path and bikeway systems will be completed.
- d) Raritan River Dredging. The river dredging project was completed. A hydrographic study was done to confirm the final depths. Middlesex County submitted a completion report to NJDEP and it was approved. The next planned activity is for a contractor to put pilings in the river, to which a floating dock will be attached.
- e) Rezoning of Y Property. The Planning Board held another well-attended meeting on this issue on September 28, at which time several professionals (traffic expert, engineer) reported on the potential project. Some potential alternatives to the Y's proposal were discussed. No decisions have been made yet by the Planning Board and further meetings will be held.
- f) Recreational Trail Grant. On Friday October 27, at 11:30 AM we will have an official unveiling of the new signage and a tour of the marked trail. . The Environmental Commission will be doing this in conjunction with the Edison Wetlands Association.

## 6. New Business

None

7. The meeting adjourned at 10:15 PM. The next meeting of the Environmental Commission will take place on Wednesday, November 15 at 8 PM in Borough Hall.