

Highland Park Environmental Commission
Meeting of November 15, 2006
Minutes

Present: Michael Rosenberg, Arnold Henderson, Laurel Kornfeld, Anthony Puniello
Absent: Jonathan Abrahams, Joan Ehrenfeld, Gabor Grunstein, Loren Muldowney,
Mary Ellen Tuccillo
Guest: Vikas Nanda

1. The meeting was called to order at 8:18 PM.
2. The minutes of the October 18, 2006 meeting were approved.
3. Correspondence
 - a) We received a public notice from PSE&G informing us that they have submitted a request to DEP for a modified freshwater wetlands statewide general permit #2. This annual renewal of their easements in wetlands allows them to install new gas mains within roadway rights of way.
4. Site Plans. None
5. Old Business.
 - a) Environmental Education Center. The glass walls are in, and the frame for the folding door is also in. The green roof will be supplied with soil and plants. The parts for the shade structure have been delivered and are awaiting installation. The new target date for the center's completion is sometime in mid to late December. Laurel will contact the Middlesex County Cultural and Heritage Commission to find out about possible grants and speakers for future programs to be held at the center.
 - b) New Jersey Community Water Watch Cleanup. Water Watch is having a cleanup at Valley Place Ravine on Saturday, November 18 from 12-3 PM. There is trash they can collect at the mouth of the stream. Arnold put yellow tape on shrubbery that needs to be removed.
 - c) Belle View (Cenacle Property). At our last meeting, we reviewed a proposal for 73 townhouses at the site. Mike submitted our list of comments to the Zoning Board, but they have not yet reviewed them. He also submitted the comments to Scott Luthman. One recommendation is that they do a Phase I archeological survey of the site before starting work to determine the presence of historical artifacts. Arnold will contact Jean Kolva to see if she can submit a request for an archeological survey, with specific reference to outbuildings and potential prehistoric artifacts. The applicant also submitted an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), which we reviewed. Tony will find out if the developer needs a wetlands permit. The Zoning Board's next meeting is Monday, November 27 at 7:30 PM in Borough Hall.
 - d) Rezoning of YM-YWHA Property. The Planning Board has not met to discuss this since our last meeting. An article published in The Home News Tribune on

November 11, discussed a suggestion by Freeholder H. James Polos that part of the property be used for open space. Polos has sent letters to the Y and the borough stating he would like the county to purchase a portion of the Y property along the river as open space. The county Master Plan seeks to have natural land all along the river. The borough will not address this concept unless it is proposed by the Y. A potential compromise could be having a shorter high-rise building, which, along with county open space funds, could provide enough money to build a new Y. We discussed this issue and decided to send a letter to both the mayor and council and to Polos emphasizing the area's natural quality, saying we would like to see the land along the river preserved as open space for public access and view of the river and that we are very supportive of the proposal and willing to help with implementing it. We will cc the letter to the Planning Board. In the letter, we will also question whether the Meyer Rice mansion could be preserved.

- e) Recreational Trail Grant. The official opening ceremony was held on October 27 at the Meadows with the Edison Wetlands Association. There was a tour of the trail to show what is there. The first section, the marked area of the trail, is now open. Arnold has blue flags up along the entire trail route. However, Edison Wetlands is encouraging people to use only the portion from the bikeway to the river that is marked with small tags saying "Highland Park Meadows."

6. New Business

- a) Laurel reported that Middlesex County is embarking on a new green initiative and will appoint an advisory committee to assist the Freeholders in this area. Also, Environment New Jersey, a group formed by NJPIRG, is focusing on outreach encouraging individuals to take action in their every day lives to fight global warming. It would be a good idea for us to tie in to the efforts of both these groups. Environment New Jersey is advocating municipalities pass a resolution officially adopting the Kyoto Protocol. Laurel will contact Joan to find out if Highland Park adopted such a resolution and if so, to request a copy for our files.
- b) Vikas Nanda, a new resident of Highland Park, brought photos he took of mushrooms and fungi around the borough, including in the Rutgers Ecological Preserve. We will put some of these photos on the Commission's web site.

- 7. The meeting adjourned at 9:32 PM. The next meeting of the Environmental Commission will take place on Wednesday, December 20 at 8 PM in Borough Hall.