

Highland Park Environmental Commission
Meeting of December 20, 2006
Meeting

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

1. The meeting was called to order at 8:15 PM.
2. The minutes of the November 15, 2006 meeting were approved.
3. Correspondence
 - a) We received a letter from NJDEP along with a booklet containing a Summary of Grant and Loan Programs, which they send out every year. We will look into coordinating with the borough in potentially applying for one of the grants.
 - b) We received a letter from ANJEC informing us of 2007 Planning Grants available to New Jersey municipalities from the Dodge Foundation. These are matching grants of up to \$20,000 for land use planning projects that protect open space, natural resources, and quality of life. ANJEC will mail applications to municipalities in mid-January.
 - c) We received a copy of a freshwater wetlands application sent by Menlo Engineering on behalf of Seth Gerzberg regarding property at 446 Harrison Avenue. A permit and/or approval is being requested to either establish a boundary of freshwater wetlands on the property or to authorize conduct of regulated activities on that property.
4. Site Plans: None
5. Old Business
 - a) Environmental Education Center Construction Update. Lots of progress since last month. The windows and doors have been installed and the shade structure frame is up. Soil has been placed on the building roof, and the fence around the area has been taken down. Topsoil has been brought in and the area is now being graded. Topsoil has also been brought in to Centennial Park, and plantings there are planned for March. Plans are in the works for an Earth Day Grand Opening of both the Environmental Education Center and Centennial Park.
 - b) New Jersey Community Water Watch. Water Watch held a cleanup at Valley Place Ravine on November 18. They had a good crowd of people taking part, most of whom were Rutgers students. The group picked up a lot of trash mostly from along the river.
 - c) Belle View (the Cenacle, 411 River Road). We submitted our comments on the application for this property, which Mike Rosenberg also read at the last Zoning Board meeting. Copies of our comments were distributed to all Zoning Board members, as they had not seen them yet. The Zoning Board approved the plan. The only one of our comments they considered was the one recommending an archeological survey for the site. Tony Puniello spoke in favor of the archaeological survey at the meeting as a professional archeologist. The Zoning Board only asked the applicant to provide a protocol to the borough for dealing with any artifacts found during digging. They did not require the applicant do an archeological study. Some minor adjustments were made to the final site plan for units close to L' Ambiance.
 - d) Rezoning of YM-YWHA Property. The Planning Board has discussion of the Y property on the agenda for its December 21 meeting. Mike obtained a copy of

Freeholder Jim Polos' letter to the borough offering county assistance in purchasing some of the Y property as open space. He reported that he spoke to the mayor about this and that she recommended we send a letter to the Y rather than to the borough. At Mike's recommendation, we will send the letter to the Y and copy the borough on it.

- e) Recreational Trail Grants. The official Meadow's trail now only goes to the Raritan River. It will eventually be a full loop.
6. New Business
- a) 2007 Meeting Calendar. Laurel noted that we need to come up with a calendar of meeting dates for 2007 and put the meeting schedule on our web site.
 - b) Gabi reported that leaves are being dumped in the flood plain in Donaldson Park. There are leaves there from years past in the area just below the community garden. This is not in compliance with flood hazard regulations. Mike will talk to Middlesex County Parks Superintendent Ralph Albanir about this.
 - c) Board of Health Walk. Laurel reported that the Board of Health is interested in sponsoring a health walk in the Meadows trail. We noted that the trail area is not very long and that the board should consider a longer route perhaps from one end of town to another. Jon suggested they organize a monthly health walk, designating a Healthy Fitness Day each month. The Environmental Commission could co-sponsor these events. Gabi also recommended that the walkers be given plastic bags to pick up litter along the route.
 - d) Environmental Stewardship Course. Laurel reported that the Rutgers Cooperative Extension is sponsoring an Environmental Stewardship Course, with weekly classes from January-June held in three separate parts of the state.
 - e) Showing of "An Inconvenient Truth" on January 25. Tina Weishaus plans to show the movie "An Inconvenient Truth" at the library on January 25 and said we might want to help publicize this.
 - f) Environmental Film Series. Mike recommended that the Environmental Commission consider sponsoring an environmental film series at Borough Hall, possibly tying each film in with a speaker. He will talk to Fern Goodhart, who will be our new council liaison, about proprietary issues in showing films. He noted that he also spoke to Tina Weishaus and representatives of the Board of Education, who noted there is a green education program in place to promote environmental education in the school community. They are looking at doing an environmental event in conjunction with Martin Luther King, Jr. Day. Mike suggested promoting increased recycling in the schools.
7. The meeting adjourned at 10:10 PM. The next meeting of the Environmental Commission will be on Wednesday, January 17, 2007 at 8 PM in Borough Hall.