

Highland Park Environmental Commission
Meeting of January 17, 2007
Minutes

Present: Michael Rosenberg, Jonathan Abrahams, Steve Barnes, Joan Ehrenfeld, Arnold Henderson, Anthony Puniello, Councilwoman Fern Goodhart
Absent: Gabor Grunstein, Mary Ellen Tuccillo
Guest: Allan Williams

1. The meeting was called to order at 8:15 PM.
2. The minutes of the December 20, 2006 meeting were reviewed and approved.
3. Steve Barnes was welcomed as a new member of the Environmental Commission. Laurel Kornfeld and Loren Muldowney were not reappointed to new terms. We thank both Laurel and Loren for their service.
4. The schedule of Environmental Commission meetings for 2007 was distributed. We will continue to meet on the third Wednesday of each month. No meeting in August. The schedule should also be posted on our web site.
5. Correspondence: None
6. Site Plans: The Commission is now once again receiving site plans for review. The Commission discussed preparing a handout (Tips for Applicants) similar to what we did in the past, and include green design, what types of plants to use for landscaping, etc. Joan and Steve will work on this project. If applicants receive this type of information before they begin preparing their application, rather than after the application and plan are already submitted, the likelihood is greater that they will take the advice.
 - a) VIC/TIM Investments
1202 Raritan Avenue
Block 106 Lot 3
Applicant is requesting approval to utilize existing single family house for office use and to add 6 parking spaces. No change to the exterior.
No Comments.
 - b) GN Builders
318 Cedar Ave.
Block 6 Lots 6 and 7
Applicant is seeking to subdivide the property (100x100 feet) and construct 2 conforming one family homes.
No Comments.
 - c) Kitisak Chokevakraikis
1142 Raritan Ave.
Block 97 Lot 7
Applicant wishes to change part of his garage to a living space to use as a home accounting office. Expansion of nonconforming residential use.
No Comments.

- d) Nikolaos Velmahos
21 North 4th Ave.
Block 143 Lot 26
Applicant is requesting approval to add a rec room and bathroom to a 2-family home that is an existing non-conforming use.
No Comments.
- e) Francis Parker Memorial Home
443 River Road
Block 189 Lo3
The applicant seeks to obtain relief from the Zoning Board to allow its daycare facility to accept children of persons other than staff members.
No Comments.
- f) Reformed Church of Highland Park
19-21 South Second Ave.
Block 22 Lot 29
Applicant is an existing church that wishes to add a second story addition and two small additions to the first story. Includes 6 bedrooms, offices, kitchen and library.
Comment: The outdoor light fixture should be designed to direct light downward to prevent spillage of light upwards and to adjacent properties.
- g) 433 Cleveland Avenue LLC
433 Cleveland Avenue
Block 191 Lot 6, Block 191.01 Lot 7.01, Block 154 Lots 6,7,8,9
Applicant proposes to subdivide Block 191 lot 6 and Block 191 lot 7.01 and merge a portion of these lands with Block 154 lots 6-9 to create 3 lots from the current 6 lots.
Comments: Keep Army Corps of Engineers flood-control project in mind. Stream buffers for Mill Brook must be maintained. Maintain a corridor for wildlife along the railroad tracks.

7. Old Business Items

- a) Environmental Education Center Construction Update. Tomco is almost finished with the construction. New plantings will take place in the spring. In some areas, we may be limited to shallow-rooted plants because of compacted soil conditions. Steve will contact MCUA about obtaining leaf compost for use at the site. Plans are in the works for an Earth Day (April 22) Grand Opening of both the Environmental Education Center and Centennial Park. A meeting of the Environmental Education Centers Working Group will be scheduled to discuss issues such as furniture for the center and future programming. We still need to obtain funding to pay for the solar panels on the shade structure.
- b) New Jersey Community Water Watch – More stream and trail cleanups will be held by NJ Community Water Watch in March and early April prior to Earth Day. A landscape architecture class at Rutgers has adopted Highland Park's Valley Place ravine for a student design project. The ravine project will be discussed at a class on March 7, from 12:30-2:00. Environmental Commission members are encouraged to attend.

- c) Rezoning of YM-YWHA Property. The Environmental Commission sent a letter to the YMHA expressing support of Freeholder James Polos' proposal which offered Middlesex County assistance in purchasing a portion of the Y property as open space. No response has been received yet from the Y. The Planning Board will continue discussion of the Y property in late February.
 - d) Environmental Film Series – The Environmental Commission will host a series of environmental films beginning on Saturday night February 10 with two screenings of “An Inconvenient Truth” a film by Al Gore, about global warming. There will be a 7:00 PM and a 10:00 PM showing at Borough Hall. Tina Weishaus will lead a group discussion after the movie. At least 3 additional environmental films are planned with a group discussion after each. Dates and movies still need to be finalized.
 - e) Recreational Trail Grants. The official Meadow's trail now only goes to the Raritan River. It will eventually be a complete loop, after additional portions of the trail are widened and made safer. The Edison Wetlands Association may be eligible for some new grants. Next step for Meadows is a Brownfield to Greenfield analysis.
8. New Business Items
- a) The National Wildlife Federation has a program for communities to get certified as a Community Wildlife Habitat. We can start by encouraging backyard wildlife habitats. Highland Park would need at least 2 schools, 3 workplaces and 100 private back yards to become certified.
 - b) The Highland Park Street Fair is scheduled for May 20th. The Commission will have a table display again.
 - c) Steve Barnes is working with Donna Como and is putting together environmental program for seniors.
 - d) Freecycle is a Middlesex County program that is an on-line materials exchange. It promotes reuse instead of recycling and lets you give unwanted things away to people who can use them.
 - e) Tina Weishaus is working with the Board of Education to promote environmental education in the school community and to encourage recycling in the schools.
9. The meeting adjourned at 10:25 PM. The next meeting of the Environmental Commission will be on Wednesday, February 21, 2007 at 8 PM in Borough Hall.