

Highland Park Environmental Commission

Meeting of October 17, 2007

Minutes

Present: Jonathan Abrahams, Steve Barnes, Arnold Henderson, Michael Rosenberg,
Mary Ellen Tuccillo, Allan Williams, Councilwoman Fern Goodhart
Absent: Gabor Grunstein, Joan Ehrenfeld, Anthony Puniello,
Guests: None

1. The meeting was called to order at 8:15 PM.
2. The minutes of the September 19, 2007 meeting were reviewed and approved.
3. Mary Ellen Tuccillo resigned as a member of the Environmental Commission. She is relocating out of state for new employment and we wish her well.
4. Correspondence: We received a copy of a public notice from PSE&G. They have submitted an application to NJDEP for modified freshwater wetlands statewide general permits #1, #2 & #21 for the installation and repair of PSE&G electrical delivery infrastructure within existing utility and road rights-of-way.

5. Site Plans: New Athens Corner
28 Woodbridge Avenue
Block 50 Lots 1,2, and 3

The applicant, an existing restaurant, is requesting permission from the Planning Board to build a sunroom over an existing patio area already used for outdoor dining. There is no change to the overall footprint and no change of impervious coverage. This is considered an exterior alteration. No Comments.

6. Old Business Items
 - a) Environmental Education Center – The EEC building has been officially turned over to the Borough and we should have a certificate of occupancy for the building any day now. According to the Fire Occupancy certificate, 19 is the maximum number of people in the building at any one time. Signs are still needed to identify the building for people passing by. Is there a budget for signs? Still need to get copy of plans, operating manuals, and details from MKW. Fern will ask Karen Waldron about this. Karen Swaine of STAC has volunteered to train DPW about how to weed the green roof. The Police Department is currently the keeper of the building's key. The key may be signed out by going to the Police Department and presenting identification. For reservations, we will use the current procedures for reserving rooms at the Senior/Youth center.
 - b) Midland Ross (Honeywell Site) Remediation – The remediation project is complete and the performance bond has been released. We should come up with recommendations for future use of the property. Honeywell paid the borough \$49,000 for new plantings.
 - c) Recreational Trail Grant Meadows – Still need to widen the trail and remove partially buried debris that may be an obstacle to hikers. Steve Barnes met with Dave Wheeler of Edison Wetlands Association (EWA). EWA is an invited partner for this project. Integrated pest management is being used for invasive species removal. Brian Marsh of the US Fish and Wildlife Service is helping with the invasive plant removal by spraying

for mugwort and cutting out escaped Japanese wisteria and exotic bush honeysuckle. These invasive plants are capable of overgrowing the trail and blotting out desirable native species. We will organize a day to have volunteers work on the invasives removal project. The recreational trail grant deadline is August 2008.

- d) Rezoning of Borough owned properties for Conservation –The Environmental Commission submitted a memo to Borough Council recommending rezoning of certain Borough owned properties adjacent to the Southside Bikeway, South 7th Avenue, Buck Woods Ravine, and Crowells Road. The Environmental Commission’s recommendation is to change the zoning from residential to conservation/recreation. Fern spoke with Mark Watson who is meeting with the Economic Development Committee. This item can be considered with new Master Plan review in 2008.
 - e) Highland Park Community Habitat Program – The National Wildlife Federation has a program for communities to get certified as a Community Wildlife Habitat. The Environmental Commission is sponsoring this project in Highland Park. The registration process is complete and we will be the third community in New Jersey registered. There are already 13 certified back yards in Highland Park. The next steps will be to prepare a brochure and to develop a web site which can be linked to the Environmental Commission web site. We all should certify our own backyards.
 - f) Recycling/Trash Collection – Fern made recommendations to the Public Works Committee that included more frequent recycling pickups, less frequent trash pickups, and a new policy for pickup of bulk items. The Environmental Commission supports this initiative. Disposal cost for trash this year is \$52 per ton. In 2008 the disposal cost will rise to \$54 per ton, another great incentive to increase recycling rates.
 - g) Tree Protection Ordinance - The new tree protection ordinance was passed at last night’s (Oct. 16) Borough Council meeting. The new ordinance includes provisions for protection of some privately owned trees.
 - h) A large group of people including several Highland Park residents attended a dusk hike sponsored by the Friends of the Rutgers Ecological Preserve and the Highland Park Environmental Commission.
7. The meeting adjourned at 10:20 PM. The next meeting of the Environmental Commission will be on Wednesday, November 21, 2007 at 8 PM in Borough Hall.