

Highland Park Environmental Commission

Meeting of December 19, 2007

Minutes

Present: Jonathan Abrahams, Steve Barnes, Anthony Puniello, Michael Rosenberg,
Allan Williams

Absent: Joan Ehrenfeld, Gabor Grunstein, Arnold Henderson

Guests: Susan Edmonds, Laurel Von Gerichten, Michael Petcov, Barry Weinberger,
Milo Schwab

1. The meeting was called to order at 8:15 PM.
2. The minutes of the November 21, 2007 meeting were reviewed and approved.
3. Correspondence:

We received a letter from ANJEC that they have received funding from the Geraldine Dodge Foundation to continue their Smart Growth Planning Grant Program in 2008. ANJEC will mail application packets to municipalities in mid-January 2008. The grants will be for new projects only and will focus on items such as open space preservation, master plan conservation elements, land use ordinances, and brownfields revitalization plans.

4. Mill Brook Situation Several residents of Grant Avenue came to the meeting to discuss a problem at Mill Brook. The problem is stream bank erosion. They received a proposal from Rutgers the Water Resources Program at The Rutgers Cooperative Extension has an initiative that works with municipalities to solve water resource related issues.

5. Site Plans:

Highland Park Conservative Temple
308 South Second Avenue
Block 16 Lot 15

The Zoning Board already approved this application, so it was not reviewed.

Avalon Bay Communities Inc.
Cleveland Avenue
Block 170, Lots 5 and 6

The applicant is requesting a use-variance approval from the Zoning Board. The property (currently Illuminating Experiences) is now zoned Light Industrial. The applicant's request would allow for construction of 178 rental dwelling units including one 4-story multi-family building containing 102 units, four 3-story 10-plex buildings each containing 10 units, 36 townhouses, clubhouse/lease office and swimming pool. The applicant is not currently seeking site plan approval, just rezoning and the plans submitted are concept plans only.

Comments: The proposed density is too high. Need a greater decrease of impervious coverage. Traffic issues and associated air pollution may pose a problem, Stormwater runoff from the site, where will it go? Are any retention basins proposed? What is the status of a new access road running through the Honeywell property to alleviate traffic from Cleveland Avenue? There are still residual soil contamination issues on the property. Honeywell must remediate it to residential standards.

6. Old Business Items

- a) Environmental Education Center – We now have a certificate of occupancy for the building. The Department of Public Works still needs to install the cabinets. Signs are still needed to identify the building for people passing by. Still need to get copy of plans, operating manuals, and details from MKW. Fern will ask Karen Waldron about getting the information. 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. We will hold future Environmental Commission meetings there.
 - b) Recreational Trail Grant Meadows – The lower meadows trail restoration project was initiated by a 2005 State grant. The trail still needs to be widened and partially buried debris removed. Integrated pest management is being used by the US Fish and Wildlife Service for invasive species (multi-flora rose, mugwort, bush honeysuckle) removal. These invasive plants are capable of overgrowing the trail and blotting out desirable native species. The recreational trail grant deadline is August 2008.
 - c) Highland Park Community Wildlife Habitat Program –The registration process is complete and we will be the third community in New Jersey registered. There are already 17 certified back yards in Highland Park. We all should certify our own backyards by going to the National Wildlife Federation's website. Highland Park already has 135 points for year number 1 of the project. We need 375 points total to certify. 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. January 18, kickoff date for the project. Steve Barnes will present a series of three workshops. The first one will be about invasive species and will be held at the Senior Center on January 23.
 - d) The Highland Park Green Community Plan (prepared by the New Jersey Sustainable State Institute) was presented to the Borough Council last night. Mike Rosenberg will email the report to members.
7. The meeting adjourned at 10:10 PM. The next meeting of the Environmental Commission will be on Wednesday, January 16, 2008 at 8 PM. Location to be announced.