

Highland Park Environmental Commission
Meeting of March 21, 2012
Minutes

Present: Michael Rosenberg, Jonathan Abrahams, Steve Barnes, Laurel Kornfeld, Karen Swaine, Allan Williams, Councilman Jon Erickson

1. The meeting was called to order at 8:12 PM.
2. The minutes of the February 15, 2012 meeting were approved with minor corrections.
3. Correspondence
 - a) We received copy of a letter from PSE&G, which they send annually, informing the borough that they can do line maintenance work in borough right of way areas.
4. Site Plans
 - a) New Police Station Building. We have a drawing of the proposed new police station building, which will be two stories high. The fire station will stay as it is. The new police station needs handicapped parking spots. We noted there is a large pin oak in front of the current police station and want that tree preserved. To preserve it, we suggest the two handicapped parking spaces be moved closer to the building. We need a minimum of eight feet from the parking lot to the trunk of the tree. Jon Erickson reported that the borough wants the building to be LEED certified. One of the parking strips will be covered with raised solar panels. The borough will bond for this project. We suggested the surface of the new parking lot be permeable. Karen will take a copy of the plan, and prepare another drawing in which the handicapped parking spots are placed in a more suitable location. We will then submit this drawing to Borough Administrator Kathy Kovach. We also recommend that all storm water runoff from the building and site be channeled to dry wells rather than into the town storm sewers.
5. Old Business
 - a) ERI Project Update. We have a CD with the final version of the ERI, which will be put on both the borough's web site and on the EC web site. The Planning Board will memorialize its resolution accepting the ERI in April. Allan has all the hard copies of the ERI, and he sent one to the county Planning Board. Because the ERI was approved by our Planning Board, it is now part of the borough's Master Plan. The final check to Debbie Kratzer of Kratzer Environmental Services will be mailed out tomorrow. We now have to send a report, including a listing of checks, to ANJEC, so we can get the \$8,400 in grant money for this project. Mike said he will call Debbie and thank her on behalf of the Commission.
 - b) Lower Raritan River Access Project—Resolution and Pamphlets. Allan sent everyone a copy of the resolution the Environmental Commission is recommending to the Council for adoption. The resolution supports the Lower Raritan River Access Project, an ANJEC initiative. ANJEC has copies of draft pamphlets to publicize this effort, which we could hand out at public events. We want the pamphlets to list the Environmental Commission as readers' first source for more information. Kerry Miller of ANJEC wants to finalize the pamphlets so we have them in time for the borough's April 22 Earth and Health Fair.

- c) Meadows Trail. We have four things to do this year: trail maintenance, finishing the lower portion of the trail, putting up signs showing people where to go and where not to go, redoing the bulletin board at the trail head, and creating a new trail head entrance. The Water Watch cleanup has been rescheduled for March 31, and we expect about 75 Rutgers students to participate. We're starting to spend the trail grant money and have arranged to purchase \$200 worth of tools. Next Tuesday, the landscape architect will go over the design she first gave us and will present a new design in line with our desire to make the trail more rustic. We're waiting for the tools to be delivered and to hear from a contractor who will be doing grading in the lower trail. We noted the drainage pattern along the route to the WCTC tower has changed. DPW has deposited a pile of woodchips under the fence along the bike path; the pile is acting like a berm. We may schedule a work day at the trail in May. Any Eagle Scouts who need a project could work on signs. Another idea discussed is placing a free-standing osprey tower about 25 feet high, on a telephone pole.

We would like interpretive signs in various areas explaining how the area came to be the way it is. Another idea is a possible trail to the upper plateau. We would need an easement of 20-25 feet along the edge of the upper plateau designated for conservation. The area is currently zoned residential, as are five or six lots on either edge of the bike trail. There is debris on the upper plateau because DPW is not using best practices high for the materials staging area. Allan questioned whether we could get reports from the DEP on any contamination at the site.

- d) Buck Woods. Tim Coyle sent a letter back to JSM with comments from the Environmental Commission, with copies sent to STAC, CME Associates, and the Borough Planner. The next move is up to JSM. Karen said she contacted the New Jersey Conservation Foundation about the possibility of their purchasing the property, but they are not interested.
- e) Cleveland Avenue Developments. Everything has been delayed, including the judgment and the court dates. We noted a new independent web site for borough news is now active at <http://www.highlandparknjnews.wordpress.com> .
- f) Riparian Buffer Conservation Zone Ordinance. Allan reported that the Council changed the ordinance to include all streams mapped by the Environmental Commission. CME needs to update the map to include the streams we listed, and they have been instructed by the Borough Administrator to do so.
- g) Audubon Citizen Science Project. Allan reported that a training session will be held on Thursday, March 29 from 4-8 PM at the Environmental Education Center.
- h) Environmental Film Festival. This is scheduled for the fall, and Sustainable Highland Park will organize it. There will be an environmental film shown at Borough Hall on the evening of Earth Day, April 22.

6. New Business

- a) Earth Day April 22. ANJEC is putting together a display about the Lower Raritan River Access Project for the Earth and Health Fair, and we will receive copies to display. Sustainable Highland Park is doing a big push for the "It's In Our Power" program at this event, which will be held at Highland Park High School on Sunday, April 22 from 1-4 PM.

- b) Annual Highland Park Street Fair. Discussion tabled to next meeting.
 - c) Water Conservation Ordinance. Several years ago, the borough passed a Water Conservation Ordinance requiring people to limit watering their lawns to twice a week. That requirement was changed from mandatory to voluntary. Matt Kaplan has approached the Council recommending it be changed back to mandatory because the borough would get points for sustainability if it is made mandatory. There is a question here of water use versus having a water conservation ordinance.
 - d) Small Wind Generators. Matt Kaplan also approached the Council with an ordinance that would regulate where small wind generators could be sited in town. Karen noted these make a lot of noise. Jon Erickson said the Commission should look at this ordinance and decide if it is appropriate for Highland Park. Allan has a draft of such an ordinance sent to him by someone at The College of New Jersey, and he will send copies to all of us.
7. The meeting adjourned at 10:50 PM. The next meeting of the Environmental Commission will take place on Wednesday, April 18 at 8 PM in the Environmental Education Center.