

Highland Park Environmental Commission
Meeting of September 19, 2012
Minutes

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

Guests: Pat McKenna, Sital Patel, Sara Wenger

1. The meeting was called to order at 8 PM.
2. The minutes of the July 18, 2012 meeting were approved.
3. Correspondence
 - a) We received a copy of a letter from NJDEP regarding a request for a flood hazard zone delineation at the Castle property. The delineation was requested by the Kaplan organization, which owns the property. Kaplan has already made a presentation to the Borough Council about its plans to build condos on the site. Any development will have to abide by the required buffers.
 - b) We received notice that the A&P Distribution Center in Edison has received a Flood Hazard permit in order to install new storm drains. They will be installed in the section of Mill Brook where Rutgers has a culvert. The notice included a copy of A&P's request to DEP for a freshwater wetlands permit and for stream encroachment.
4. Site Plans
 - a) Donald and Judith Monk
102 North Fourth Avenue
Docket #: No. 212-03
Block 159, Lot 23

The applicant wants to add a deck in the back of a single-family residence. This is going to the Zoning Board because variances are being sought for both sides. No comments.

5. Old Business
 - a) 7-11 Application on Old Sunoco Site. In our last memo, we asked the applicant for a map of the location where they did previous soil sampling. So far, the applicant has not responded. Allan said he will raise this issue at tomorrow night's Planning Board meeting. They responded to our previous memo but did not address all our concerns in it. They did agree to conduct air monitoring under the building in order to detect contaminants. Discussion will continue at tomorrow night's meeting, and Allan expects it to go on for another two or three meetings, as many members of the public want to comment. A new group called Highland Park Future hired a lawyer who has questions for the applicant on several issues, especially that of curb cuts on Raritan Ave.
 - b) Y Property. Allan looked at the new concept plan, which still calls for 23 units, of which 21 will be market rate, and two will be affordable. The building locations were moved to 30 feet from the steep slope; our ordinance requires they be at least 100 feet from it. The developer is willing to grant a greenway easement going from the waterline all the way to the top of the slope. A homeowners' association would be responsible for maintaining the steep slope and keeping it clean. Steve recommended that we and the Shade Tree Advisory Committee meet with the homeowners'

association to work out a management plan for the area. This could be made a condition for approval of the site plan. The NJDOT owns the retaining wall along Raritan Avenue, so the developer cannot do anything with it. The borough can apply to the DOT to do improvements to the wall under an agreement with the developer, with the developer doing the work. The developer also agreed to perform an archeological study, which will be submitted along with the site plan. The new concept plan is dated July 3, yet the Commission did not see it until tonight. The site plan will also be reviewed by the Zoning Board.

- c) Bee Hives for the Native Plant Reserve. The Middlesex County Utilities Authority (MCUA) has an easement here and previously had a bad experience with someone having been stung by bees. We want the hives situated at least 75 feet from the area where the MCUA does maintenance and want to make sure they are not close to the road. The hives will be in freestanding boxes. Sara Wenger noted they need to be placed behind a high fence and that the temperature has to be below 47 degrees F to move them. The Shorrs, who now have the hives at their home, will maintain them. We are concerned about potential vandalism, which is why we recommend placement of a six-foot high chain link fence around the hive area. It is uncertain whether the Commission will participate in putting up this fence. The Council has approved locating the hives here, but we don't know who will pay for it. Allan is meeting with the Shorrs tomorrow to pick appropriate spots. He will also ask what their recommendation is for the enclosure. We will also need warning signs; this is a condition the Council imposed. We would like to add educational signs as well. Allan will find out whether there are any additional requirements in writing from the Council. The Shorrs have said they will give the honey away rather than sell it. Information on the hives can be disseminated through the schools.
- d) Meadows/Trail Update. Allan and Steve put in about 30 hours at the site this summer, mostly weeding and mowing. We have two estimates for the trail head entrance and grading of the new portion of the trail and expect a third estimate tomorrow. If we move quickly, we can select the best estimate, get approval from the borough, and get the work done this year. We need to receive at least three estimates and choose the lowest bid to move forward. We have a rough plan from Eleanor James. All runoff will be routed into the existing storm drain. If we can complete the work this year, it will settle in over the winter, and we can have a ribbon cutting ceremony in the spring.
- e) Riparian Map. The riparian map is completed, correcting the previous one. It took slightly over a year to do and cost \$1,000, which was paid by the borough. The map shows waterways along with the required 50-foot buffers on each side and is overlaid on top of the zoning map.
- f) ERI. Debbie Kratzer and Allan gave a presentation to the Middlesex County Water Resources Association about what is included in the ERI. *ANJEC Report* published Allan's article about the ERI process.
- g) Raritan River Festival. We agreed to have a table at the festival, which will be this Sunday, September 23 at Boyd Park in New Brunswick from 12-4 PM.
- h) Harbor Estuary Program. The EPA New York/New Jersey Harbor Estuary Program chose three sites in Middlesex County to examine the impact of rising ocean levels and determine the protective measures that can be taken in response. One of the sites is in

Donaldson Park. They will write up a report of recommendations. We don't know the terms of the grant at this point.

6. New Business

- a) Memo requesting the Environmental Commission receive site plan applications at the same time as other borough professionals. No response yet from the borough.
- b) Break-in at the Environmental Education Center. We had a break-in at the center some time between July 18 and 24. Karen discovered the evidence when the Native Plant Society had a meeting here. Vandals sprayed the fire extinguisher, and both front door locks were broken. Mike has a copy of the police report, which describes the crime as burglary and criminal mischief. Everything has since been cleaned and repaired except we don't yet have a new fire extinguisher. We commended DPW for doing a very good job cleaning up.
- c) Eagle Scout Project. Yair White did a survey of storm sewer catch basins for his Eagle Scout project. He identified all storm drains on the north side and put stickers on them; he also made sure the DEP has an accurate database. He is still working on the project and plans to get GPS coordinates for each location.
- d) Work Day. We want to have a work day at either the Meadows, the Native Plant Reserve or Valley Place Ravine in late October or early November. The ravine at the end of the Native Plant Reserve, where it meets the park, is a possible trash cleanup site. We discussed the option of replanting the irises dug up near the Senior Center. No date or site has yet been selected.
- e) Livingston Manor Pathways. Jon received a notice about the installation of the pathways in the Livingston Manor area, along with a map of the area. The project is being put out to bid. There will be a public meeting to inform residents in this area. We already reviewed the plans. Sidewalks will be placed in the little park between Madison and North Fourth Avenues.
- f) Mosquito Spraying. Using a pickup truck, the county sprayed in late August, about 6-8 feet off the ground. Allan noted people can opt out of the spraying by contacting the Mosquito Control Commission.
- g) A dead rabid bat was found on Valentine Street. This was the third rabid creature found in Middlesex County.

7. The meeting adjourned at 9:30 PM. The next meeting of the Environmental Commission will be on Wednesday, October 17 at 8 PM in the Environmental Education Center.