

Highland Park Environmental Commission
Meeting of December 19, 2012
Minutes

Present: Michael Rosenberg, Steve Barnes, Laurel Kornfeld, Karen Swaine, Allan Williams, Council liaison Padraic Millet

1. The meeting was called to order at 8:14 PM.
2. The minutes of the November 21, 2012 meeting were approved with minor corrections.
3. Correspondence
 - a) PSE&G sent us a copy of its annual notice to municipal and county officials applying for a freshwater general permit, enabling them to do maintenance work in right-of-way areas.
 - b) We received an invoice for 2013 ANJEC membership. The fee is \$290. We agreed to continue our membership for another year and to pay an additional \$60 to be part of their workshop plan, so Commission members can attend the workshops for free. Allan will take care of the purchase order.
4. Proposed Meeting Dates for 2013. We decided to change our monthly meeting day to the first Wednesday of the month, starting with February 6. This would put our meetings before the monthly meetings of the Zoning and Planning Boards. We will have no meeting in January. The only first Wednesday that is a problem is in September due to a Jewish holiday; we will reschedule that meeting. Allan will send Joan Hullings a copy of our meeting dates.

5. Site Plans

- a) Chi-Chiang Wang
74 Lawrence Avenue
Docket No.: #Z12-09
Block and Lot: B-175, L-5

The applicant seeks to build a larger two-family house than the one currently on the site. The lot is undersized at 4,000 square feet, and the property has a steep slope in the backyard. The application contains a steep slope analysis and proposes to add a retaining wall in order to have a flat surface. The borough planner asked the applicant to consider a conservation easement on the remaining steep slopes, restriction against parking in the front yard, and restriction to a single-family use. The applicant must specify what the retaining wall will be made of. Because the proposed new house has a much larger footprint, storm water runoff is a concern. The applicant should put something in to retain storm water on site.

Comments: Put a dry well on the site. We need a better description of the retaining wall, including the materials to be used. We recommend vegetated gabions.

- b) Francine and Harold Glazer
133 North 10th Avenue
Docket No: #Z2-10
Block and Lot: B130-48

The applicant proposes a one-story addition in the back of the house, which would almost double the footprint of the house. The application is before the Zoning Board, as three variances are being sought—for building coverage, impervious lot coverage (the proposal would result in 46 percent impervious coverage), and minimum distance between buildings (the ordinance requires 20 feet; the application proposes 13 feet).

Comments: The applicant should add a dry well, so 100 percent of the additional stormwater runoff from the proposed new construction is retained on site.

6. Old Business

- a) Raritan River Access Signage. The sign is in the Environmental Education Center. As Padraic recommended, we will install now and have a ribbon-cutting ceremony in the spring.
- b) 27 Brookdale Court Application. The applicant requested a Letter of Interpretation from DEP. We have a copy of this and of their freshwater wetlands permit application. At the December 17, Zoning Board meeting, the applicant's attorney said they will comply with the borough's tree ordinance. There are nine trees the applicant wants to take down that are not in the building footprint. Based on the diameter of these trees, the Shade Tree Advisory Committee will recommend the number of replacement trees the applicant must plant. The applicant can choose instead to pay into the borough tree fund. The plan does indicate where the wetlands are located. The borough planner recommended a conservation easement for the steep slope and keeping the home as a one-family home; the applicant agreed to these conditions. However, the application still does not provide definitions for re-grading, replanting, and natural conditions. They need to provide these. Any disturbance to the site has to return it to the condition it's in now or to a previous, better condition. Zoning Board chair Judy Richman asked Allan to write up a general description of our riparian buffer ordinance she can refer to regarding this case.
- c) The Crossing at Highland Park. This is the name of the site plan for the Honeywell property. The plan has been submitted; now the question is whether it should go to the Zoning Board or Planning Board. Some of the proposed homes are higher than they should be according to the ordinance.
- d) Pulte Park and Historical Monument Status. Pulte has not yet put up the historical monument or showed any commitment to doing so.
- e) Signage for Environmental Education Center. The sign is supposed to say, "Eugene Young Environmental Education Center: Borough of Highland Park." Its dimensions should be proportional to the dimensions of the building wall. Karen will draw up a schematic for the sign.
- f) Meadows Trail. Council passed a resolution for Garden State Landscaping to do the work in two phases. The first is grading the trail, which will probably be done in January. The second is beautifying the trail entrance, which will be done in the spring. Allan and Steve will be present at all times when the work is being done. The grading will take two days. The contractor will also remove trees felled by Hurricane Sandy. We could use Eagle Scout projects to relocate another section of the trail and make additional trail improvements. These would require another grant.
- g) Meadows Property Rezoning. Padraic will ask the Council to review this option. We would like to have the county buy Buck Woods from Jack Morris for open space. This would establish a contiguous open area. The Council has to petition the

Planning Board to change the zoning for the Meadows; then, the planner has to review the proposal and write it up.

- h) Proposed 711. The Planning Board hearing on this continues tomorrow night at 7:30 PM. The lawyer representing Highland Park Future and BB Big's lawyer will cross-examine the applicant's witnesses. The owner of BB Big is objecting to the proposal and will present arguments why the 711 is not a good idea. It looks like the application may be voted on in February.
7. New Business
- a) Rutgers Deer Hunt. Rutgers is holding a bow and arrow deer hunt in the Rutgers Ecological Preserve from December 22-January 18 with the goal of removing 25 antlerless deer, mostly mature does. The hunt will take place only in Piscataway. Between 10 and 15 pre-qualified hunters will participate. No signs are currently up about the hunt; we might want to put notice of it on the borough website as a precaution. While the Rutgers website has notice of the hunt, no official communication about it was made to the Environmental Commission. This is an active birding area, so someone could be there at that time doing a bird count.
 - b) Keys to Environmental Education Center. Mary Denver, chair of the Highland Park chapter of the Native Plant Society, wants a key. STAC has not been given a key to the Center; Padraic recommended giving keys to Carol Avelsgaard and Karen. Giving Karen a key will mean the Commission won't have to go to the Police Department before every meeting to get a key and then return it that same night. STAC members will get official borough IDs because they do work around town.
 - c) Rutgers Scholars Program Water Monitoring of the Raritan River. Heather Fenyk of the New Brunswick Environmental Commission sent Allan an email asking if we want to participate in a water-monitoring program for the Raritan run by Rutgers juniors and seniors. The program is being organized by a professor and will be funded by a grant. Steve recommended the professor send us a letter describing the program so we can determine whether we want to be part of the grant application.
 - d) Bee Hives. The president of the Raritan Valley Beekeepers' Association sent a letter recommending use of a four-foot fence, six inches at the bottom, in response to Udi Shorr asking the association to review his proposal. They said the proposal sounds good, and the security is appropriate. Padraic will review the proposal with the borough attorney. A question arose as to whether the Commission wants to use some of its 2012 funds to help pay for this. We have \$200 left. Udi Shorr will pay the rest of the cost. We agreed to provide the \$200; the money will have to be encumbered by borough administrator Kathy Kovach.
8. The meeting adjourned at 10 PM. The next meeting of the Environmental Commission will take place at 8 PM on Wednesday, February 6, 2013 in the Environmental Education Center.