

**Highland Park Environmental Commission**  
Meeting of December 4, 2013  
Minutes

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

1. The meeting was called to order at 8:10 PM.
2. The minutes of the November 6, 2013 meeting were approved with minor changes.
3. Correspondence
  - a) We received a copy of a request for an LOI dated October 31, 2013, sent to the DEP by Eastern State Environmental Associates, the environmental firm representing the developer of the Illuminating Experiences/American Properties site at 233 Cleveland Ave.
4. Site Plan
  - a) Francis Parker Memorial Home  
1421 River Road  
Docket No.: Z13-03  
Block and Lot: B 189, L 03

Parker at Stonegate, the assisted living facility, is applying to the Zoning Board for 45 additional parking spaces. They will pay into the borough's tree fund because several trees will have to be cut down. The retaining wall will be pushed further back. They do have a stormwater management plan and will need to present expert testimony stating that the additional parking spaces do not impact that plan. Adding these 45 spaces will put the site at 49.85 percent impervious coverage; the ordinance allows a maximum of 50 percent. We noted the drainage is all downhill and pools onto River Road. We also noted they have an underground stormwater retention system directly below the parking area.

Comments: Eliminate the proposed seven parking spaces in the center. Provide either additional retention capacity or a non-structural stormwater management plan. What is the justification for the change (additional parking spaces) from the original plan?

5. Old Business
  - a) Environmental Commission Mission Statement. Allan put together a new draft mission statement with some changes from our current one. We reviewed it and made comments. Steve noted our goals may have an effect on our mission statement.
  - b) Environmental Commission Goals. Mike found and distributed our goals list for 2011, and we discussed which ones to keep and which no longer apply. We completed the ERI and implementation of the 2011 Meadows trail grant. Since we have three vacant positions (two alternates and one regular member), recruitment of new members should be one of our goals. Others goals discussed include physical improvements to the Environmental Education Center; programs for the Environmental Education Center; formulation of an open space plan based on our Open Space Inventory; planning for the Raritan River greenway, which the county is already addressing; updating the Open Space Inventory; public outreach, including a Commission page on the borough's website; creating opportunities for community involvement in Commission activities and encouraging participation. Mike will put together a new list of goals, which he will circulate to us.

c) Meadows Trail. Allan and Steve cleared deadwood from trees overhanging the trail. The deadwood needs to be stacked up into brush piles. They planted milkweed, goldenrod, and black walnut seeds. Our equipment is now put away for the winter. Brian Marsh of the US Fish and Wildlife Office will revisit the trail next Tuesday. Christine Hale of the Natural Resources Conservation Services assigned her staff members to help put together a conservation plan for the Meadows and for other areas. These plans will be sent to us as soon as possible.

d) Redevelopment Update. The November Planning Board meeting was canceled. The next Planning Board meeting will be on December 19; at that meeting, the Board will memorialize the resolution designating Buck Woods and both the Upper and Lower Meadows as areas in need of redevelopment. After that, the Borough Council has to formally accept the resolution and then have a planner come up with an assessment and redevelopment plan for these sites.

e) Plastic Bags. Karen is looking into the option of banning plastic bags in the borough.

f) Environmental Center Signage. Padraic asked the borough's communications office to look into this. We want to make sure all borough signage has a similar look. Feedback on the sign from the communications office should be available at the next Borough Council meeting. We are still pursuing the goal of getting solar panels for the site.

g) Pump House. A roofer is scheduled to complete repair of the pump house roof this month. We currently store tools in there.

h) Rutgers Scholars Project Water Quality Monitoring Program. Allan expects to get a draft proposal for the project by this weekend.

## 6. New Business

a) Potential Dangers of Wood Burning Smoke. The Borough Council received an email from a resident about the dangers of wood burning smoke and the question as to whether the smoke produces carcinogens. The council has asked the Environmental Commission to provide more information on this, including possible dangers. We need to find out which communities have banned wood burning smoke and how they did this. It isn't clear whether the possible ban would apply to fireplaces or only to wood burning stoves. Steve noted that a fire burned properly emits a low amount of carcinogens. He added that the Commission should think about potential impacts on our air quality. There are currently very few regulations for wood burning stoves in private residences. We need EPA air quality data to determine whether wood burning smoke is a problem in the borough. Padraic noted that at minimum, the borough could educate residents about the dangers of improper burning. We could ask DPW to publicize information about how to clean chimneys properly.

b) Next Meeting. The first Wednesday of January is New Year's Day, so we cannot meet then. Instead, we decided to have a joint meeting with the Shade Tree Advisory Committee on January 8, the second Wednesday of the month (and STAC's regular meeting day) at 8 PM in the Environmental Education Center.

c) 2014 Meetings Calendar. We decided to continue meeting the first Wednesday of the month at 8 PM. The first Wednesday in June conflicts with a Jewish holiday, so we will hold another joint meeting with the Shade Tree Advisory Committee on June 11, the second Wednesday of that month.

## 7. The meeting adjourned at 9:41 PM. The next meeting of the Environmental Commission will be a joint meeting with STAC and will take place on Wednesday, January 8, 2014 at 8 PM in the Environmental Education Center.