

**Highland Park Environmental Commission**  
Meeting of April 2, 2014  
Minutes

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

Guests: Belinda Beetham, Mary Denver

- 1) The meeting was called to order at 8:13 PM.
- 2) The minutes of the March 5, 2014 meeting were approved with minor clarifications.
- 3) Correspondence: None
- 4) Site Plans
  - a) Highland Cliffs, LLC (former Y property)  
2 South Adelaide Avenue  
Block: 1, Lot: 1.01  
Docket No.: Z14-01

The developer submitted a bifurcated application for preliminary major site plan for three buildings, each two-and-a-half stories high, for a total of 23 residential townhouse units. He has already obtained preliminary major subdivision approval from the Zoning Board and is seeking D3 conditional variances. The application includes a storm water plan featuring a filtration device. This requires a variance because it does not match the requirements for townhouses. Allan pointed out two issues of concern. The first is that the required archeological study of the site is not done yet. The Zoning Board has stated they will not consider the final application until the study is complete. The second concern is that the developer did not provide any proposal for an easement at the top or bottom of the cliff after having agreed to do so. An existing drainage pipe emerges in the middle of the cliff, and a Middlesex County sewer goes under the property. The developer proposes a 25-foot buffer from the bluff. They did not provide a tree plan, which is required, or a count of the number of trees that will have to be replaced. A plant list is included with the application; some plants on it are native while some are not. They did conduct a traffic study. We noted that DOT owns the retaining wall along Raritan Avenue. We want to see the easement, the archeological study, and the tree plan. Steve requested that STAC inform the Commission as to their recommendation about trees on the site.

- b) Kaplan & Sons Construction Corp.  
433 River Road  
Block 189, Lot 4  
Docket No. P2014-01

The developer is proposing to build four buildings with a total of 96 apartments and a clubhouse. The development, called Merriewold, will have four three-bedroom apartments and 100 two-bedroom apartments. Trees marked with ribbons and numbers are those the developer plans to remove. Karen noted STAC will need permission to walk around and study the property.

Comments: There is a storm water detention basin proposed for the site. The detention basin should not have a cement channel along the bottom and should be vegetated and not mowed. In addition, the storm water Operation and Maintenance Manual is very general and without specific practices. The developer should vegetate the outside of the retaining wall with shrubs, specifically

the Virginia Creeper. It is not clear if the proposed development is in compliance with the Steep Slope Ordinance. The proposed plan is not in compliance with the tree ordinance and should be revised.

## 5. Old Business

a) Honeywell Site Remediation/Air Monitoring Data. Mike sent Jon the data for the last days of asbestos abatement, March 19-20, for placement on our website. The next stage involves crushing concrete and will take approximately three weeks.

b) Conservation Plan for Meadows. Steve is still waiting for a response from the Natural Resources Conservation Center. We want to know when their representatives plan on visiting the site.

c) National Recreational Trail Grants. The DEP initially said it would not distribute grants for the year 2013-2014, but subsequently decided to award them later in the year. ANJEC sent a sample draft application letter, which the mayor is willing to sign if it is made specific to Highland Park. Grants of up to \$25,000 will be awarded; the deadline to apply is September. We agreed to apply for a grant and are still considering whether it should be for the Meadows, the Native Plant Reserve, or Valley Place Ravine and just what the scope of the application will be.

d) Environmental Education Center Identification Signage. Allan has seen the mockup and made a recommendation as to where it should be placed. We are also moving forward on lighting and a motion sensor. We noted that a Rutgers group applied to the Middlesex County Planning Commission for a Park Partners grant to create murals on local retaining walls, including those on the Environmental Education Center. We have some reservations about this. Commission and STAC members need to speak to Council members Gayle Mittler, Gary Potts, and Padraic Millet if we don't like this idea. We want to see what the student group proposes. They will draw sketches, which should be reviewed by the Commission, STAC, and Sustainable Highland Park. We noted that Sherwin Williams is willing to donate the paint, but there is no money to pay the artists. Allan met with members of STAC and Sustainable Highland Park to discuss possible locations for the trail. The next step is delineating a proposed route and determining what plants are currently there. Representatives of all three groups will hold another meeting and walk through the area when it is green. Everyone is excited to have a butterfly garden. Sustainable Highland Park could also use funds they have as part of a match for the National Recreational Trails Grant.

e) Pump House Repair. Nothing has been started yet.

f) Fencing for Native Plant Reserve. The front fence is broken and needs to be replaced. Karen recommended we replace it with a new split rail fence.

g) ANJEC Dues. The Commission has paid ANJEC dues for 2014.

h) Pulte Overlook Development. The historical monument has been put in. Allan showed us a picture of it. Pulte had promised we would get a chance to review the sign before it was finalized, and they did not follow through on this.

i) Environmental Commission Website. Allan updated the air sampling information on the Honeywell project four times. We are receiving a lot of requests asking for information about how to build trail benches.

## 6. New Business

- a) Earth Day Activities. Sustainable Highland Park is running this event. The Commission and STAC have been invited, and the Native Plant Society will also be there. The main Earth Day celebration will be on Sunday, April 27 from 11 AM-3 PM at the Environmental Education Center and will include musical groups, food vendors and exhibits. This is a good opportunity to recruit volunteers. We will have our own display as well. We noted the sink in the building does not work. Before the event, we need to make sure the bathroom and sink are both working. Allan will contact DPW about this.
  - b) Sustainable Highland Park Cleanup of Native Plant Reserve. This will take place on Saturday, April 19. We will try to organize another cleanup the first or second Sunday in May.
  - c) May 18 Street Fair. We will not have a table at the street fair. For other programming events, Jon recommended we have workshops on composting, beekeeping, rain barrels, and attracting birds. Allan noted there will be a rain barrel display at the Earth Day event and suggested we purchase rain barrels at a discount from the county.
- 7) The meeting adjourned at 10:10 PM. The next meeting of the Environmental Commission will take place on Wednesday, May 7, 2014 at 8 PM in the Environmental Education Center.