

**Highland Park Environmental Commission**  
Meeting of October 1, 2014  
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 September 3, 2014 meeting were approved with minor corrections.
3. Correspondence – None
4. Site Plans
  - a) Emmanuel Zachariah  
1415 Central Avenue  
Block 102, Lot 10  
Docket No.: Z14-05  
The applicant is adding a second floor with no footprint change, and is seeking one front yard setback variance and two side-yard setback variances.  
No comments.
  - b) Aharon Grossman  
1602 Central Avenue  
Block 110, Lot 11  
Docket No.: Z14-04  
The applicant is adding a second floor to a one-story house at the corner of Central and Seville Avenues. The Borough Planner said it is actually a third floor because the attic is too high. A small section of the property that is now open will be closed, increasing the amount of impervious coverage from 47 percent to 47.5 percent. The applicant is seeking five variances, including one for impervious coverage. Allan noted the applicant has already made some changes since submitting the application.  
No Comments.
5. Old Business
  - a) Kaplan Castle Application. Kaplan agreed to make the modifications to the retention basin requested by the Environmental Commission. They are moving the sewage pump house outside of the steep slope/riparian buffer area. They do not want to replace the trees that will be cut down or pay the appropriate amount into the borough's tree fund, as required by our ordinance, and requested this be made a provision in the development agreement, claiming there is a precedent. The Planning Board can require Kaplan to follow the tree ordinance.
  - b) Highland Cliffs/Former YM-YWHA Property. The Zoning Board approved a preliminary site plan. The borough and the developer entered an agreement to request a DOT permit to clean the retaining wall, paint it, and put the borough logo on it. Since then, someone has painted the wall. The DOT said they did not paint it. Karen met with Schechtel and the developer's landscape architects. They agreed to go with STAC's recommendations for plantings. The Zoning Board also approved the logo for the development.

- c) Pulte Property/The Crossing. Pulte now has a sales trailer on the site. Dust is still blowing during construction activities. Padraic agreed to raise the issue with Borough Administrator Kathy Kovach. A tractor trailer started working at 7:30 AM on a Saturday even though the ordinance says such work cannot begin until 8 AM on weekends. The Chief of Police advised Karen to call him if this happens again. All the units on this site are ownership, but the owners will be allowed to rent them out.
- d) Illuminating Experiences. Allan reported that the borough and the developer are close to an agreement ending the litigation. There will be a public meeting, known as a Fairness Hearing, on this before anything goes to the Planning Board.
- e) Pulte/Overlook Development. The Borough Council asked STAC to look at the trees and shrubs planted at Overlook, as there are many dead trees and shrubs at the site. They are trying to find a copy of the original developer's agreement in which release of the performance bond to Pulte was made conditional on their following our tree ordinance in either replacing trees cut down or contributing to the borough's tree fund.
- f) Environmental Education Center/Native Plant Reserve. The door to the Center has a problem locking, which is a security issue. A purchase order was issued to fix the door. Padraic met with the electrical contractor to discuss outdoor lighting and motion sensors for the site. The lighting will illuminate the exterior of the building. He will also ask DPW to pick up garbage at the site at regular intervals. The fence repair may not get done this year. The pump house has no electric power; the electrical box is disconnected and the main feed to the building cut. We would like the building to have lights again. Regarding the murals proposed for the Center's walls, we noted that the original concept for the Center was that it blends into the environment. Unfortunately, there was no money to do the proposed stone facing on the walls. STAC members met with the mayor to discuss planting native plants that are indigenous to the area and therefore historic. She liked the idea and said there is \$150,000 in the Historic Trust Fund for which we can apply. Mike noted we need to apply using a historic angle. Steve said native plants were historically found on the banks of the Raritan and agreed to come up with a list of historic species. The murals will be unveiled on Sunday, October 26.
- g) Meadows Trail. We have 13 volunteers on the Meadows Trail team who have put in a total of about 150 hours of work on the site since the last introductory meeting in September. This equates to more than \$2,000 of in-kind services. Working Saturdays and Sundays, the volunteers cleared about 1500 square feet of mugwort and replanted the area with milkweed seeds from plants already present; they did this in several locations. They also will plant black walnut seeds. Mary Denver and Belinda Beetham planted white pines and are taking care of them. The volunteers also picked up trash along the trail. We want the Council to pass a resolution recognizing them for their efforts. Steve will send Padraic a list of volunteer names and talking points. Jon would like to have a work day in November. We plan to have them year-round. In cold months, work will be limited to cleaning the trail. We noted more people are using the trail than ever before. The bike path fence repairs, which will cost about \$800, will not be done this year. We have not yet heard anything further about the National Trails Recreation Grant; so far, applications have not been made available on the web site. We also have not heard back from the Natural Resources Conservation Center because they are busy doing paid work in Manalapan.
- h) Environmental Commission Domain Name. We have a domain name, and Leora will continue working on this.

6. New Business

- a) Environmental Commission Facebook Page. Jonathan controls this. We should post scheduled Meadows Trail work days on the page. Steve recommended we post information from the flyer used this past summer to recruit volunteers, which includes his email address as contact information. People interested in volunteering will email him.
- b) State Open Space Constitutional Amendment. This proposed amendment would allocate a portion of corporate revenue to fund open space from now through 2045. The program would be administered through DEP's Green Acres program. We discussed asking the Council to pass a resolution supporting the amendment.
- c) Signage. Jon noted that the restaurant Sushiana, which opened at a new location on North Fourth Avenue in September, has a backlit sign that remains lit all night. He questioned how this gained approval. It should have been caught by the Zoning Officer. We will research the question of whether backlit signs are allowed. If the restaurant is not in compliance with borough ordinance, they will be asked to comply. Steve said Frank Troy wants the minutes of both STAC and the Environmental Commission to be sent to him directly rather than via email.
- d) The annual ANJEC Congress will take place on October 24 at Raritan Valley Community College. Allan plans to attend.

7. The meeting adjourned at 9:20 PM. The next meeting of the Environmental Commission will take place on Wednesday, November 5 at 8 PM in the Environmental Education Center.