

NEXT MEETING: SEPTEMBER 28, 2006, AT 7:00 P.M.

MINUTES OF THE RP ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION

Jim Ruff called the meeting to order at 7:10 p.m., it having been duly noted that this meeting is being held in accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act, N.J.S.A. 10:4-6 et seq., notice of which was sent to The Record on the 16th day of December, 2005, and to the Star-Ledger on the 16th day of December 2005. Members present were: Jim Ruff, Barbara Frimmer, Linda and Steve Quinn. Madelaine Cappuccio, Kathy Jacob and Maureen Nassan could not attend the meeting. Flo Muller from the Shade Tree Commission was also present.

The minutes of the April 27, 2006, meeting were approved. There are no minutes for May, June and July as there was no quorum.

Jim Ruff thought he had an email for Gil Hawkins from Teaneck but cannot locate it at this time. Steve Quinn said there is a group called the Teaneck Conservation Commission that the Commission should try to contact. There was an article in the Patriot a few weeks ago and he would try to get the name of the person from this group.

Flo Muller, Chairman of the Shade Tree Commission, attended the meeting. She is concerned about the stream behind the DPW and how dirty it is. She would like to see the Environmental Commission, the Shade Tree Commission, the DPW and the Riverkeeper work together to clean up this stream. She would like to see the park by the DPW look better. She said the water is a mess. She would like to see something block the awful of surrounding businesses from the park.

Steve Quinn said the Riverkeeper would need to be contacted to see what could work on this type of area. Steve said all of the plantings have to be vigorous to withstand salt, sun, etc. He said there is potential provided it is cleaned up and cared for. John Anlian has always been interested in having interpretive panels put in the park. It was proposed that two panels be put in this park and two panels put in McGowan Park.

Regarding Overpeck Park, the Commission will speak to Madelaine Cappuccio to see if she has made any progress with setting up a meeting. Steve Quinn said he will speak to his brother because John has spoken to the Puffin Group from Teaneck. John might have some contacts that the Commission can use. Steve Quinn also remembered that there was a councilman from Palisades Park that should also be contacted.

As far as the proposed plans, Jim Ruff wondered if it really mattered where the actual placement was of each proposed usage of the park. He felt it was more important that there was not much nature and trails planned for the park. Barbara Frimmer feels that to her Ridgefield Park has been waiting 50 years now

and it is just one more slap in the face that Ridgefield Park is not getting any of the actual "nature preserve" that is was promised. Ridgefield Park seems to be getting all the usages that will increase traffic, crowds and pollution while other towns will be enjoying a high-end horse stable and low-impact usages.

Steve Quinn thinks that this project should be handled the same way that other construction is handled. A traffic study should be conducted and the Commission should recommend this as future plans could really change the intended use of this park. Future plans could change and the Commission needs to know all the facts. The Commissioners say that the plans for the amphitheater have changed from 7,500 to 2,500 but there is nothing in writing. There is the potential for a lot of traffic in Ridgefield Park. It at least warrants a traffic study by the zoning board and/or planning board. It is a good thing that things are happening in the park but the Commission needs to make sure they are good things that are happening. Ridgefield Park has been put off. Leonia got the horse stables, Palisades Park got low impact usage and Ridgefield Park got everything that comes with a big crowd. Pollution will increase because of the crowds.

Natural open space and natural environment is going to become increasingly more and more unique in these areas. The areas not between these big spaces and crowded uses should be more "nature friendly". There is no shelter for any wildlife or that promotes wildlife. The Commission should discuss this and possibly suggest shifting of these areas so that all of these congested areas are not located in Ridgefield Park. The Commission should be the voice that says there are other activities besides sports. The Commission should ask for a traffic study at the very least. There is great progress with the Ridgefield Park nature preserve. This project is in the very early stages and now is the time to ask questions. Athletic fields should not be the main concern for this county park. Ridgefield Park gets the marina complete with restaurant. It is important to meet with the surrounding communities. The Commission should put all of these thoughts into a letter to the Mayor and Board of Commissioners, raising issues and possible problems with a request to meet sometime and review the plans.

Some of the islands should be designated with wildlife signs and posted that no one can climb onto them. An osprey nest pole would be perfect on one of these islands.

Barbara Frimmer thought if the other environmental commissions spoke to their governments and they all got together there would be a big voice to listen to. There is plenty of time to make proposals and appeals. The area should not be overdeveloped as a park. The Commissioners are basically in agreement with the Environmental Commission that there is the potential to overdue the development of the park. It is important to see the entire county park and this is the heavy usage area.

Steve Quinn said he still thinks there are ways to design it to make it serve as a wildlife area as well. If the plantings are done correctly, in the future this could be an important ground for the birds. The area would be more useful to the school children if there was more open space.

The parking lots, marina and restaurant, amphitheater and sheds are all located in Ridgefield Park. There is a court order to open this park in 2009, although it can open before fully completed. It would be nice to see a complete plan for the park. Jim Ruff will try to find a contact for Leonia and Teaneck as well as Palisades Park. Steve Quinn wonders how the environmental commissions feel as opposed to the conservation groups. Palisades Park and Leonia already have their park so they don't have a big stake in this. Jim Ruff will look into this when he gets back from vacation. Dual use should definitely be the purpose of this park.

Jim Ruff said the Commission should review the original plan for Riverfront Park. He is not sure if this area is in the park. Steve Quinn said he knows the NJ Audubon Society did an extensive study of the Hackensack Meadowlands and Overpeck Park. This area was cited as an important area for migratory birds. They were very precise in citing the area that was filled in already.

In the fall, the Commission should try to get a letter to the Mayor and Board of Commissioners. Steve Quinn said he could try to get some information since he deals with signs at the museum. Maureen Nassan will need to bring the planting plan to the next meeting for review.

The next meeting is scheduled is for Thursday, September 28, 2006.

The meeting ended at 8:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Barbara DeLuca