

**NEXT MEETING: JANUARY 25, 2007 AT 7:00 P.M.**

**MINUTES OF THE RP ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION  
December 11, 2006**

Jim Ruff called the meeting to order at 7:35 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 16<sup>th</sup> day of December, 2005, and to the Star-Ledger on the 16<sup>th</sup> day of December 2005. Members present were: Jim Ruff, Barbara Frimmer, Linda and Steve Quinn and Madelaine Cappuccio. Kathy Jacob and Maureen Nassan could not attend the meeting.

The minutes of the August 24, 2006, meeting were approved.

A special workshop meeting was held to discuss the proposed plans for Overpeck Park. The Ridgefield Park section seems to be Phase III of the project.

Steve Quinn thinks that the map is no longer accurate because the islands that used to exist appear to be gone. The Commission is concerned that all of this high intensive use is located in Ridgefield Park. Teaneck, Leonia and Palisades Park appear to have gotten the more passive activities. Even the maintenance sheds are located in Ridgefield Park. The projected date is 2009 so the Commission feels there is time to note their concerns regarding the usage of the park.

Steve Quinn would like to see a protected area on the shoreline that would be protected from people and dogs. He would like to see the waterfowl protected. There are bald eagles that winter there. The Ridgefield Park section is intensely developed. There appears to be four maintenance sheds in Ridgefield Park.

The Commission has several concerns:

- 1) hours of use
- 2) effect of nighttime activities and how there will effect the people that live in these areas
- 3) aerodrome – will there be another in Ridgefield Park? It is intrusive and detrimental to wildlife. The noise pollution would be a problem and very disturbing to Ridgefield Park
- 4) concerns that Ridgefield Park has high impact activities
- 5) seems to be a park for people rather than for wildlife
- 6) recognize that it will be developed as a park but can it be done somewhat in harmony with wildlife? There has to be some thought to getting the kind of intensely recreational activity in Ridgefield Park while including nature
- 7) there appears to be four maintenance sheds in Ridgefield Park – why?
- 8) Why are so many parking lots located in Ridgefield Park? This will cause increased pollution.

- 9) Three buildings in Ridgefield Park (maintenance sheds, concession stands, restrooms?) Large percentage of parking lots, maintenance buildings and intense, more intrusive development rather than passive use and nighttime events in Ridgefield Park. Planning Board has always been concerned that there are no lit signs on west side so Ridgefield Park is not illuminated. This could be a very big bright light on Ridgefield Park.

The baseball and soccer fields are all Phase II. The following was stated at the August 2006 meeting of the Environmental Commission:

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.

The Commission recognizes that this park is apparently being intended for people but the green spaces between the athletic fields could be planted for wildlife or at least try to enhance wildlife. The Commission needs to suggest the following:

- 1) question the impact of lights on surrounding homes

- 2) shoreline could be developed and there could be specific zones off limits to dogs and people that could be protective zones for nesting wildlife. Even as a people park, it can be critical for wildlife.
- 3) Concern about traffic in Ridgefield Park. Will there be a traffic study?

Steve Quinn will make a draft of a letter to the Mayor and Board of Commissioners.

On another matter, John Anlian said there is funding for educational signs. He can get two signs. He would like to put signs along the river about common wildlife and wetlands. Steve Quinn thinks McGowan Park would be good location for the signs. One sign could be about Ridgefield Park in general.

Earth Day will be held on May 5 this year so that the Commission can get the boats. Letters will go out inviting everyone to participate on May 5.

The next meeting is scheduled is for Thursday, January 25, 2007.

The meeting ended at 9:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Barbara DeLuca