

Vineland Environmental Commission
Minutes
November 18, 2019
(meeting originally postponed from Nov. 12, 2019)

The meeting was called to order at 7:06 p.m. by Chairperson Diane Amico. The public notice was read into record. Present were: Diane Amico, Sue Fenili, Lisa Fleming, John Pedersen, Charles Valentine, David Lowenstern, and guest John Lauria.

There is one correction to the **minutes from the October 15, 2019 meeting**. In Site Plan reviews, “our meeting preceded the Planning Board meeting” should say “the Planning Board meeting preceded our meeting”. A motion to approve the corrected minutes was made by Lisa Fleming and seconded by Sue Fenili. All were in favor.

Sue Fenili’s and John Pedersen’s **members’ terms** expired on October 16; both were reappointed by the Mayor.

The **Budget Report**, including grants, was passed around. Most of this year’s remaining money, about \$2700, is in Professional Services. There is also another report available for anyone interested which shows every single item ever purchased all year. Diane reviewed the procedure for members receiving orders. All items currently on order must be picked up by December 31.

Agenda Item “A” is skipped, as Kaitlyn from the League of Conservation Voters is not present.

There is nothing new to report on **pesticides**, but Lisa gave an overview of the issue for members who previously were not present.

The **Raingarden** at the library will have its drains rerouted shortly, as per Cheryl Reardon at ANJEC. It took a little longer than the Annex to obtain the correct parts for a round drain.

Volunteer work days continued throughout November with John Pedersen leading. Diane is working on a “google” calendar that Public Relations put on the City website for us. This was prompted by a request that events be scheduled further in advance, as the short lead time is hindering getting volunteers.

Volunteers worked at Union Road, and noted there was another dumping. There is also a hunter’s tree stand in the woods. It was not taken down, as it was unclear exactly where the City’s property line is. More “no hunting signs” are needed, and should be of a better quality. John Pedersen and John Lauria have been working at Willow Oak spreading stone on the path and mowing. John Lauria built some new bridges over wet areas. Diane thanked John Lauria for all of the work he has done. The tables at Giampietro Park have all been painted, and some VHS students helped with this. John P. would like to do more bench and table painting at other parks. John P. and John L. are also working on measuring the trails at Willow Oak for updates to the map. Setting up a regular maintenance schedule for all of the nature areas was discussed.

The **Wildflower areas** do not yet have signage, as we are waiting for official designations.

David visited the tree planting area at **Giampietro Park**, and he straightened and reinstalled some tree supports. There is more to be done. Diane has been in contact with the Littoral Society, but their summer interns are done for the year. The mesh and stakes should not be removed, as there is an obligation to maintain them. Diane said we can keep contacting the Littoral Society, or do some of the maintenance on our own.

At the **Roots for Rivers Maurice River Site** on November 16, Lisa and Diane fixed leaning poles and uprighted downed tubes. Overall the area does not look too bad. The ground is hard and compacted in some spots and some of the stakes were not in all the way. There are still more to be fixed. Also, the deer fence is ripped and torn down, likely done by deer. Another maintenance day is scheduled for November 23. It was decided to put a wire around the top of the deer fence for more strength. A motion to purchase steel wire was made by Charles Valentine and seconded by Lisa Fleming. David abstained; all others were in favor.

Site plan reviews:

The Planning Board did approve last month's application for **Rovagnati Meats**. Lisa Fleming attended the Planning Board meeting. After a presentation by the applicants engineer and attorney, Lisa spoke to explain the Tree Committee's position on the forested area. Although the committee's comments were discussed, the Board did not ask for major changes regarding the trees. The applicant will, however, deposit \$1500 into the tree fund.

There was discussion about issues with the current ordinance and lack of enforcement. It has been several years now that the City has been talking about updating the ordinance. Diane is trying to stay in the loop with Planning, so that we can participate if the ordinance is reviewed for changes. Some deficiencies were discussed, such as using one DBH size overall to designate "forest", when actually different species are different sizes at maturity. The area to be selected and averaging methods should also be designated in the ordinance as, in this case, the engineers and the Tree Committee came up with different data from different parts of the same site.

John Pedersen said one problem with any "phased" project is that after the first approval, the applicant will point to that approval at all stages going forward.

There were no Planning and Zoning applications for review, but there are three wetlands delineations and one upcoming residential solar array application.

John said that Michelle Ernst expressed concern that surveying is being done adjacent to her property, near Asher Road. John P. is looking into what is being planned.

The residential solar array on Lincoln Ave is near Willow Oak and wetlands. There is concern about tree clearance. This notification to property owners references a variance application to the Planning Board, but that has not been received by the committee. It is unclear whether the applicant did a wetlands delineation. A creek runs through the area, although it usually doesn't contain water. The rear-yard buffer is the variance that is of concern. The side yard buffers do not come in contact with Willow Oak.

Notifications for wetlands delineations were received for the already-cleared s.w. corner of Mill Rd. and Landis Ave., and for the old Dilks Electric site on Chamblings Court. The Chamblings Court development may expand toward Manaway Creek. We will keep an eye out for a future application.

A wetlands delineation request for Creekview Development was received with just a block and lot, but no map. This is 2788 Maple Ave., just east of Brewster Rd. There are a lot of wetlands in the whole area. There is nothing to review until such time that they put in an application for development.

Old Business: Diane said the **Library** trees, witch-hazel buffer, and front median have been planted and the contractor has been paid.

The **2019 Green Communities Award** was presented to us at the NJ Shade Tree Federation annual dinner. David, Charlie, Diane and Sue attended the conference. Diane participated in the panel discussion at one of the sessions. Diane and Sue attended the awards dinner. A plaque is engraved wood in a leaf-shape, and the announcement appeared the City's Facebook page. The award is for the whole Environmental Commission, specifically for its forestry efforts, including our tree committee. A review of the Roots for Rivers project at Blackwater Branch during the City's Sustainable Jersey certification application process is what brought attention to our efforts, and the NJDEP Community Forestry Program nominated us for the award.

The City is receiving a bronze level **Sustainable Jersey** re-certification. Diane, along with another Green Team member, is representing the City tomorrow in Atlantic City to accept the award.

New business:

Prioritizing future activities will be discussed at either the December or January meetings. An annual reorganization meeting would be good to do. Diane discussed Brownfields as one action that would be important to the City. Out of all

of the things the Commission has discussed, we should pick something to focus on, make it a priority, and follow through.

We have received notice of free seedlings available through the **2020 Tree Recovery Campaign**. The seedlings would need to be picked up on March 27. The possibility of doing the giveaway on the following day, on a Saturday, was discussed, but this would mean it would not be at City Hall. The other option is City Hall on Monday March 30, however, we have used City Hall numerous times and employee interest has declined. New locations were discussed. If anyone comes up with one, please forward to Diane. John P would like to purchase additional trees for this event.

Diane met with Paul Farinaccio at the **Board of Education** to discuss planting trees on school properties. At this time, the Board of Education does not want trees planted due to issues with maintenance and lack of funding. However, Arbor Day activities are o.k., since this is for the students. Several issues with survivability of Arbor Day trees were identified, such as missing bark guards, distance from water sources, poor location selection, and wrong species. The Board of Education would prefer that trees be planted off to the side and out of the way of mowers. Clustering of trees is also preferred, as this combines them into only one mowing obstacle. They would like the plantings planned better, and for the Environmental Commission to get more involved with choosing locations and doing maintenance, especially over the summer. One large issue identified is the miscommunication between teachers, who receive the planting instructions, and custodians who do the planting. Mr. Farinaccio said he prefers native trees that will do better without a lot of water. We can improve on the process by sending a representative to meet with the teacher, and maybe try to include the custodians to discuss directly with them how to plant the tree. It is noted that there are very specific security requirements to meet before visiting any school sites, including emailing in advance for approval.

Lisa left the meeting early.

Diane has been in contact with **Jay Adamson**, but there are some hurdles in getting the scope of work. John Pedersen will contact him to have the scope of work amended. A motion to use up to the balance of the Professional Services budget line item, not to exceed \$2700, was made by John Pedersen and seconded by Sue Fenili. All were in favor. John and Diane will work on getting the scope of work and requisition.

John Pedersen presented literature on the benefits of leaving fall leaves on the ground instead of removing them.

A motion to adjourn was made by John Pedersen and seconded by Sue Fenili, all were in favor.