

Vineland Environmental Commission
Meeting minutes
November 9, 2020

The meeting was called to order at 7:20 p.m. by Chairperson Diane Amico. Present in person were: Diane Amico, Charles Valentine and John Pedersen. Present virtually were: Lisa Fleming, David Lowenstern, Sue Fenili, and guest Marcelo Gracia. The secretary dispensed with reading the public notice.

Marcelo is this year's **Watershed Ambassador** for WMA17 through the Cumberland County's program. Various potential partnership projects were discussed. It was decided that working on the riparian buffer tree planting area at Giampietro is a good project for volunteers. Diane will arrange details with him for a December 12th event. He will check with his contacts at the County regarding what chemicals they are using for spraying vegetation, especially around the guardrails.

A motion to approve the **minutes** of the October 13, 2020 meeting was made by Charles Valentine and seconded by John Pedersen. All were in favor.

Diane gave the **budget** report. Since the last meeting, the only expenditures were for materials for birdhouses.

The **maple trees** purchased from Hopewell Nursery need to get in the ground. John P. will pick them up. John Casadia has told Diane that he got permission from Paul Farinaccio at the Board of Ed to replace some dead trees at Pilla School, and he can arrange the access to the school. John P. has already received permission to plant some of them at Giampietro. John P. will contact John Casadia to decide how many are to be planted at each location.

Diane said the **Disc Golf Club** is requesting to remove another tree at South Vineland Park. She told them that since previously they didn't replant new trees as promised, it would be good if they could follow through before any new requests for removals are considered. There is a new contact, Charlie Gabage, who was not aware of the previous agreement, and he said they should not have a problem purchasing some trees. In a subsequent conversation, John Pedersen indicated to him an alternate project of assisting with planting the maples we have already purchased. However, these would be planted in other locations, and David said they should replant in the same location as the removals. John said the understory at South Vineland Park might make it more difficult to put the larger maples in the woods, but using the small leftover saplings is an option. Since we have a budget for tree purchases, but manpower is usually lacking, most members agreed that it would be more beneficial to let them supply volunteer time to assist John with planting the maple trees, rather than purchase trees. Another option is to ask them to plant the small saplings at South Vineland Park, which includes them in the beautification of the same area where they play. John Pedersen will contact them with the options.

John P. has been in touch with Mark Guglielmi about planting trees at Giampietro, where we have been losing trees to storms and removals. He has also been in touch with the new Director of Public Works via email, and he sees positive things happening. Mowing efforts are going well, and a new roof is being put on one of the shelters at Giampietro. He has asked that no pesticides be sprayed at Willow Oak, and they have honored that.

Volunteer days have not been taking place recently, but if we get stone for Willow Oak, John P. will need help.

Regarding **wildflower and milkweed** areas, the County has stayed away from the areas on the Blvd. There is some milkweed growing in front of Willow Oak.

Lisa said it may be time to purchase a **sign for the garden at Giampietro**, similar to the raingardens. The price will be approximately \$1100 to \$1300. The quote from Michelle Ernst was about \$1300 or \$1400, but was not for the same style of sign. Diane will get a photo of one of the existing signs and ask for a re-quote. Charlie Valentine made a motion

that we get the sign and have it installed. The style should be consistent with the other signs. Sue Fenili seconded. The material composition of the sign was discussed. John P. said the sign should be situated on an angle, consistent with the others. In favor were Diane, Charlie, John P., Lisa, and Sue. Opposed was David. Diane will send photos to Michelle, to see if Market Fuel can do that type of sign, and she will research where Rutgers gets theirs. There is some work to be done regarding design, as we have to supply all photos and wording. The method of installation will be decided later.

Regarding **Willow Oak**, Diane got a call from Mark Smaniotto, a former employee of the Electric Utility and former Boy Scout leader in Vineland, who was walking out there and noticed the high grass around the perimeter of the field. He offered to do some mowing. John P. said the main trail is starting to close in on the sides, although the City overall has been mowing better recently.

John Pedersen said all of the **mulch** has been delivered. Diane did not get an invoice, so she will follow up.

At Willow Oak, John P. did fix the **split rail fence** using scrap wood, but he needs posts. A motion to spend approximately \$350 to purchase posts was made by Charles Valentine and seconded by Sue Fenili. All were in favor. Charles Valentine amended the motion to include horizontals, and increased the amount to \$500. All were in favor.

John P. said we can use more **small signs** on the perimeter of Willow Oak and the other natural areas, similar to those put up many years ago. They are attached to trees, so the only hardware is one nail. He will get prices. A motion to allocate \$200 for these signs was made by Charles Valentine and seconded by David Lowenstern. John will take a photo and circulate it for those who don't know what the signs look like. They are generic, so can also be used at Bennett's Mill. All were in favor.

Lisa discussed **tree "diapers"**, which are a ring around tree that holds rainwater then releases it back into the ground. The cost is about \$30 each. Charles Valentine made a motion that we purchase a dozen of these. David seconded. All were in favor.

The sign is no longer needed for the **Space Shuttle pine**, as it has died. It was noted that it died after the Electric Utility did work there installing lighting poles and lines, which included some trenching. It could have been damaged during construction or the ground could have been compacted. Lisa discussed one of the Shade Tree Federation sessions regarding current tree diseases.

Diane discussed the Shade Tree Federation Conference session on **Community Forestry Management Plans**. Some new changes include a requirement for more proactive activities, more meeting of goals, and a tree inventory. The inventory must be done by a professional, not volunteers. There are specific parameters to be included, so everyone's data is consistent. Maintaining Community Forestry "accreditation" was emphasized, mainly for liability reasons. It is also important to keep up with current developments such as diseases. The deadline for plan renewal has been extended. David said the Conference was informative and well presented. Lisa said there was access to talk to vendors during the special sessions. Conference sessions will be available online for a year.

There is only one **plan application** for review, which is a loading dock in a paved area with no environmental concerns.

A meeting of the **tree committee** to develop guidelines for Engineering is still to be scheduled. David discussed trees being cut for sidewalks and education needed on the importance of roots. John noted that some trees may need to be removed, but there should be a way to buy replacements.

There are trees growing both in the area next to the soccer field and in the field at Willow Oak. These should be removed. The trees next to the soccer field are mostly Bradford pears, and the field at Willow oak has a lot of gum trees.

Lisa said there is a gum **tree in the raingarden** at Giampietro. It was decided to leave it there. There is a honey locust growing in the Annex raingarden, and there is some concern about big trees growing too close to the building. Rutgers did plant some trees there, but it was noted that honey locust trees get very large. Rutgers did cut this one back during weeding, but it is growing back.

A motion to adjourn was made by Charlie Valentine and seconded by Sue Fenili. All were in favor.