

Vineland Environmental Commission
Regular Meeting
September 13, 2021

The meeting was called to order at 7:15 p.m. by Chairperson Diane Amico. The public notice was read into record.

Present were: Diane Amico, Charles Valentine, John Pedersen, and guest Ariana McTamney, and virtually present were David Lowenstern, Lisa Fleming, and guest Ellen Pedersen.

A motion to approve the **minutes** of the August 9, 2021 meeting was made by Charles Valentine and seconded by Lisa Fleming. All were in favor.

Diane gave the **budget report** and reminded members that the October meeting is the last chance that the Commission will have to approve expenditures for the current year, due to the deadline for submitting requisitions to the Purchasing Dept.

Lisa discussed an engineered type of tree planting pit that may work on Landis Avenue. She will investigate further by contacting the City Engineer.

Volunteer work days have continued with John Pedersen. This month's MaysLanding Road cleanup will be postponed in order to do a work day this Saturday, Sept. 18th, at the Vineland Library. We will plan to do mulching, fertilizing of the witch-hazel hedge, and weeding of the 2 butterfly gardens in the medians. Lisa also can put the tree diapers on the witch-hazel. The rings would go on top of the mulch, or we can mulch around them. Diane will send out the volunteer notice. We are waiting for a purchase order for the mulch. Lisa asked if John Pedersen can also put mulch around the perimeter of the Library raingarden.

A **volunteer day** will be held on Oct. 2 at Pilla School to plant trees. Access to the school must be cleared with security. Diane will verify with Hopewell Nursery that the trees are still there for us. John Pedersen will pick up the trees. He would prefer trees that have not become root-bound in the pots.

Wildflower / milkweed areas still need to be designated by City Council with an official list. It was noted that some of the cultivars are not producing nectar like the native plants. John Pedersen said three locations have not been mowed, and he maintained the one in front of Willow Oak. It is important that we get an official list and go through appropriate channels to avoid continuing issues with mowing.

Willow Oak field needs tree removal. Options for help were discussed. It was noted that all of our options are using the same piece of equipment that is being passed around. Peter Galetto

offered to help us, but needs to look at the area again to see how big the trees have grown. Diane said we should do whatever areas can be done, even if it is not the whole field. Due to the possibility of birds still having clutches, February would be a good time to remove trees. However, this leaves a really small window, since bluebirds begin nesting again in March. The dead trees maybe could either be used to hold the perimeter back, or can be mulched by Public Works' chipper. John P. said there is a lot of mud in the back entrance on Maple Ave. that will be an issue for access. John P. said someone should be there with a chainsaw to get whatever the machine cannot get.

The **Spotted Lanternfly** problem was discussed as a topic we should include in future educational outreach.

John Pedersen will find out the name of the stream that goes through Willow Oak so we can discuss putting up a sign there. He said the area across from the homeless shelter has been cleaner, possibly because of new management at the shelter. He also is planning to put up the small nature area signs around Bennett's Mill.

Raingarden maintenance was discussed. Diane met up with SJ Landscape Design to get answers to the questions that were posed at the last meeting. The vendor is aware of what plants are planted there and what needs to come out. The bulk of the estimate is for mulch. We have grant money in No Net Loss that can be used for this. Lisa said she will discontinue maintenance at the raingardens if we are hiring someone else to take a different course of action. Diane will verify with Public Works that they don't have any plans for the area between the garden and the building. A motion was made by Charles Valentine and seconded by Diane Amico to hire SJ Landscape Design for the cost on the estimate to get the raingardens pruned, weeded, and mulched. Roll Call vote: Diane: yes, Charlie: yes, David: yes, Lisa: abstain, John P.: yes.

Site Plan reviews:

There are 3 duplexes/triplexes for Zoning approval to bring them up to code. The Zoning Board meeting is this Wednesday, Sept. 13.

One project application for a self-storage facility on Chestnut Ave. is asking for a use variance. The developer provided no lot coverage calculations and there are wetlands on the property. The project would include cutting down woodlands, complete clearing of 8 ½ ac. of trees, and no landscaping. The clearing would be behind a residential neighborhood and there would be a straight 720' wall directly behind the houses. The property is currently zoned as RP residential/professional, and R3 residential. The entire lot would be covered with buildings and asphalt, with small buffers, and only saving some woods because there is a wetlands buffer. When use variances are approved at this stage, developments are likely to also be approved at later stages of development. The comments will be consolidated and submitted to the Zoning Board.

An addition to Chem Glass was already voted on last week, and other project application also was already approved last week, so no reviews were done on these. Sometimes depending on the way the days of the weeks fall, the Planning board meeting occurs before our meeting.

Garden State Truck Stop was discussed. It was verified that this application has been postponed pending redesign.

Diane got prices for seed packets of wildflower/pollinator plants, appropriate for New Jersey. To get the best price of \$0.30 ea., the order needs to be a minimum of 1000 packets. A motion to purchase 1000 seed packets was made by Lisa Fleming and seconded by John Pedersen. All were in favor. Grant money will be used for the purchase.

Lisa would like to do fall planting of plant plugs, in coordination with Ellen. A motion to approve native plant plugs not to exceed \$500 was made by John Pedersen and seconded by Charlie Valentine. All were in favor.

Lisa will be attending the Shade Tree Federation Conference. Diane asked members who else would like to attend. David and Charlie would like to attend on Friday. Diane will do the registrations. Public Works was invited to attend but did not reply. The continuing education credits are applied to the City of Vineland, not to individuals.

Regarding 4 Evelyn Avenue, Diane got a price for installation of a dogwood at the street, for a cost of \$447. This includes calling for utility markouts. A motion was made by Lisa Fleming and seconded by John Pedersen to hire Fred Cristelli to plant the tree. All were in favor.

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