

Vineland Environmental Commission
Regular Meeting Minutes
November 14, 2016

At 7:03 p.m. the meeting was called to order by Chairperson Lisa Fleming. The secretary read the public notice.

In attendance were: Chairperson Lisa Fleming, John Casadia, Sue Fenili, Brad Giordano, Charles Valentine, David Lowenstern, John Pedersen, Anthony Coffee, and City Liaison Diane Amico.

Christine Brown has resigned from the Commission. Sue's term is due for renewal, and Diane has asked the Mayor's office to act on that. John Lauria, a former member, has contacted Diane about serving again on the Commission. There is still one open alternate position.

A motion to approve the minutes of the October 11, 2016 regular meeting, as written and corrected by Lisa, was made by John Pedersen and seconded by Brad Giordano. All were in favor.

NJ Shade Tree Conference: Three Environmental Commission members and four Public Works employees attended the conference in Atlantic City. Lisa said the conference overall was geared more toward removing trees than saving them. Lisa said the presentation by the NJ Tree Foundation indicated potential for future involvement in projects and the Foundation does give away trees. Regarding the City's Tree Fund, the fund has been created and one payment has already been made into it by LIDL supermarket. The fund is for use by the Environmental Commission. Lisa said projects should be aligned with other city Departments, such as Planning and Engineering, for long term plans so that all are moving in the same direction.

VDID Tree Planting: 13 dogwood trees that were originally purchased for another project at the Pigtail League field, but were not utilized, were given to the VDID. VDID planted them downtown at Wood St. & East Ave. (3 trees), West Ave. & Landis Ave.(3 trees), 6th St. & Wood St. (4 trees), and 7th St. near the Historical Society (3 trees). John said the VDID also got 3 trees from us on Arbor Day.

VDID Tree planters: Lisa has been attending plant seminars recently and is looking to connect the planter projects to stormwater issues. A few years ago there was a student from Rutgers who wanted to assist with stormwater projects in Vineland, but the lead person from Rutgers on the project is now focusing on Millville. Lisa said there may be a way to modify the existing planters to redirect the stormwater by removing pavers. There was some discussion on various ways to achieve this on various blocks on Landis Ave. Lisa said is more critical to protect the trees that are already there than to plant more. The trees need to be watered, and it is preferable to utilize stormwater than to try to get a city watering truck to make rounds.

Regional environmental activity: Lisa said there is a lot of regional activity that can be tapped into. She has been attending the Native Plant Society meetings. There is a lot of discussion regarding DOT projects and the Turnpike Authority being required to use native plants in projects. John said that we are responsible to maintain a list of acceptable trees, but that Planning still accepts site plans that have Bradford Pears on them. Diane said the Commission does not maintain a separate list, but rather our recommendations reflect whatever NJ State is doing at the moment. This is usually in the form of a "do not plant list". It is not practical to put a definitive list in the ordinance, as the list could change.

Sand: Brad said the sand that was discussed at the last meeting was tested and is clean. Brad has received the o.k. from the Health Department and Public Works to donate the loads of sand for the city's use. He is waiting for them to give him a location for delivery.

New Mayor and Council: After the new administration is settled would be a good time to talk to the Mayor and invite him to a meeting. John said there was a vote at last City Council to let CCIA develop the lot on S.Lincoln Ave. that was originally planned for development by Magic Sports. Diane will contact him after January 1, and if anyone knows him they can invite him to a meeting. Diane said she has in the past met with new Mayors to review the responsibilities of the Commission.

Sustainable Jersey Diane briefly summarized the program, and explained details of a Diversity Survey being distributed to all City Boards and Commissions as part of this program. The member surveys are anonymous. Surveys were distributed and filled out by members. Diane explained some of the current City projects in progress as part of Sustainable Jersey; just about every department is working on a project. Some examples are Fire Department - Firewise, Economic Development - Buy Local Program, Chamber of Commerce - Anti-Litter program, Recycling - Shredding Day and they are making changes to the Construction and Demolition Debris ordinance, Purchasing - increasing recycled paper content, Planning - Green Building, and Sustainability Element to the Master Plan, Information Systems - changes to the City website to include a Community calendar, VMEU is looking into alternative fuel vehicles, and there are planned changes to the City's Water Conservation ordinance that should be going before City Council soon. The Sustainable Jersey committee involves supervisors from many departments.

Recognizing the Mormon missionaries - Nothing has been published yet. The group has begun working on Saturdays instead of during the week.

Newspaper Articles - David is working on an article about the benefit of trees.

Giampietro Park Rain Garden – Lisa asked if members can just keep watch on what is going on out there and we can begin plans for more work to be done in Spring. Some potential locations for milkweed and wildflowers were discussed, such as the circle area or the front field near Landis Ave. It was noted that only blue flags are native iris, but the yellow ones are not. Native plants are preferable. We should avoid anything invasive. Brad said there is a new tulip bulb business in Vineland on Landis Ave. Anthony said there are a lot of invasive autumn olives at Giampietro.

Romano Park David said there is less milkweed there than before.

Burnt Mill - Lisa attended a meeting with Engineering. Dale Elbeuf was not there. The pond is filled with Willows, and there is hardly any open water. The City is discussing with consultants how to address making this a better park by doing vegetation removal, possibly along with ramps and docks. The entire project may be expanded to include other parks. There is no exact plan yet, so the Environmental Commission does not have enough information to be in favor of the improvements. John said he is concerned about lack of a committee that allows the Commission to participate, and he noted the state of disrepair of many of our park facilities. John said there is a city that paid a "play" consultant to design a park, and Vineland could be doing more.

White Cedar (MRCA) Hunting signs still need to be attached to trees. John P and David will meet there this weekend, at 2:00 on Saturday. He said there is a lot of trash dumped there. Perhaps the

Mormon volunteers can assist. Sue said her son can help. Some of the other areas have already been done.

Willow Oak field Controlled Burn - Diane reported this on schedule to be done prior to mid-March. The date will not be known in advance because it is heavily weather dependent. She just met this morning with the Fire Chief and a representative from the NJ Forest Fire service. Some members would like to see the neighbors notified in advance. The NJ Forest Service prefers that no one be in attendance. The City's fire department always attends. The Commission can notify the neighbors that a controlled burn will be done at some point over the winter, so that people will not get upset if they see smoke. John said that NJ is behind on doing controlled burns to reduce the fuel load to prevent fires. Diane said the Vineland Fire Department is working on a program called Firewise, which will include controlled burns in southeast Vineland near neighborhoods that are surrounded by woodlands. The program also includes educating homeowners to remove the low underbrush from the woods behind their houses to create a buffer around the houses. There will be a committee formed and the Environmental Commission will be invited to assist on the committee. The NJ Forest Fire Service is aware of Timber Rattlers in the area near Rt.49, and they will modify their controlled burn procedures to protect this and other species. An article was published in Rolling Stone magazine recently about the potential for wildfire in NJ.

Site Plan reviews: There is not much going on other than some parking lots. Three applications had been send to members prior to the meeting; there is nothing that specifically needs to be addressed.

Lisa asked members for suggestions on where to focus efforts. Suggestions included focusing on one or two parks, Giampietro and Willow Oak.

Budget: Diane said that the \$100 approved previously for an auger and bypass lopers for tree maintenance is not enough to cover purchase of these 2 items. A motion to increase the amount to "not to exceed" \$250 and to add tree bark guards to the purchase was made by Charles Valentine and seconded by Sue Fenili. All were in favor. John also needs stakes and wires but Lisa said she has some that can be used.

Diane asked if anyone receives verification of credits obtained from the NJ Shade Tree Federation sessions, please forward to her.

Diane passed out a sample of the Anti-Litter pledge that local businesses are submitting to the Chamber of Commerce.

Tree guards: Sue requested tree guards for the Board of Education trees that are getting damaged by mowers. She has a contact at the Board of Education that may be able to assist (John Capizola teacher at D'Ippolito). John Casadia will reach out to Wayne Weaver. John Pedersen said he can put the guards on and mulch the trees if we get permission from Wayne Weaver. Diane will contact LaTorre Hardware for the type of tree guard that John Pedersen would like to use.

Tree Committee - Sue Fenili, John Casadia, David Lowenstern, John Pedersen

Meeting adjourned