

Vineland Environmental Commission
Minutes Regular Meeting
April 8, 2019

The meeting was called to order at 7:04 p.m. by Chairperson Diane Amico. The Public Notice was read into record. Present were: Diane Amico, John Casadia, Sue Fenili, Lisa Fleming, John Pedersen, Charles Valentine, and guests Emma Melvin of the American Littoral Society, and Cheryl Reardon of ANJEC. David Lowenstern and Melanie Cucunato, the CCIA Watershed Ambassador, entered later.

A motion to approve the **minutes** of the March 11, 2019 meeting was made by Charles Valentine and seconded by Sue Fenili. All were in favor.

Cheryl Reardon of ANJEC said the first project from the grant, the **City Hall Annex raingarden** is coming up. There is a question of the date; it is either May 14th, 15th, & 16th or May 8th, 9th, & 10th. Cheryl will check the date. The first two days are for digging and installation of soil/mulch, and the third day is for planting. Diane said it is difficult to get volunteers on a weekday. Cheryl will check to see if Saturday is an option for a planting day. There will be some Rutgers volunteers.

ANJEC is applying with Pinelands Preservation Alliance for a **grant for green infrastructure** improvements to businesses near the Menantico Creek. They are looking for specific types of business. Several possible projects were discussed. ANJEC would like a letter of support from the Commission for the grant application. A motion to give the letter of support was made by John Casadia and seconded by Charles Valentine. All were in favor. If the grant is received and a business is selected, the green infrastructure or raingarden would be built by a combination of ANJEC, Rutgers, the business itself, and possibly additional volunteers.

The **Roots For Rivers Giampietro Park** planting is ongoing. John Pedersen and other people had previously gone back to put in more trees. At least one more additional community planting day is needed. Saturday, April 27th was selected. Diane will start to do outreach. On this day, it is hoped that the balance of trees will be planted, and maybe some stakes and tubes might be installed. It was noted that Public Works has started to mow for the season. Emma will return to the site to put up a rope or otherwise mark out the area. She also will be out there with some interns for training, and they may possibly remove some invasives. There is no water available, as the spigot has been broken by vandals. Emma said someone on Facebook has written some good posts about the tree planting efforts at Giampietro.

David Lowenstern and Melanie Cucunato entered the meeting.

For the **Roots for Rivers Maurice River** project, Diane said that since there were concerns regarding species, availability of water, locations, deer browsing, mesh vs. tubes, and more, there have been a lot of compromises on the part of all involved toward making the project successful. The Nature Conservancy has agreed to let us use deer fence around the Atlantic White-cedar instead of tubes. A conference call took place with Diane, Emma Melvin, Melanie Cucunato, EPA, and the Army Corps of Engineers. The planting area will be modified to include more uplands and less area near the water. The EPA has agreed to some changes in the tree species list. The EPA had intended to let the area reforest itself, but it is not happening on its own. They indicated that Atlantic White-cedar was only planted first to give it a head start before the hardwoods came in, but it was not EPA's intention to create a cedar

forest. Our species list will be modified to have less Atlantic white-cedar, and this will be fenced in. EPA said we can use some of the existing deer fence, as during the walk-through it was noted that there is evidence of deer browse. The EPA is done with their project, and will not come back to fix or install any fencing. There was also a conversation about the quality of soil. The EPA said they took out the soil to clean it, and returned sterile soil to the site, but this soil did not have the organic quality that they had hoped for. Emma discussed the difference between an area dominated by bacterial-based soil as opposed to fungus-based soil. Since the area has so much grass, and the trees are struggling, she would like to inoculate the roots of the new plantings with micorrhizal fungi. Right now Diane, Emma & Melanie are working on an updated plan for re-submittal for approval. Diane has to send in a revised budget to the grant administrator. Diane said it is a problem that EPA will not give us access to the site on a weekend, as we cannot get volunteers on weekdays. This is something that needs to be worked out. The entire project needs to be done by May 31. Diane thanked Emma and Melanie for all of the work they have done so far on the Roots for Rivers projects. The map of the new planting area was reviewed.

The **budget report** was passed around for review. We are on a permanent budget now. For the purchase of mulch approved at the last meeting, Diane used the No Net Loss Grant money.

The **NJ League of Conservation Voters** has contacted Diane to see if the Commission is interested in hosting an informational session for residents to learn about stormwater, flood defense, and the new State regulations. Emma said that this group is looking for towns willing to do a pilot program and that is willing to raise awareness in their community. Diane said there is an interim step of doing a Stormwater Feasibility Study, usually done by a hired professional, which is a precursor to creating a Stormwater Utility. After some discussion, it was agreed that there is interest, but it should be scheduled for June, after the planting projects are complete. Diane will contact Carolyn Singer to plan the date. The League of Conservation Voters does the presentation and outreach, and we would provide a venue as well as do some additional outreach.

Volunteer work days: John Pedersen worked by himself this weekend.

Sue reported that 12 trees are on order for **Arbor Day**. The Board of Education is o.k. with using stakes. A motion to order 100 large stakes was made by Charles Valentine and seconded by David Lowenstern. All were in favor. John Casadia offered to pick up the order from the Vineland Produce Auction. John Pedersen offered to assist with installing them. A motion to order straps to go with those stakes was made by Charles Valentine and seconded by John Casadia. All were in favor. Diane will do some research on where to order these.

Education: There are still 6 boards to be made under the existing purchase order for Market Fuel. This Saturday is Super Science Saturday at VHS. John Pedersen will attend and will use some of the educational boards. Diane has reached out to Michelle Villar for details.

Willow Oak: Diane mailed Chris Ravelly's certificates to him, as he has been unable to attend the last 2 meetings. We are still in need of a basic map for the new flyer. John Pedersen said the parking lot at Willow Oak was relatively clear this past weekend.

Giampietro Park Raingarden: Lisa said there isn't much coming up yet, and there are a lot of leaves in it. She did some maintenance and will keep an eye on it. There are still some perennials to be planted.

Seedling Giveaway: Diane thanked everyone who helped give out seedlings on April 1. We have some trees left that are being stored at John Pedersen's office.

Community Forestry Management Plan goals: At the last meeting, Diane had brought the outdated resolution for the City's Tree Canopy goal. She said this still needs to be updated.

New business: David said the new **Raymour & Flannigan** on Delsea Drive has cut down the trees lining the entrance road. Diane said these are not street trees, but could possibly be a condition of the site plan of the previous K-Mart. John Casadia will look into what are the site plan requirements. David also showed pictures of black edging material that can be used around trees to keep mowers away.

Site Plan Reviews: Newcomb Senior Apartments site plan was reviewed. The whole site is already all asphalt. Utopia Salon is right in town, so is unlikely there are environmental concerns. Other site plans were passed around and reviewed, including a new tire store on Landis Ave. A new Shop Rite is planned for the lot next to the old one at Lincoln and Landis Ave. The site is currently a farm, and is upstream from Giampietro Park. The plan states there is already an approved Use Variance. There is concern about the request for a waiver for the tree islands for every 14 parking spaces. John Casadia will discuss it at the Planning Board meeting.

A motion to **adjourn** was made by John Casadia and seconded by Charles Valentine. All were favor.