

Vineland Environmental Commission
Regular Meeting Minutes
February 11, 2019

The meeting was called to order at 7:07 p.m. by Chairperson Diane Amico. The Public Notice was read into the record. Present were: Diane Amico, John Casadia, Lisa Fleming, John Pedersen, Charles Valentine, David Lowenstern, and guests John Lauria and Melanie Cucunato.

A motion to approve the **minutes** of the January 14, 2019 meeting was made by Charles Valentine and seconded by John Pedersen. All were in favor.

The **budget** is still temporary with line items populated by a percent of what the final budget should be after City approval. There are no expenditures yet for our 2019 budget.

For the **Volunteer Work Days**, John Pedersen said there were 6 participants on Saturday at Campanella Park who collected 16 bags of trash. Cleanups have been consistent. John passed around photos of various cleanups showing the large amounts of trash being collected. There has been a problem with the type of trash being found in the parks, much of it being drug-related. John has been told that the police are too busy with calls to do any patrolling of parks. The Maple Avenue entrance to Willow Oak is particularly problematic. Possible causes are limited visibility due to vegetation and lack of lighting. Options discussed were closing off that entrance altogether (leaving a parking area but preventing cars from going in further), opening up the vegetation for visibility, getting lighting, and/or getting cameras. John Casadia made a motion that we investigate lighting, one in each parking lot, and Charles Valentine seconded. All were in favor. David made a motion that we hire someone to clear brush at the entrance, but others would like to get this done as a volunteer effort.

Regarding the **Roots for Rivers Maurice River Project**, Diane had previously forwarded information to the members. She has reached out to vendors to begin the purchasing process for trees and other supplies. John Pedersen does not think the tubes will be correct, noting that the previous planting by EPA had a high die-off rate. No tubes have been ordered yet. The vendor asked for a list of species to be planted and sizes, since the tubes will be different for each. The grant administrator has specific requirements that includes tubes, and they have arranged for special pricing with specific vendors. John Pedersen has concerns with planting the sassafras and pine species in wet areas. Melanie reviewed her work to date on the project and her conversations with EPA, who has instructed her to stick with the species that EPA has already started planting there. EPA has asked that we stay near the upland areas and not plant directly on the stream bank. John said the upland areas are already planted. The map was reviewed. EPA wants to meet on-site with Melanie, and plans to get input from the Army Corps of Engineers. Then we can discuss our concerns with them. There is an existing deer fence that has been knocked down. There was discussion regarding species. Diane said in order to change any parameters of the grant, a request form must be submitted by Business Administration and we need approval before proceeding. She asked members for any specific requests to change the list of species or any other aspects of this grant before we proceed. There were no specific requests, but John has concerns regarding the survivability of trees in the wet areas, the use of tubes, and who will water the trees. The species were selected by Melanie in conjunction with EPA and the Army Corps of Engineers. Lisa said

there is enough area there that we should be able to find appropriate spots for all of the trees. John suggested red maples, but it was discussed that this was not included because this species competes with Atlantic white-cedar. Atlantic white-cedar grows in groves. Most of the plants are reserved at the Pinelands Nursery, but sassafras and some other species are not in stock, so Diane has to look for another vendor. John asked if the money for tubes could be used for fencing, however, the grant specifically says every tree must be tubed. It was discussed different ways the tubes could be collected at some point in the future after the project is finished. Diane asked if there were any changes to be officially requested of the grant. John Casadia made a motion that we accept the project plan as written. David seconded. Roll call vote: John Pedersen initially abstained but later changed his vote to No. David: Yes. Lisa: yes. Lisa will consider anything specific that we can amend, but otherwise we can proceed as it is now. Charles: yes, with a qualifier that we should make sure the trees will grow. Diane: yes. Motion passed with 5 yes votes and 1 no vote.

Diane said that saying that “the plan needs amending”, and saying that “we need to carry it out properly”, should be two different discussions. We have an action plan, and we can either change it to do something different, or we can make sure we carry it out properly and plant the right thing in the right spot. The plan does not go into detail about what plants must be planted in wet vs. dry areas. If we cannot find sassafras trees to purchase, Diane will need to ask for a budget change to a different species. We may consider and discuss later using the Commission’s budget for the other items John Pedersen is requesting.

The Roots for Rivers Giampietro Park project is also coming up, but we have not yet seen the details of that project. This discussion was tabled until such time as Emma from the American Littoral Society can be present. John Pedersen will research different tubes and what is available from Plantra Co. This project may have similar issues as the other one. Survival rates of Atlantic white-cedar were discussed, as well as how “in-kind” matches work. Next steps include visiting both sites with both Melanie and Emma. We will revisit this at the March meeting.

For conversations on the Giampietro Riparian buffers, Diane would like to include Dale Elbeuf, Recreation Superintendent, and John Betz from the Cumberland County Mosquito Commission. The County cleared some areas for stream access for equipment, so we don’t want to plant in areas where someone might come through later and remove what we planted.

Other events: Michelle Villar from Vineland High School is hosting a **trail cleanup** on the Board of Ed property across the street from the High School, and could use help.

For **Willow Oak**, John Lauria has previously built a wood and steel walkway bridge over some wet areas of trail and would like to build another similar one. He is requesting the Commission provide some steel materials. He already has some composite decking material. A motion to approve up to \$150 for steel was made by Charles Valentine and seconded by Lisa Fleming. All were in favor. John Lauria will get a price list and send the estimate to Diane. As far as stone for the muddy trail, we will continue to talk about it in the spring.

Diane said Sue would like input on tree species to be purchased for **Arbor Day**. The members are o.k. with whatever she gets, except for purple plum. John Pedersen said VDID would like trees again, and Ellison School could use shade trees. If the soldier's home wants trees again, John can let Sue know. Sue has requested pamphlets to be purchased from the Arbor Day Foundation at a cost of \$9.95 each bundle of 2000. A motion to purchase 2 bundles of pamphlets was made by Charles Valentine and seconded by David Lowenstern. All were in favor.

Diane reminded members that we still have an open purchase order with Market Fuel for 6 more **educational display boards**. Regarding the library display, there was a small blurb and a picture in the Southern NJ Today paper, but the Daily Journal did not print it.

There is a fundraiser breakfast at **Ellison School** on March 30 and they would like a few of our boards on display. John Pedersen and Sue Fenili have both been in touch with others regarding participating in this event.

A **calendar** of everything coming up was reviewed. There are a lot of events upcoming. With all of the plantings, and the seedling giveaway, Sue has Arbor Day, and Diane said she is hesitant to try to add Founders Day and the Ecofair to the list. We are also invited to participate in the VHS Super Science Saturday May 13 and another rainbarrel workshop at the high school.

For the **Giampietro Park Raingarden**, there are still perennials that need to be planted this spring.

Milkweed/wildflower areas: John still needs to get together with Mark Guglielmi to identify and list the areas. It was noted that Monarch butterfly populations are going up. John P. and David will arrange to get together for some maintenance of one of those areas.

David did purchase and send a card to **Michelle Ernst** for all of her work. Since she did get the card and gift card, it was decided that an additional letter from the Commission is not needed.

Diane said at the State level, there is pending legislation that would enable towns or counties to create **Stormwater Authorities**. She updated members on the purpose of the legislation, and how the legislation functions on a local level to encourage green infrastructure. She has seen conversations on social media where people might be misinformed as to the reach of those types of Authorities.

Site plans were reviewed with some issues noticed on the plan for U-Store-It on Main Road regarding excessive impervious coverage and set-backs that are near houses. The application requests to go from 38% to 50% lot coverage, and the zone allows for 15%. John Pedersen made a motion that when they're going from 12% to 50% they should have to do something to compensate for it. They are supposed to prove a hardship for it, and they should mitigate and make their property nicer, such as by installing green roofs. They should be wary of impervious coverage and that they should take more sensitivity around residential areas. John Casadia seconded. David abstained, everyone else yes,

David made a motion to adjourn the meeting. All were in favor.