

Environmental Commission
Regular Meeting Minutes
July 8, 2019

The meeting was called to order at 7:10 p.m. by Chairperson Diane Amico. Present were Diane Amico, Sue Fenili, Lisa Fleming, John Pedersen, and Charles Valentine. David Lowenstern and John Casadia entered later. The public notice was read into the record.

One correction was noted to the **minutes** of the June 10, 2019 meeting, which was to change the reference of the Mormon group to the LDS Church. A motion to approve the minutes with the correction was made by Charles Valentine and seconded by John Pedersen. All were in favor.

Diane passed around a printout of the current **Budget Report**, with the balances left in each line item circled. There is \$3000 left in professional services. The balances left in the Training and Dues/Subscriptions line items will be used for the upcoming Shade Tree Federation meeting and the ANJEC membership renewal. John Pedersen said he can use some more mulch.

David Lowenstern entered the meeting.

The **budget** printouts for the Developer's Fund and the No Net Loss grant were also passed around. Diane ordered t-shirts from Custom Graphics, as they had the cheapest price. The wildflower signs were not ordered, because the motion was for an order of 18 signs, but David was going to see if there was a quantity discount. There was not a discount.

John Casadia entered the meeting

Diane discussed the **Sunshine Law** and how it relates to the Commission. There was discussion and clarification about what can and cannot be done via email.

Lisa said the **Library Raingarden** has been installed. The plants were planted mostly ahead of schedule and had not been watered. Lisa watered it over the weekend, but going forward there are watering issues to be resolved. There is a hose and a key for the spigot, but the closest spigot in the back of the building is stripped. The front spigot is very far from the raingarden and requires several lengths of hose. There is also an issue over who will do it. The drains have not yet been re-routed. The number of plants put in the ground was discussed. John Pedersen said the mulch should not be up against the building and the gutters will need regular cleaning. Some solutions were discussed, such as stone for against the building and sprinklers. Redirecting the drains can be done by a local plumber or someone who deals with sheet metal. Public Works has not yet done the City Hall Annex drains either, and cannot commit to a time-frame. John Pedersen will research professionals that can re-route the drains, as the library's drains are cast iron; a professional can do it in a way that will not destroy the cast iron. John Casadia made a motion to table the issue of hiring someone to reroute the drains until we see if Public Works or Rutgers does it. Sue Fenili and Charles Valentine seconded. Roll call vote: Lisa, no. David, abstain. John Pedersen, no. Charles, yes. John Casadia, yes. Sue, yes. Diane, yes. John Pedersen will look for a professional that can give a quote on the drains and maybe also the spigot. A motion to spend up to \$500 for a plumber was made by John Casadia and seconded by Sue Fenili. All were in favor except Davie who voted "no". David made a motion that we look into putting in a rain-barrel and diverter with hoses. Diane said there are some maintenance issues with rain-barrels including the need for mosquito dunks and freezing in winter. The raingarden was designed by an engineer to function a certain way without an interim piece of equipment. There was no

second for the motion. Redirecting the drains will help but until that is done, watering is needed to get the plants established, which would require about 4 lengths of hose to reach. After discussion about having the plumber also look at the spigot in the back of the building, Lisa said she will handle the watering. The three inches of mulch will help to keep the need for weeding down until possibly the Fall. Diane had a discussion with Dale from Recreation about general maintenance for raingardens. She discussed with him the state-wide push for green infrastructure, but Public Works is not on-board with the need to weed, nor are the employees knowledgeable on plant species or what to weed. Diane offered to give a short training to the employees.

For the **Library Parking Lot**, Diane received a plan and quote from Lawn and Garden Landscaping for planting of 4 trees, a row of hedges, and some native plants in the front median. The price is for \$3500 for 4 London Plane trees and a row of Witchhazel, and the front median would be planted to mirror what is in the butterfly garden further back in the same site. The quote was facilitated by Martin in the City Engineering office, who will work with the vendor should we decide to pursue by issuing a requisition. John and Ellen Pedersen had an alternate proposal that includes using a Landscape Architect. This would be only for design, not implementation. John Pedersen discussed landscapers lack of knowledge on how to plant trees or prep the ground. A landscape architect can come up with a sustainable plan. Lack of maintenance was discussed, as well as native vs. urban street trees. The quote from Lawn & Garden, along with the offer of help from Martin, is right now on the table as an option. If the Commission pursues other avenues, we will be doing it without the help of Engineering. David made a motion that we accept the offer and plan for \$3500. The motion was seconded by Charles Valentine. Roll Call Vote: Lisa, yes. David, yes. John Pedersen, abstain. Charlie, yes. John Casadia, yes. Sue, abstain. Diane, yes. There was some discussion of whether witch-hazel will grow into a hedge. Diane will ask if there is another plant that can substitute for the witch-hazel.

John Pedersen said that **volunteer days** have continued every Saturday. He can use some more mulch, but the current vendor is closing. We will talk about it at the next meeting. Garoppo Stone never received the purchase orders that the city's Purchasing Department mailed to them. That is now straightened out, and the stone can be dropped off. The area needs to be clearly marked if not one is going to be present, or they can meet someone there. Diane gave the contact info to John Pedersen, and he will arrange for the drop-off of the stone in the parking lot. John Casadia offered assistance with his tractor. As far as continuing efforts, the paint for Giampietro Park is in the closet in the Annex office. Diane asked if someone could meet at the office to get the paint, as it is heavy to carry.

It is unknown whether the grass at **Willow Oak** has been cut. John Casadia will follow up. The driveway and around the field perimeter needed cutting last time anyone checked.

Lisa said that at the **Giampietro Park** raingarden some kind of animal is eating some of the plants. There are other things that are growing nicely. John Pedersen cleaned up along the guardrail, and said there has been no mowing along Lincoln Ave in the milkweed area.

Regarding the **Wildflower signs**, Diane said the price from Garden State for 18 signs is \$997, or 25 signs is \$1272. The quantity discount is only around \$5/sign. Posts are \$16 each regardless of quantity. John Pedersen said that the City and the County have been cooperative by not cutting several milkweed areas, but signs would bring more attention. A motion to order 6 signs from Garden State Signs at a cost of \$332.40 was made by David Lowenstern and seconded by Lisa Fleming. All were in favor. David will be the contact person with the vendor.

Regarding the Maurice River Conservation Area, John Pedersen said Citizens United is looking for trail projects.

Diane discussed the NJ **Sustainable Jersey** Program. Although the Commission is not involved, our activities do count for points toward the City's certification. More information is available on the Sustainable Jersey website. All are invited to attend meetings. John Pedersen said he sees a lot of unsustainable practices in Vineland, including cutting trees down. Diane reviewed the various aspects of the program and what actions Vineland has completed to date for points through the program. David made a motion that the Commission get involved with Sustainable Jersey. John Casadia seconded. All were in favor, none opposed. Diane explained how the program works and how cities earn points. The points are not permanent and need to be maintained and updated.

Site plan reviews:

Medical Marijuana Dispensary- applicant is not asking for any variances of concern and the development will result in low impervious coverage.

Vineland Auto Electric on N. West Blvd. - no environmental issues noted.

Reconstruction of West Landis Avenue – John Pedersen said having a sidewalk is good, but it is right up against the edge of the road. Some litter already washes into the creek in this area, and the plan shows no tree planting. The ground is steep at the creek embankment. It would be better to have a nice pedestrian path.

In response to a follow-up question on the results of the Shop Rite application, John Casadia said there was no response to our recommendations.

Diane sent **thank you letters** to Citizens United and Vineland High School for their volunteer efforts on the two large tree plantings recently. The letters were passed around to read.

New business:

John Pedersen presented a plan he has developed for **Vineland Tree Restoration** to encourage discussion on how we want to spend our money. A Science Magazine article was quoted in the Daily Journal as reporting that the most cost effective way to combat global warming is to plant trees. By taking the global recommendation and dividing the numbers, it shows that our part would mean having 133 trees per person in Vineland, which equals 88,000 trees. The plan contains tree counts and possible planting locations. The Plan was officially entered into record. Also presented in the plan were the proposed budget and a city-run nursery. John said Dale has been supportive of trees as long as the crews can mow around them. The school grounds in Vineland are devoid of trees. There was discussion about the Landis Avenue trees. Diane was informed that there are water issues in the basements of the buildings, but members pointed out that many of the stormdrains are clogged with leaves and debris and backing up from lack of maintenance.

The "Space Tree" needs an identifying sign; this can be discussed at the next meeting.

A motion to adjourn was made by David and seconded by John Casadia. All were in favor.