

Vineland Environmental Commission
Regular Meeting
March 11, 2019

The meeting was called to order at 7:06 p.m. by Chairperson Diane Amico. The Public Notice was read into record. Present were: Diane Amico, John Casadia, Sue Fenili, Charles Valentine, and guest Melanie Cucunato, Watershed Ambassador. Anthony Coffee, Carolyn Singer from the NJ League of Conservation Voters, and John and Ellen Pedersen entered later.

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

Budget report: We are operating under a full budget now. There is a pending purchase of brochures for Sue for Arbor Day. Since the City changed purchasing systems and since it has been so long since we ordered these, we need to get The Arbor Day Foundation set up as a vendor all over again before making the purchase.

We have **certificates of appreciation** for Chris Raively, the Scout who did work at Willow Oak. One is from the Commission and the other is from the Mayor. The project is complete but he has not been able to make it to our meetings.

Carolyn Singer and Anthony Coffee entered the meeting.

The **Giampietro Park Roots for Rivers** project is moving along quickly, and is scheduled to begin on March 20 with Citizens United, followed by our two community days on March 22nd and 23rd. Sunday is open in case an extra day is needed. A site walk-through took place a few days ago with Diane Amico, Emma Melvin, John Betz, and John Pedersen. The Recreation Department has requested that nothing be planted in front of the lake. The Mosquito Commission wants access to the stream. The meeting was productive regarding observation of water ponding and flow. For the planting, someone is needed who is strong enough to handle the auger. Vineland High School is planning to help on Friday, including both the S.H.A.P.E. club and the freshman students who need community service hours. It would be helpful for people to bring shovels. The event has been posted on the City's Facebook page. The plan is to plant 1000 trees. The grant will not cover removal of invasives. The Littoral Society is planning the locations of each tree, and Emma will direct volunteers as to the right place for each tree species. We are helping with outreach and getting volunteers.

John and Ellen Pedersen entered the meeting.

Roots for Rivers – EPA Superfund Site. Melanie is trying to set up a site walk-through with EPA. John Pedersen said he is concerned about planting late in the season and availability of water. Diane said repairing the deer fence will be discussed with EPA at the walk-through. Several pieces of fence are down. The grant terms require all trees to be in the ground by May 31. Melanie is exploring different types of tree tubes that break apart as the tree grows; Diane has not ordered anything yet. Plantra, the vendor for tubes, does not have a NJ business number and is working on obtaining one. We are talking to EPA and Nature Conservancy (the grant administrator) on the other details. The quality of the soil was discussed and whether the EPA returned the original soil to the site.

Flood Defense /Stormwater Utilities: Carolyn Singer from the NJ League of Conservation Voters discussed flooding problems in the State and the new Stormwater Utilities bill that would allow cities to create

Stormwater Authorities. This would encourage green infrastructure. The bill is due to be signed by the Governor on March 18. The League of Conservation Voters has targeted 12 towns for outreach. The towns were chosen because of Environmental Justice issues and flood data which was obtained from the Pinelands Preservation Alliance. A Stormwater Feasibility study can be done to determine the stormwater problem in an area vs. a City's budget. We already had an Impervious Cover assessment done by Rutgers, and two related green infrastructure projects are being done this spring as a result of that assessment. Rutgers has also recently done several raingarden workshops for residents. The League of Conservation Voters is educating townships and residents on the both the issues and the new legislation, and is looking for municipal support. Diane had previous communications with Russell Swanson from VDIG, who was interested in stormwater projects on individual buildings. Diane said some flooding is caused by blocked storm drains. Our City administration would have to make the decision on whether they want to impose a fee on residents. Diane asked what other Mayors in South Jersey have been doing. The bill is still new. The League is looking for three towns to be part of a pilot program, to be committed to doing a Stormwater Feasibility Study. Carolyn circulated a petition to encourage lawmakers to consider looking into stormwater regulation. John Pedersen made a motion we sign the petition as a Commission. It was seconded by Anthony Coffee. All were in favor. Carolyn clarified that the petition is not a petition for the City to create a Stormwater Authority, but is for advocating for flood defense.

Volunteer work days continued this weekend with clearing of trails and litter cleanup across from VHS with Michelle Villar and the S.H.A.P.E. Club. Overall, weekend litter collections are averaging 30-40 bags of trash. Diane was contacted by a Vineland High School teacher looking for opportunities for students to earn service hours, and they are now on the volunteer notification list. For city trees, a motion was made by Charles Valentine to order mulch in the amount of \$600, and seconded by John Casadia. All were in favor. Different types of mulch were discussed. Diane will call SJ Landscape to see if pricing is the same for all types of mulch, otherwise the Purchase Order needs to be specific. Also needed are wooden stakes. John Casadia will check to see what farmers use and where they get them, possibly from the Vineland Produce Co-op.

Arbor Day notices were sent out on February 20th to all school principals. Trees will be delivered on May 2 and planted on May 3. It is being done later this year due to school summer break and testing before the summer break. Trees are being ordered from Hopewell Nursery. October Glory Maples are planned for the schools, and John Pedersen requested sycamores for the downtown area. Sue would like to get stakes for the school's trees, in addition to the bark protectors, but Sue will verify through the Board of Education that they will allow stakes. The stakes would need to be large enough for bigger trees. At the next meeting we will discuss it again.

Education events include Ellison School on March 30, where John Pedersen will represent the Commission. Ellen will have a butterfly table and will use a couple of our educational boards. Sharon Flaim is providing some promo items to hand out. Diane will put the word out requesting help at the table. Also coming up is VHS Super Science Saturday on April 13 from 9 a.m. to 12:00. We are not committed to attending. John Pedersen offered to man a table. Diane will contact Michelle Villar. We still have 6 boards on an open purchase order for Michelle Ernst to do.

Willow Oak – We also still need a map of Willow Oak for the flyer. We had set aside money for materials for John Lauria to construct a small path bridge, but someone gave him some materials, so the purchase is not needed. Regarding lighting in the parking lots, Diane looked into it, and the Maple Avenue parking lot is not in the VMEU service area. In general, various city departments would purchase their own lighting and VMEU would install. John Boyle suggested we try to petition City Council for security lighting. This would be done through Business Administration. Diane asked if anyone would talk to City Council. Diane will find out what is the process. John Pedersen offered to go to City Council. John Casadia said all bluebird houses have been

cleaned out. The number of houses has decreased; one is missing and one was burned. Other locations that he maintains have bluebirds nesting. As a follow up to discussions at previous meetings regarding stone for muddy paths into Willow Oak, a motion to purchase \$300 worth of ¾" gray stone was made by Charles Valentine and seconded by Sue Fenili. All were in favor.

Site plan reviews – The Dollar Store application that we commented on a while back did not get approved, mostly due to problems with traffic patterns.

The availability of **office space** at the old Board of Ed building is 99% definite. Our area would include a reception area, two small rooms, and a closet. We were given a big table. John Lille has purchased carpet, new paint on the walls, one new desk with chair, and four chairs for the table. This will be the first time in 20 years that the Commission will have a home. There is a lot of wall space for the educational boards.

Tree committee:

The **Seedling Giveaway** will be held on April 1. Diane passed around a sign-up sheet for volunteers to cover different hours during the day. For tags, we are given a template and we have to print them ourselves. We won't know what tree species until they are picked up by John Casadia on the Friday before, then there is usually a scramble to print the tags and to tag the trees. Ellen offered to assist with tagging. There may be some high-school students helping.

Community Forestry Management Plan- The resolution to maintain a 51% tree canopy within the City is outdated. We had previously done an assessment of aeriels to estimate the canopy cover and the Commission had made a decision to maintain it. Diane would like to get an updated canopy goal resolution. Diane asked if the Tree Committee could meet to decide on a new canopy goal, or at least to decide to maintain the same goal. The Tree Committee is tasked with the CFMP plan and goals. John Pedersen said that we have lost trees in storms, so the current canopy is likely less. He saw a lecture by Bernard Isaacson, an Assistant State forester, and will look into the methods used for estimating tree canopy. Diane said the Annual Accomplishment Report for NJ Forestry was done and sent in. She passed out membership cards for the NJ Shade Tree Federation.

Regarding **money** for tree planting projects, the grant for the Roots for Rivers Maurice River project provides half of the money upfront and half when we are done. However, we have to make the purchases all at the beginning, so we may have to tap into our tree planting fund and then we will get it back afterwards. There is a lot of work involved in implementing projects. VDID wants to do a center city tree planting. Diane said they will plan it out, and we can assist with funding, but they will need to implement it.

Zoning Board and other **development applications** were passed around for review. Rudy's airport has applied for a wetlands delineation. Regarding the other projects, John Pedersen one involves a bridge across the stream on Landis Avenue, which is concerning. John Casadia will find out more information. An office plan near the Freezers on Mill Rd, involves wetlands.

A motion to adjourn was made by John Casadia and seconded by Charles Valentine. Meeting adjourned.