

Vineland Environmental Commission
Minutes – Regular meeting
February 10, 2020

The meeting was called to order at 7:02 p.m. by Chairperson Diane Amico. The public notice was read into record. Present were: Diane Amico, Charlie Valentine, David Lowenstern, Brad Giordano, Lisa Fleming, John Pedersen, guests Nora Zielinski, Casey Lippincott, and John Gallo and his family. John Casadia entered later.

Casey Lippincott is the new CCIA **Watershed Ambassador**. She offered assistance with projects and partnerships for cleanups and other Cumberland County events.

A motion to approve the **minutes** of the January 13, 2020 meeting was made by Charles Valentine and seconded by Lisa Fleming. All were in favor. David abstained.

A motion to pay the **NJ Shade Tree Federation membership** renewal for \$170 was made by Lisa Fleming and seconded by Charles Valentine. All were in favor.

The **budget** is still not populated yet with our line items. The two grants are the same as last month, and the printouts were passed around for review.

For the **2020 Tree Recovery Campaign** seedling giveaway, we are set up at the YMCA. A sign-up sheet for volunteers was passed around. There will be two different tables, since the seedlings will be in a different room than the entrance. We still need someone to pick up the seedlings in Sewell on the Friday before the event. Diane will send email with the address for pickup.

John Pedersen reviewed the order form for purchases of **additional seedlings**. Seedlings are approximately \$1 each, and he can find places to plant for about 100. He can pick them up. The seedlings will be available for pickup on the same day as our seedling giveaway, but the pickup location is at Parvins. A motion for \$100 to be reserved for additional seedlings was made by Charles Valentine and seconded by David Lowenstern. All were in favor. John P. will send a list of species to order to Diane so she can place the order.

John Casadia entered the meeting. He introduced **Johnny Gallo**, who dedicated a day to help build bluebird houses. John Casadia demonstrated how the houses are constructed and how Johnny Gallo helped with the construction. Pictures were passed around. The Commission presented Johnny with a certificate of appreciation.

March 14 was originally scheduled for a **second-Saturday cleanup** at South Vineland Park, but will be cancelled due to a conflict with the Pinelands Short-course. We can move this to the third Saturday.

John P. said at **Giampietro** last month, several VHS students put stakes on the trees. We have not heard back from The VHS life skills class in response to the email asking if they wanted to help with this.

The **Events list** has been updated to clarify which events are not yet scheduled. Scheduled events are already on the Google calendar on the city website. The events on the list are things for which members previously expressed interest, and are for discussion. The highlighted items are things we are obligated to do. Casey Lippincott said the CCIA Trash Hunt starts 3/21 and is a week long. The South Jersey Scrub event starts on 3/28. John P. discussed various areas we have done in the past and some that we can try to do this year. We can check with CCIA regarding which sites already have registrants participating there.

John P. said the **Cumberland County EcoFair** is a good education opportunity. Several members expressed interest. Diane will get the registration forms and put it on the calendar. Diane said the Sustainable Jersey Green Team is planning a Vineland EcoFair for some time in August. They are partnering with VHS. It will be planned for outdoors, but will move indoors if there is bad weather.

John P. said the LDS Church volunteers have backed out a little bit. He started to spread mulch, and did some work at the library. He has not recently heard from the community service worker.

ANJEC and Rutgers contacted Diane about planning an **outreach event for the raingardens**. They would like to invite city officials. Diane said the drains at the library should be finished before an announcement is scheduled to be made. We are waiting for Cheryl Reardon to get back to us on when the drains will be done.

John P. attended the Chamber of Commerce luncheon where the Mayor gave a **State of the City address**. The Mayor mentioned the Environmental Commission, and also John's cleanup efforts, in his speech. The Mayor also mentioned the Sustainable Jersey certification, raingardens at the Annex and Library, the seedling giveaway, and the Maurice River tree planting.

John said there is still a lot of litter in the City, but that the new trash cans are helping. He cleaned the **wildflower areas** along the boulevard. The City has not cut down the wildflowers near Giampietro. He is in touch with the County engineer and is still planning to get the signs up after getting official approval.

John P. is still working on the mapping of Willow Oak. The trails are measured, and the parking lot looks good. The stones are helping on the trail. John P. and John Lauria made several bridges. For the March 21 CCIA Trash Hunt, John P. said both Mayslanding Rd. and Union Rd. need to be done, regardless of whether someone else is already doing it. Diane will find out if either of those locations has been registered.

Site plan reviews:

Vasquez & Diaz market at Park Ave. & Blvd. The shopping center on the southwest corner has expanded their parking lot without approval. John P. will do comments on that.

Rovagnati Meats submitted a utility plan, but it was noted they previously did not include trees in their site plan.

An application has been submitted to the NJDEP by ARH Associates for removal of vegetation, habitat enhancement, and public access trail at **Burnt Mill Pond**. It was noted that no one from the City has contacted the Commission with any information.

Wawa, proposing construction on W. Landis Ave., has asked for signage variances. The stream is behind the property, and litter is a concern. They are asking for four signs, vs. two allowed. John P. said the current sign standards are good. Light pollution is another concern.

The former **Shop Rite on Delsea Dr.** will be turned into self-storage. John Casadia said a condition of their approval is to repair the entire parking lot area within 2 years. The self-storage use has already been approved.

The **Board of Education** applied for site improvements on the former Landis School site that includes extensive paving. We just received the plan today for review. Permitted lot coverage is 50%, they are already at 52%, and are planning for 64%, which is well in excess of permitted impervious coverage. The plan includes paving the entire area west of the field, and there are no trees planned and no landscape plan. Since the Planning Board meeting is in two days, in lieu of typing a letter, John Casadia will bring the Commission's comments to the meeting. The plan was reviewed in detail as to the location of the pavement. There is one area where a previous use for trailers will not be needed. Members asked whether the Board of Ed. can remove that concrete/pavement and plant grass or trees there.

Diane filed the Annual Accomplishment Report as required for the NJ Community Forestry Program. It was passed around for review.

An **ANJEC Grant** is available for \$1500. There is a list of acceptable types of projects, and the deadline is April 3. If anyone has a project they would like to do, contact Diane regarding the application process. The announcement was passed around for review.

Creating a **City nursery** was discussed. The needs for this include water, pots, soil, and security. John P. currently puts seedlings in pots to allow to get bigger, as smaller seedlings would not be viable as street trees. Although the City does not like trees near power lines, some cities are planting offset, just inside of the lines. Possible locations for a nursery were discussed. Diane said there is concern about security, and that there will be ongoing water expenses that will need to be paid.

As a follow up to the **new Arbor Day procedures**, the letter to teachers was revised by Sue and Diane to incorporate the items we discussed regarding more hands-on involvement by the Commission. Currently, many of the Arbor Day trees are dying from lack of water and mower damage. Diane reviewed her discussion with Paul Farinacchio for members who were not present at the last meeting. The teachers are doing the Arbor Day lessons, but the custodians do the planting. Overall, the Board of Education staff has been decreased. There are no tree guards on any of the trees, although these were provided to each school. The Commission will now be involved in location selection, as the Board of Ed. has indicated they want fewer obstacles. Clustering or planting near a wood-line is preferred. Drought-tolerant trees should be used, as watering is not likely to be done. John P. would like to mulch the trees. It was noted that if any member wants to go on a school property for any reason, they must first notify the school, security, and Paul Farinacchio.

John P. will work with **Jay Adamson** on the tree maintenance planning. Mr. Adamson's last email suggested we wait until spring. However, pruning should be done in fall/winter when trees are dormant. We need to decide what exactly we want to do.

John Casadia has a few extra **bluebird boxes** if anyone has a good location. The best place is a farm or field environment at least 40 feet from a wooded area.

A motion to adjourn was made by Charlie and seconded by John Casadia.