

Vineland Environmental Commission
Meeting Minutes
October 13, 2020

The meeting was called to order at 7:15 pm by Chairperson Diane Amico. Present were Diane Amico (in person), David Lowenstern (virtual), Lisa Fleming (virtual), John Pedersen (in person), Charlie Valentine (in person), and guest Nora Zielinski (virtual). John Casadia (in person) entered the meeting later. The secretary dispensed with reading the public notice.

A motion to approve the minutes of the July 13, 2020 meeting was made by Lisa Fleming and seconded by John Pedersen. All were in favor.

The Budget Report is the same as the last time we met. Diane reviewed how much is left in each line item. The total for all is about \$1000, plus Professional Services which still has \$3000. The cutoff for 2020 spending is end of November.

Reappointments for four members are due to expire soon. Three people have said they would like to continue to serve, and Diane is still waiting to hear from Brad Giordano. She will contact the Mayor to follow up on the status.

Trees ordered, but not used, for Arbor Day are still waiting to be picked up at Hopewell Nursery. John Pedersen will get them and find a place to plant them.

John Casadia entered the meeting.

The entire calendar of events has been on hold due to the pandemic. John Pedersen's individual efforts have continued on Saturdays. The new trees at Giampietro need work. He has restaked some and fixed mesh, but there are still a lot of trees leaning. Some have branches coming through the netting. There is plenty of room there for volunteers to spread out. A significant amount of work is needed in an area where there are bugs, tall grass, and maybe some vines. The Disc Golf Club has been cutting back some of the small trees and other vegetation.

John Pedersen requested to purchase more stone for Willow Oak, and lumber to fix the split rail fence. The stone should not be limestone. A motion to purchase \$300 of stone from Garappo was made by John Casadia and seconded by Charlie Valentine. All were in favor. A motion to purchase fence lumber for \$150 was made by Charlie Valentine and seconded by John Casadia. All were in favor. Hardware for the fence can be purchased on the Reubens' open p.o.

John Casadia requested to build additional birdhouses, similar to last time. A motion to spend \$300 for materials was made by Charlie Valentine and seconded by John Pedersen and Lisa Fleming. All were in favor. John would like to get wood from Lowe's this time, as the quality is better and is cheaper than from the previous vendor. Diane will check the purchase arrangements that the City has for Lowe's.

John Casadia asked about the possibility of doing a fundraising sale of birdhouses. Diane will check with the City regarding whether this is possible.

Regarding pesticide spraying, there is now one person working for Public Works who is certified to do all of the spraying. The City gave a general notice on Facebook that there will be spraying around the City. It is unclear whether this satisfies their notification requirement. We still don't know what chemicals are being used. John Pedersen said they are spraying near streambanks, specifically on both sides of Landis Avenue near Panther and on Lincoln near Giampietro.

Lisa left the meeting.

John Casadia was informed by a landscaper that many of the chemicals currently in use stay on the plant and do not wash off into water, nor go down into the soil. Diane said Dale Elbeuf is no longer involved building and grounds maintenance, so we'll have a new contact in Public Works. John Pedersen has been getting more cooperation from the City and County regarding leaving the wildflower areas unmowed.

There are new raingarden signs up at the Annex and Library, but we still need one at Giampietro. John Pedersen said any sign we get should match the style of the ones the American Littoral Society put near the new trees.

John Pedersen has been at Willow Oak weekly, and the litter has not been bad. He notified Mark Guglielmi that there is a big tree down across the trail. If it is still there going into the winter, John Casadia offered to help remove it.

Diane said that Lisa has been working at the raingardens. Giampietro needs work and more plants, as many of the plants have died. Lisa has been purchasing some on her own. In the spring, it would be helpful if we could buy plants. At the library, there is a mulberry that she cut back, but it keeps coming back. John Casadia will take a look.

Diane got a call from a resident, Jerry Blom, regarding the Giampietro trees. He has been walking in the park and said the planting area looks abandoned. He noticed tree branches growing through the mesh and many trees leaning on their sides. Diane said the Littoral Society interns are done for the year and it is not expected that that group will keep returning to do maintenance. John Pedersen spent a few days re-staking, but the bamboo does not stay up. If the branches are coming through the mesh, it is not working for deer protection anyway. The extra boxes of bamboo stakes have apparently been stolen from near the stream. It would be nice to get the trees standing back up again. Mr. Blom told Diane that he has been fixing a few himself every time he is out there.

Planning and Zoning applications were reviewed. Some opportunities to comment were missed, since we have not had regular meetings. It was noted that Davey Cold Storage is seeking 75% impervious coverage. It looks like they would be clearing 4 acres of a total 11 acres, but no tree survey was provided to us. The site plan has a page for "landscape and lighting", but there is no landscape, just lighting. Since this application may be heard at tomorrow's Planning Board meeting, there is not time to draft and distribute written comments. John Casadia will bring the Commissions concerns to the meeting if this is on the agenda, and will ask for a tree survey. There is concern that a trend may develop, as in similar previous projects, of applicants claiming that their forested area does not meet the definition of a forest.

Nora asked about the Garden Road Truckstop sign, which is already constructed, but non-conforming. The applicant is asking for retroactive approval. Previously, there was a question on this project's landscaping regarding a deficiency in the number of trees. John Casadia said the applicant moved the sign closer to the road because there were trees from a neighboring property that would have blocked the view. The applicant also made the sign larger than was approved.

Four people are registered for the NJ Shade Tree Federation Conference, which is virtual this year. Once registered, a person can join into whatever sessions they want over the 5-day conference, except for the CORE sessions. Diane, Lisa, John Casadia, and David are registered.

Jay Adamson has been paid for work completed to date, but it is unknown whether he is willing to continue on with the rest of the project.

John Pedersen said the City cut down street trees along West Ave, and that doing sidewalk work using a smaller machine might be less invasive. David said the City is cutting trees and roots, during construction of sidewalks on Mayfair near Park Ave. He messaged the Mayor's office but got no response. John Pedersen said it would be good to get the Tree Protection specifications done for Engineering to use. A tree committee meeting is to be set up to work on those, possibly as a virtual meeting. John will set up a Go-to-Meeting and Ellen will send out a few different possible dates. As long as there are 3 or fewer people participating, no public notice is needed.

Diane said our 5-year Community Forestry Management Plan is due to be updated by 2021. Also the ERI can use some updating, especially the mapping and some error corrections on the table of contents. A consultant would be needed for the ERI, but the CFMP can be done in-house.

John Pedersen said a tree inventory would be useful, to see where we stand with our canopy. It was noted that the Board of Education is removing trees we gave them.

John Casadia motion to adjourn. Seconded by Charlie, all were in favor.