

Vineland Environmental Commission
Meeting Minutes
April 12, 2021

The meeting was called to order at 7:10 p.m. by Chairperson Diane Amico. The public notice was read into record. In attendance in person were Diane Amico, Charles Valentine, John Casadia, and Anthony Coffee, and virtually were Lisa Fleming, Sue Fenili, David Lowenstern, and guest Ellen Pedersen. John Pedersen joined later.

A motion to approve the **minutes** of the March 8, 2021 meeting was made by Charles Valentine and seconded by Lisa Fleming. All were in favor.

After we were asked by the Business Administrator to switch to an all-virtual **meeting format** in order to avoid the expense of City Hall evening security guards, the City's IS Division set up the Chairperson with different meeting software. However, there was not enough time to do proper revised public notices before this meeting. Other City Boards and Commissions are returning to in-person meetings. Some options are to either go all-virtual or to change our meeting night to coincide with another Commission that already has a security guard scheduled. A motion to change our meeting night to the first Monday of every month was made by John Casadia and seconded by Sue Fenili. All were in favor. The public notice will need to be changed and re-posted.

We are still on a temporary **budget**, so line items are not fully populated yet to print a report. We should get the same amounts as last year. A purchase request for replacements for expired items in our First Aid kit is needed. A motion to purchase up to \$50 of First Aid items was made by Charlie Valentine and seconded by John Casadia. All were in favor.

Diane has been trying to purchase the previously discussed **tree pulling tool**, but none of the City-approved vendors carry it, and Reuben Hardware's suppliers do not carry it. To do further research to see if a third-party vendor can get one and sell it to us, Diane needs to know exactly which one is preferred, as there are several different models on the internet. Other possible sources are the same company where we purchased the tree diapers, and it was noted that the City is now purchasing from Amazon. A motion to make the purchase, if we can find one, for up to \$250, was made by Charlie Valentine and seconded by John Casadia. All were in favor.

The **Tree seedling giveaway** will be on Saturday, April 24, from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Volunteers are needed and Diane will send out the email request. So far the following people have offered to attend: Diane, John & Ellen Pedersen, Lisa Fleming, and Anthony Coffee. John Pedersen had previously offered to pick up the seedlings on the day before, April 23 around 10:30/11:00 a.m., in Jackson, NJ. The event has been posted on the City's Facebook page and Diane has already received a favorable response from several residents.

Regarding **Volunteer days**, Diane said that both events at Willow Oak were well attended by Vineland High School students. Public Works dropped off tools, shovels, and a pile of stone in the parking lot in advance. The wet areas along the whole east trail have been filled with stone. This Saturday, April 17th we will be at Giampietro Park, in a partnership with the American Littoral Society, to straighten up trees

and remove invasives. Diane has not heard from any students, maybe because when the notice went out they were on spring break. Melanie Druziako from the Rotary Club will be there, so that morning we can take some time to discuss with her the flagpole planting project.

John Pedersen joined the meeting.

John Pedersen said there may be a plan to put a porta-potty at **Willow Oak**, and he noticed some of the fence has been removed. Diane received Lowe's receipts from the purchase of fence material, so the removal may be part of a larger project of fence replacement. Diane will follow up with Jeff Bordley on the status of the fence. In general, members are not in favor of putting a toilet there. John said that Dave Guidarini has offered to make some kind of donation. John Pedersen will find the preferred model of tree puller we could use, and will discuss with him. Different types of tree puller were discussed. David said during the tree removal at Willow Oak, he noticed there were a lot of praying mantis eggs on the trees. John gave an update on projects at Willow Oak.

John Casadia thanked the Commission for the ability to purchase the wood for the **bluebird houses**. He presented a sample of the houses he has been building. Several more of these have been placed at Pilla School, so they now have eleven. The Board of Education donated all of the poles. John has a few more houses and is looking for additional locations. John Pedersen said one possibility is South Vineland Park.

Regarding **Arbor Day trees**, Paul Farinacchio gave John Casadia the o.k. to put more trees at Pilla School to replace those that have died. Since we are not doing Arbor Day with schools this year, we can still make a purchase, and plant them at Pilla School. Sue will contact Hopewell Nursery for prices. Native trees are preferred. To plant 15 trees, we may need help from one of the groups like Rotary or Disc Golf.

John Pedersen previewed **Site Plan and Zoning applications** in advance of the meeting and made summary notes. John Casadia will bring the Commission's comments to the Planning Board meeting.

- Northeast Precast has no landscaping plan. They have already been pre-approved to take out all of the trees. It is a large development, but is not visible from the road. It would be nice to see a landscape plan or at least some trees along the entrance road.
- Inspira Medical on Orchard Road has an application to install a big generator in the front yard. Regarding aesthetics, it is about the size of a tractor trailer and will be located near an entrance to the City.
- There are two Dollar Store applications. One is on north Boulevard between Weymouth Rd. and Arbor Ave., which does propose landscaping. However, the one on Main Rd. and Wheat Rd. consists of widening the street, landscaping that is behind the building with only three poorly placed trees in front. It also proposes a basin in the front yard.
- Salon Promise LLC proposes a project at the old Amari Real Estate building. There is no basin, and the parking lot would drain toward South Vineland Park. There would be clearing of some trees to create lawn areas toward the lake side, but it would be better to leave the trees rather than have fertilized run-off running towards the pond.
- 313 S. 3rd St. is a zoning application that appears to be bringing an existing duplex or triplex up to current zoning. It was noted that many of the houses that were converted to multi-family don't have enough parking.

Lucia at the **American Littoral Society** contacted Diane about making a grant application to assist with mitigating draining issues at Giampietro Park. We had previously been advised by the Cumberland

County Mosquito Commission that we should aerate for compacted soil, put back the channels that someone graded to be flattened, plant more vegetation, and fix the broken drain. Any of these would qualify under this grant. Right now it is a general proposal, and Diane wrote a letter of support for the planning stages only. It is not an agreement. Members stated concern about drainage coming from ShopRite that will send water to the lake from roads and parking areas. It would be a better plan to pick up the drainage closer to the Shoprite before it gets to the park. If ALS get the grant, we can talk more at that point about how to proceed.

This year's **Shade Tree Federation conference** will be held in person, in Cherry Hill. Members can be on the lookout for the announcement.

Diane followed up on the link that Ellen forwarded from the Bee Conservancy for the **Sponsor-A-Hive** project. The site said a 501(3)c number was needed to be eligible, but it also said that schools are eligible. Diane made an inquiry, and is waiting for a reply. The project supports native bees, mostly mason bees, and requires participants to follow up with reporting on the hive for several years.

Regarding the tree removed by Public Works at **4 Evelyn Ave.** Diane received word from Jeff Bordley that it was an unhealthy tree. Therefore, nothing is preventing us from replacing it with a new tree. Maybe we can place an extra Arbor Day tree here.

Regarding purchasing **additional seedlings from the NJ State Nursery**, Diane was advised that when the list comes out every December, the nursery sells out quickly. If we want to get seedlings, we must order immediately for spring pickup. Also, Alexander McCartney indicated the State has a lot of Atlantic white cedar seedlings available very cheap or possibly free. John Pedersen said Willow Oak would benefit from Atlantic white cedar if we can figure out how to keep the deer from eating it.

Regarding the trees planted in 2019 on the **Blackwater Branch at Maurice River Parkway**, the perimeter fence has been fixed. John Pedersen would like to visit to see how things are doing. Diane can only get the key for a day at a time, so the timing needs to be coordinated. It was noted that the State installed Wildlife Management signs on the adjacent property.

The **Willow Oak flyer** still needs a small simple map in order to be complete. John Pedersen said the **tree I.D. signs** are broken. We have plastic that can be used if we can find someone to router the wording, and the plastic will need to be backed up with wood or something stable so the plastic does not crack again. John can make an inventory of what signs are missing and broken.

There was discussion about invasive **bamboo** at Giampietro and whether this could be removed and replaced with Atlantic white-cedar.

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