

Vineland Environmental Commission
Minutes – Regular Meeting
August 9, 2021

The meeting was called to order at 7:25 p.m. in the 4th floor conference room at Vineland City Hall by Chairperson Diane Amico. The meeting was delayed because the main computer in the conference room had been turned off. The public notice was read into record.

Present were Diane Amico, Charles Valentine, Lisa Fleming (virtually), John Pedersen, and guests Ariana McTamney and Ellen Pedersen. Anthony Coffee entered later.

A motion to approve the **minutes** of July 12, 2021 was made by Charles Valentine and seconded by John Pedersen. All were in favor.

The **budget** report was presented. The only expenditure since last month was for color print copies for handout at National Night Out for a cost of \$250. This was above the original amount approved for \$200, as the copies were more expensive than expensive.

Diane introduced Ariana McTamney to the members. Ariana is interested in the Environmental Commission and she works for the City.

This past month, John Pedersen and one **volunteer** worked at East and Wood Streets mulching trees and cleaning up. October 2nd is still planned for tree planting at Pilla School. An additional date was set up for September 18 for litter cleanup on Mays Landing Road near the shelter and bus stop. A motion to order a \$300 load of mulch was made by John Pedersen and seconded by Charles Valentine. All were in favor.

The Environmental Commission had a table at **National Night Out**. John and Ellen attended as well as Sue and Diane. The attendance was good and people were engaged with the educational boards and information. One person asked to be put on the volunteer email list. For future displays, we need better supports or easels that can withstand the wind. Diane discussed Sustainable Jersey's plans for an EcoFair in Vineland. Diane researched sustainable promo items that could be given out, and she found availability for wildflower or pollinator plant seed packets. There are choices for native seeds, and they are non-GMO and neonicotinoid-free. They are cheaper per packet than the cost of printing one color handout. There are also pencils available that have a seed in the tip that can be planted after the pencil is used up, but these were a little pricier. Tree seedlings are only available around Arbor Day but the rest of the year, seedlings cannot be purchased. Other items were discussed, such as wildflower seed bombs or paper infused with seeds. John said it would be good to have information that is available online for download, or a speaker.

John marked off the wildflower area in front of **Willow Oak**. The county has been staying away from the area that was marked on North Boulevard.

Willow Oak trees in the field are still an issue. Public Works has mowed the field perimeter and keeping the main trail clear. Perhaps the field can be done in sections. Both Public Works and Pete Galetto have equipment that can remove or cut the trees. The latest we can work in the field would be February because of bird nesting. There is a question of how soon in the fall we can remove trees without disturbing birds that are still having clutches. Ellen will reach out to Karen Williams. Some of the trees are getting large, and these sections should be done first. Jeff Bordley had offered to take care of the removal; it is unknown at this time how busy is Public Works. After September, Public Works will be busy with leaf pick-up season.

Rutgers came back to our **raingardens**, and others around the State, to remove one plant that had become more aggressive than the other plants. This is likely the virginia creeper. Lisa has been maintaining the raingardens. She has emailed Public Works regarding maintenance of the gardens. A few plants have grown successfully, but we need to stop them from cutting down what is there. John Pedersen has access to logs that can be cut and placed as a perimeter. Diane located a directory of Rutgers Raingarden installers and found one that services Cumberland County. He provided a quote to do a one-time cleanout and mulching this year for a cost of \$2100 for the Library and \$3500 for the Annex. They would actually weed, not weedwack. Additional visits for weeding would be \$750 each.

Anthony Coffee entered the meeting (virtually).

John said the raingarden at the Annex is important because everyone from the City sees that one every day. The plants still need to be pruned until it fills in. The high school volunteers will not know what to pull out. Diane said it is a lot of work for only a couple of volunteers. We do have grant money that could be used for this, so the money would not come out of our regular budget line items. Diane has received negative comments about the function of the Annex raingarden. John said it is important that we have success here. It was noted that Round up is phasing out glyphosate for residential use.

Site Plan reviews:

Burger King on Delsea Drive is putting in a second drive-through lane, which will create slightly more impervious cover but will be compensated by additional planting out front.

Regarding the Garden State Truck Stop on Garden Rd., John P. recused himself from the review. The applicant plans to pave and asphalt almost all of the property, and is clearing the entire lot. The back will have retention basins, and the front is to be asphalt truck parking with minor landscaping. Impervious allowable 50%, but it will be up to about 57%.

For the Newcomb Senior Apartments application, John P. recused himself. This project was previously approved, but has been adjusted for lot lines and some other modifications. It is in a redevelopment zone, so has unique development characteristics for the site. There were no comments on environmental issues here. They are not clearing any woods and will likely be planting new trees and landscaping. This will be an improvement for the area.

There were two Zoning applications to bring existing non-conforming duplexes up to current zoning. One is at 7th & Washington, and the other is at Cedar & Mill Rd. There are no comments.

VCC has an application for a truck parking lot. John P. recused himself from the discussion. Their grass lot on Park Avenue has previously been used for truck parking and they would like to get approval to continue doing this. There was agreement that it is not a good idea to park trucks on the lawn.

UMH has been postponed by the developer and there is not yet a reschedule date.

Diane found a program through the **Arbor Day Foundation** that partners with organizations to give out trees to residents. There is an online format where they do all of the tree distribution, and the website determines where the tree should be planted where it will have space, the location of utilities, home orientation, and what species of tree should be planted in order to gain the most energy savings. The resident would then sign an agreement that they will put the tree where indicated. The program uses iTree software to crunch numbers on energy savings and other data. The data is updated over a couple of years to account for increases in canopy and growth. Each partner-participant gets a page on the website. Arbor Day Foundation has one program for electric utilities and a similar one for non-utilities called "Community Canopy".

Regarding the tree request from the resident at **4 Evelyn Avenue**, Diane has located dogwood trees at County Line Nursery for \$75 for a 5'-6' tree. John P. had a question on whether dogwood is good street tree, since some small trees along the street get a certain amount of stress. The two trees we put in on Valley Avenue a couple of years ago are doing well. Diane will call Fred Cristelli for an installation price.

It was noted that the Library witch-hazel hedgerow is not looking good.

All were in favor of adjournment.