

Vineland Environmental Commission  
Regular Meeting  
November 8, 2021

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Chairperson Diane Amico. The public notice was read into record. Present were: Diane Amico, John Pedersen, Sue Fenili, Ariana McTamney, Anthony Coffee(virtual), and guests Nora Zielinski, Ellen Pedersen (virtual) and Jodi Dziedzic (CCIA Watershed Ambassador). Charlie Valentine and David Lowenstern (virtual) entered later.

A motion to approve the **minutes** of the October 12, 2021 meeting was made by Sue Fenili and seconded by John Pedersen. All were in favor.

Diane gave the **budget report**, which is similar to the last report. There has only been one expenditure, with \$3227.56 still left. It was decided to use regular budget money for the seedling purchase from NJ State Nursery rather than use the forestry grant. This will use \$1500 of the remaining balance. The seedlings may be difficult to obtain. The tree trunk protectors are not available.

David Lowenstern entered the meeting.

Jodi Dziedzic explained the Watershed Ambassador program and she is representing Watershed #17 this year. She offered her assistance with any projects on which we would like to partner or if we need her assistance.

Charlie Valentine entered the meeting.

Annex raingarden maintenance and weeding was discussed regarding whether the Watershed Ambassador program can assist.

The next Volunteer Work Day will be held at Pilla School as a follow up to the tree planting that was done previously. It is hopeful that other planting areas will be addressed, trees will be mulched, and Public Works will send a crew to assist. So far, 4 students have sent RSVPs. This is scheduled for November 13. The Vineland High School Interact Club and Key Club would like to participate on December 11. Various locations were discussed. It was decided that the December event will be at VHS at 9:00 a.m. and will include mulching trees. The January 8<sup>th</sup> event will be at the Giampietro Park tree planting area.

Home Depot is the only source for the tree-trunk protectors, and the store doesn't have any. Diane is working with a sales representative, but it is uncertain whether we will be able to get them. The purchase of seed-packets from American Meadows is also uncertain, as the company misunderstood the purchase order process and will not ship the order without payment up front.

Milkweed / wildflower areas still need to be listed for forwarding in a Resolution to City Council. John is still working on logging the locations. Possibly we can salvage some white fiberglass stakes from the Blackwater Branch planting area.

Diane filled out the application for the prescribed burn at Willow Oak, and this is on tomorrow's City Council agenda. At the last meeting, Public Works had indicated that the burn will remove a lot of the vegetation,

which will make the removal of the trees easier. Members were concerned with the date of the prescribed burn extending into bird nesting season in March. Diane will pass a message on that the Commission would like the burn done by the third week in February. If they cannot come by then, the burn will be cancelled.

John Pedersen said for Bennett's Mill and Maurice River Conservation area need signage installed and there is some litter. The MRCA could use a trail network; this will be kept in mind as a future project.

Raingarden maintenance is still pending. After Diane mentioned members' concern about mulching before plants reseed in the fall, the vendor thought we wanted to postpone and did not put us on the schedule. He will do pruning also. There were issues at the Annex with the water ponding in pockets along the edge of the garden instead of rolling down the rocks into the center. Jeff Bordley repaired the water direction by installing pvc piping at the end of the gutters that extend a few feet into the planting area.

Southeast corner of the mini-park was added to the agenda so we can plan for the future of this corner. Public Works had asked us to take this on as a project. There are some planting areas. John Pedersen said we should not create more raingardens that cannot be maintained, but maybe we can plant trees there. This will be discussed closer to the Spring planting season. There previously was a landscape plan for the 4 mini-park corners. John P. will look for the plan so we have some sizes and areas as a starting point for tree spacing.

Regarding the Giampietro Stormwater Grant, Diane spoke to the City Engineer and he was in favor of working with the Littoral Society and Rutgers. He indicated that the bandstand and playground areas are priority, and the rest is wetland. We do not have an in-house person that can do a topographic survey. Diane sent a question to Lucia as to how the grant would pay for a survey if the City has a vendor. The scope should be limited to one part of the park. A walk-through will be scheduled for after January 1st with Engineering and Rutgers.

Planning and Zoning applications were reviewed.

Golden Palace Diner is just seeking approval for outdoor dining, with no increase to impervious cover. There are two applications for wetlands delineation. We will keep an eye out for future development applications. There is one zoning application to bring an existing duplex up to code.

The NJ Shade Tree Federation conference was attended by Charlie and Lisa. David had contacted the conference host to see if the sessions can be attended virtually after the conference for credit.

Diane made a list of locations discussed at our last meeting for potential green infrastructure. Various locations were discussed. There is hesitancy to put in raingardens that will need maintenance, but there are other types of green infrastructure. Diane sent the Green Infrastructure guide and Maintenance guidance to Public Works for their reference. One of the locations discussed is at the corner of West Ave & Walnut Rd. This is not big enough to handle the flooding at that intersection and it would be better for the City to come up with an Engineering solution for the stormwater drains. However, this corner could benefit from better landscaping.

Diane presented the Public Notice for the 2022 meeting schedule. A motion to approve the meeting dates was made by Charlie Valentine and seconded by John Pedersen. All were in favor.

A purchase was approved for bare root seedlings from the NJ State Nursery. Diane explained the process for making this purchase. We may or may not be successful in purchasing seedlings.

It was decided to do our own tree planting in 2022 for Arbor Day, as the schools are not yet back into their regular routines. We are having some difficulty buying native trees from the usual nursery. We may need to try a different nursery, such as Pinelands.

Diane discussed the long-term tree plan previously presented by John Pedersen as a guide for future planning. We were temporarily sidetracked by Covid, but we should revisit the plan and proceed. John discussed various areas and various tree needs.

Diane received a call from the City Engineer, who is looking for suggestions on trees to be planted near the Veterans Circle where construction on the sidewalks will include removal of a few large trees. The Veterans Circle is a separate property than the rest of the city park, and has additional restrictions because of being a war memorial. There are also plans to pave a walkway near the back of the park. Diane asked whether the back part of Landis Park is a good area for our next tree inventory. John Pedersen discussed the way City Engineering plans their projects. There was discussion as to the role and history of the Tree Committee. Doing a presentation to City Council was discussed. Diane said we should limit the topics to be presented to a couple of priorities. The Tree Committee should be presenting an annual report. Diane said that sidewalk liability is a big issue that affects decisions the City makes.

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