

Vineland Environmental Commission
Regular Meeting
December 13, 2021

The meeting was called to order at 7:04 p.m. by Chairperson Diane Amico. The public notice was read into record. Present were: Diane Amico, John Pedersen, Anthony Coffee(virtual), Lisa Fleming (virtual) and guests David Mougakos, Steve Borek, Ellen Pedersen (virtual). Ariana McTamney, Charlie Valentine, David Lowenstern and Sue Fenili entered later.

A motion to approve the **minutes** of the November 8, 2021 meeting was tabled until the next meeting, as they were released late and members did not have a chance to review them. [Charlie Valentine entered the meeting.]

There is no **budget report**, as it is the end of the fiscal year and budgets are closed out. At the end of the last meeting, there was \$1500 left in the budget. Diane did requisitions for Reubens for Departmental supplies for \$530, for DeRose for \$300 for mulch, and for \$750 to South Jersey Landscaping for one weeding of the Annex raingarden to be done in the spring. [Ariana McTamney entered the meeting.] A motion to approve these 3 expenditures was made by Charlie Valentine and seconded by John Pedersen. All were in favor.

There was a good turnout at **VHS** on Saturday for volunteering. There were about 15 students, 3 Public Works employees in 2 trucks, 2 adults, and one high school teacher. A lot of tree mulching, weeding, and other maintenance was completed. [David Lowenstern joined the meeting] Diane said there was one issue with several participants attempting to leave the site to go to Wawa, but they were told to call a parent for pickup and Diane waited until someone came.

The next volunteer day will be **January 8 at Giampietro Park**, and the February event will be planned for Blackwater Branch. Diane picked up paint and supplies for painting benches when the weather is better. The paint is at the Annex.

Lisa is working on the **Giampietro Park sign** with Michelle at Market Fuel. We need to decide where to install it, and how. This should be done in the spring. The draft of the sign looks very good, and Lisa was able to include QR codes that linked to two other websites for more information.

John and Ellen noted that some signs at **Willow Oak** have been vandalized. The posts were rotted and they were able to stand one back up. Diane noted there have been complaints about ATV's in the area. As far as the prescribed burn, Diane contacted Quincy Jones from NJ Forest Fire Service regarding moving this up to January, as discussed at the last meeting. Ellen has reached out to the Galetto's regarding using their equipment to clear rest of the meadow after the burn.

Maurice River Conservation area needs a clean-up, so we will keep this in mind as a possibility for the March Second Saturday.

David Lowenstern said that **South Vineland Park** is looking denuded of trees. It was noted that the disc golf activities are trampling a lot of the undergrowth. John Pedersen said there are areas that could benefit from mulch or general landscaping. Diane said this is a conversation we should have with Public Works. Signage for

litter was discussed, although some areas look cleaner than previously. [Sue Fenili joined the meeting]. We can keep this in mind for a future cleanup, as well as some tree planting and dog-waste bags. Planting the meadow is still an open item. We can ask Public Works if they can make No-Litter signs for the trails.

There is currently a plan to plant trees on the southwest corner of **Landis Ave. & Blvd.** in the spring. John Pedersen will get a sketch of the layout of the corner so we can see how much space is available.

For the **stormwater grant for Giampietro Park**, it has been verified that the grant will pay for a topographical survey.

Zoning applications:

Walnut 554 Holdings, LLC, (Lilac Ct.) Bl. 4801, Lots 40 & 41, W. Walnut Rd., near Lilac Ct.: Applicant plans to clear-cut woods and to leave very few trees. The property has wetlands and is zoned R-3. Developer is seeking a use variance, citing hardship caused by new stormwater regulations and wetlands regulations. The Architectural plan and the site plan provided do not match each other. Official comments are to be prepared and submitted to the zoning office, and will include the Issue with high density.

Paradise City LLC, Block 1802, Lots 11 & 12 (Fresh Wave Cold Storage) on Oak Rd near Main Road: Proposed is storage on a paved area on the west side of Main Rd. near the Produce Auction. The project may result in some noise for the neighbors, as the trash dock will be near houses.

Southwest Council, Block 1601, Lot 98 (+ zoning application) at a former insurance building: The applicant will be cutting some trees, but meets zoning requirements.

3192 NJGCCP, LLC, 3192 & 3120 N. West Blvd, Bl. 703, Lots 2, 3, & 4, Cannabis Cultivation Facility: John Pedersen recused himself. Property has no sewer, no city water, and is situated up against some houses. Some clearing is proposed. Zoned residential, so is deviating from the zoning.

1667 E. Landis Avenue Wellness Center, Block 4301, Lot 1, (+ zoning application): This is a minor application now, but a bigger one is expected later. This is the old State-school property, zoned institutional, which is 149 ac. extending from Spring Rd. to Main Rd, and from Chestnut Ave to Landis Ave.

Mohamed Mekkawy & Hanan Tazari, Bl 3201, Lot 7, 405 N. Main Rd, for a Triplex being brought up to code. No comments.

Rock Towing, LLC, 2490 S. West Blvd., Bl. 6103 L. 21 – use variance for auto repair shop, to be followed by a site plan application at a later date. No comments.

1303 Associates, LLC, Bl 303, Lot 19, 3680-3700 N. Delsea Dr. Property is already developed. No comments.

Miguel Melendez-Torres, Bl 3114, Lot 41, 33 N. Valley Ave. application to construct pole barn. No comments.

Sewer extension notice: Cavallo Drive Bl 6901, Lots 12-20 Notice only, no comments.

Lisa said the witchhazel at the Library has bloomed, and it appears the tree diapers are working. A motion to purchase 10 more tree diapers was made by Lisa Fleming and seconded by Charles Valentine. All were in favor.

Lisa has been in touch with the **Audubon Society**, who has indicated they are willing to attend one of our meetings to talk about their wildlife habitat certification program.

Willow Oak brochure still needs a small simplified map. John Pedersen will pass the map on to Anthony Coffee. The rest of the brochure is complete. For future mapping, John said all of the mapping for all of the natural areas should follow the same design structure.

The tree trunk protectors are still not received from the Home Depot representative. He provided some that were used at Pilla School, but it is unknown whether we can get any more.

A motion to purchase 5 boxes of Jobe tree fertilizer stakes was made by John Pedersen and seconded by Charlie Valentine. All were in favor.

We need some 4 x 4's to repair the **signs for the Willow Oak** trail signs. The hardware can be obtained from Reuben's Hardware. Type of signs for the trails were discussed.

It was decided at the last meeting to not give trees to schools for **Arbor Day**, as they are not into their regular schedules yet. We will purchase trees to plant ourselves this year. We need to pick one school or area by March. The option to hold a community Arbor Day ceremony in April was discussed. Sue will contact the nurseries for tree availability. Since the local nurseries are having difficulty getting native trees, Sue will contact Pinelands Nursery. This would be a good use for the tree diapers.

We need to develop a plan for the **Spring Tree plantings** at the locations suggested by Jeff Bordley. We will wait until the next meeting to discuss with him.

Diane said one of the Tree Committee's responsibilities is to provide an **annual Tree Plan** to City Council. Since members previously discussed meeting with Council members, this plan should be developed and be in-hand prior to scheduling any meetings. The Tree Committee should meet to work on this, with no more than 3 members meeting at a time.

Mr. Borek suggested that QR codes could be used to tap into trail maps online.

Diane said there are additional recommendations from NJ State Forest Fire Service for properties that would benefit from **prescribed burns**, including South Vineland Park, the Police Training Grounds, and several other city-owned properties.

The **Ash trees** all around the City, including many from the center-city planting, are having issues and dying. Jeff Bordley has been having them sprayed or removed, depending on whether they look like they can be saved. Diane made a spreadsheet of all of the ash trees planted during the 2008-2009 seasons, and the number is significant. This list was requested by Public Works so they can check for those areas. It is possible we may see many of these street trees being removed in the future. We should plan for replacement trees in these areas. We need to talk to Jeff regarding whether the stumps and roots will be removed at the same time, otherwise another tree cannot be planted in the same spot.

Diane thanked the guests for attending. A motion to adjourn was made by Sue Fenili and seconded by David Lowenstern. All were in favor.