

Vineland Environmental Commission
Minutes
Regular Meeting October 11, 2022

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Chairperson Diane Amico. Present were: Diane Amico, Charles Valentine, Sue Fenili, Ariana Headley, David Lowenstern, and guests Ellen Pedersen and Joshua Aderholdt. The public notice was read into record. John Casadia, and John Pedersen entered later.

A motion to approve the minutes of the September 12, 2022 meeting was made by Sue Fenili and seconded by Charles Valentine. All were in favor.

The chairperson gave the budget report. The two grants are the same as last month. The regular budget line items still have balances. The Chairperson asked for all requests for expenditures for this year be submitted tonight. A previous email request had asked members to bring ideas including quotes to the meeting. There were none. The chairperson asked for any general requests for approval that can be followed up on later. There were none. A motion to request a requisition for Rueben Hardware for \$300 for mulch and project supplies was made by Diane Amico and seconded by Sue Fenili. All were in favor. Diane received a request for a street tree at 64 Axtell Ave. There are no sidewalks there. A motion to hire a contractor to put in a small street tree at 64 Axtell Ave was made by Diane Amico and seconded by Sue Fenili. All were in favor. The Chairperson asked for members to suggest expenditure ideas as the meeting progresses, as it is getting close to the requisition deadline for this year, and approvals are needed a.s.a.p.

Diane Amico is attending the NJ Shade Tree Federation conference this month. No one else responded to be registered, so we are one person short of meeting our annual Continuing Education requirements to maintain our active status for our Community Forestry Management Plan. As an optional source of qualifying credits, Diane had forwarded via email some information on online courses. She will resend the email with the course links so members can look at it again, and if anyone can attend any of the online classes, she needs to know a.s.a.p. to facilitate registrations.

John Casadia and John Pedersen entered the meeting.

A vote was taken on photographs for the banner. The photos were taken by Dennis Abriola, who generously allowed the Commission to use them at no charge. We will supply an assurance that we will not use the photos for anything else, and there will be photo credit given on the banner. Photos were sent to members in advance for review. Four pictures were selected. David will contact Mr. Abriola regarding obtaining the photos in high quality digital format. The banner will be made by Custom Graphics.

Diane previously sent out the contact information for the Cub Scout leader who would like a member to contact her regarding assisting the scouts with their outdoor badge. Sue will contact her.

John Pederson said the City has been mowing at Willow Oak and the litter has not been a problem. Diane did proceed with the prescribed burn application after confirming with NJ Forest Fire Service that we should do one this year. The application will be on the October 25 City Council meeting. The suggestion from Mr. Jones at NJ State is to do one again this year, then go to an every-other year schedule. The date of the burn is to be determined by the Forest Fire Service. The forest fire service asked about other city areas, and Diane referred them to Public Works.

A volunteer event was scheduled for October 22 at the Library to do maintenance at the raingarden. Diane will send out the email to volunteers. There were 8 student volunteers at the last event at the Annex, plus several adults. Everyone was happy with the results. Soon it will need to be cut back to remove anything brown or dead. Diane thanked everyone who helped.

As a follow up to previous discussions on moving some plants out of the raingardens, Diane will be meeting with Jeff Bordley from Public Works to look at spots at Gittone and Magnolia Road parks. There was discussion on going forward with the raingardens. We had already decided at a previous meeting that at a minimum we will move the coneflowers away from the front of the Library raingarden and either put them in the back, or transplant them somewhere else.

To avoid a spending crunch at the end of the year, expenditures for 2023 will be addressed at the beginning of the year at a regular meeting.

Planning and Zoning applications were reviewed.

Chipotle is developing the site formerly occupied by Butch's Gun Shop. A list of landscape plants was discussed. The proposed site layout was discussed. They would develop the whole site with small buffers. Comments will be prepared.

Diane had received a request from the Planning Board secretary for our street tree planting list. We do not keep an official list because NJDEP does it in the reverse, i.e. lists of what not to plant. Diane gave her a list of small trees that are appropriate for under wires, and also provided a list of what to avoid due to current pests and diseases, such as ash, red oaks, Bradford pears, and others. It was noted that the new Dunkin Donuts at Lincoln and Dante Avenue planted London Plane trees under electric wires.

On Crystal Avenue, there is a plan for a used car dealership, in an industrial zone. The current property has not been kept up very well. The project may be an opportunity to require that the property be improved. It should be requested to keep the buffer for nearby residents. There may be some drainage issues. Comments will be prepared.

One application is for a church property on Park Avenue near West Ave. where someone wants to construct a bus maintenance and holding facility. There is concern this would be a bad precedent in a residential area.

The Siloam application has not been reviewed yet.

John Pedersen discussed a paving project for Chestnut Avenue and whether we can use some money for tree protection for the Engineering project.

There was discussion of lack of Site Plan enforcement regarding projects constructed, with trees put in initially, but afterwards the site is not maintained. David Lowenstern made a motion that as a board we send a letter to the Mayor with a list of properties that are not being taken care of. John Pedersen seconded. Voting "yes" were David Lowenstern, John Pedersen, Sue Fenili, and John Casadia. Voting "no" was Diane Amico. Charles Valentine and Ariana Headley did not indicate any vote. Diane advised that any correspondence should include specific information on site plans and associated deficiencies.

Diane still has the Salem Oak Seedling. John Pedersen will get it and will plant it at Landis Park. The area in front along Park Ave will be better than in one of the inside medians. John will coordinate with Jeff Bordley.

Cumberland County Technical Center constructed 16 bluebird nesting boxes for donation to the City. John Casadia will accept the donation on behalf of the Commission and will see that the boxes are erected in various locations around Vineland. Certificates of appreciation were printed for the students, and John will present them at the school.

Joshua (guest) works for a utility and is on their Green Team. He offered his assistance with any cleanups or projects we have coming up. Diane will keep him updated on our events.

It was noted that a lot of shrubs and arborvitae around the city did not survive through this summer's drought.

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