

Vineland Environmental Commission
Regular Meeting Minutes
March 14, 2022

The meeting was called to order at 7:08 p.m. by Chairperson Diane Amico. Present were: Diane Amico, John Pedersen, John Casadia, Lisa Fleming, and guests Lucia Ruggerio, and Steve Borek. The public notice was read into record.

A motion to approve the minutes of the February 14, 2022 meeting was made by Lisa Fleming and seconded by John Casadia. All were in favor.

We are still on a temporary budget and there were no expenditures since the last meeting. The grant balances are \$12,993 for No Net Loss and \$41,500 for the Developer's Tree Fund.

Lucia of the American Littoral Society spoke about the grant for the Giampietro Stormwater Mitigation Plan. The walkthrough with the City Engineering and Rutgers took place on March 2. Several ideas were discussed, including naturalizing or redirecting a swale, and some wetland restoration. Chris Obropta of Rutgers will look into how to get the survey done by a licensed surveyor. Rick Caudell from the City Engineer's Office will check on whether there are any wetlands restrictions. Lucia is working on a draft of the stakeholder survey.

Lucia asked if the City can spread the word and submit a letter of support for the South Jersey Landscape Project being conducted by American Littoral Society. This funding might possibly pay for reseeding the meadow at Willow Oak. Exactly how and when the seedling should be done needs to be researched first.

The prescribed burn at Willow Oak is done, and DunRite Sand & Gravel cut the trees. It was recommended that if we want the small stumps and roots removed, a type of raking should be done. It is getting late in the season, so it was decided to leave it as-is. It was also recommended by NJ Forest Service that we not wait more than 3 years between prescribed burns. DunRite offered to return next time to remove any trees again. We should get on a more-frequent burning schedule. We will see next year how much woody growth comes back and make a decision in August. If the Littoral Society does a wildflower planting, it should be done after any prescribed burns, and with consultation with NJ Fish & Wildlife.

The Community Wildlife Habitat Program will need a committee to implement. John Pedersen volunteered. We still need more people to serve on the committee. A survey can still be taken at the Green Fair to see if there is resident interest.

The free seedling giveaway will be held Saturday, April 16 from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. We are only allotted 500 seedlings this year. Working that day will be Diane and John P. More people are needed. A motion to purchase curling ribbon, buckets, and tablecloths was made by John Casadia. Lisa Fleming seconded. All were in favor. If we get stuck, Lucia has buckets we can borrow.

1800 seedlings from NJ Forest Nursery will be picked up on March 30. John Pedersen has made plans for several parks and Diane is working on getting groups to do planting, and is trying to coordinate who can moderate the planting events. All planting in the city parks needs to be cleared through Public Works. The VHS Life Skills group offered to do some planting; they have a grant and can supply some stakes. John Pedersen made a list of supplies needed, including posts, wood stakes, root mulch, cedar mulch, pipes, and water buckets. A motion to purchase the necessary supplies was made by John Casadia and seconded by John Pedersen. All were in favor. Shovels were added to the list. Any members who have some time to plant a few trees, are welcome to get some seedlings from John and he can give direction where to plant them. Saturday April 2 will be the seedling planting by the Mennies School Safety Patrol at Campanella Park. Saturday April 9 will be the D'Ippolito School planting.

A Volunteer Work day is scheduled for March 19 at Giampietro to remove vines in the riparian buffer. We still need to arrange for the installation of the sign at the garden.

The Green Fair on 6/4 has been received positively so far and we are hoping for a good turnout. Diane reserved a table for the Commission. The City department tables will all be near each other. The event will run from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. and we will need table coverage. The educational boards should be secured better than just using an easel, due to wind. We will be taking 2 surveys that day, for the Giampietro stakeholder opinions, and for the Community Wildlife Habitat program. The auditorium will be available for demonstrations or speakers.

Diane said Jeff Bordley has been working on clearing a trail at West Side Park, and removing overgrowth.

Diane gave a key for the Maple Avenue gate at Willow Oak to the Vineland Fire Chief, in case of any fire emergencies. There are significant ruts in the Maple Ave entrance driveway from the Forest Fire Service trucks from the day of the prescribed burn. Diane noted that the Maple Avenue sign needs new paint and the area around the bronze plaque is a little overgrown. John Casadia has returned the bluebird houses to the meadow. John Pedersen re-staked the wildflower area in front of Willow Oak on the Landis Avenue side, and it has been left alone.

Regarding the Maurice River Blackwater Branch planting area deer fence, Diane did some research and found that NJ State gives specific recommendations for deer fencing. We do not have this kind of fencing, and it can only be purchased as a specialty item. For us to redo the fenced area, it will be very expensive. There is significant deer activity in the area. John said he can use the green tree tubes if we plant any additional Atlantic White cedar there. It was decided to abandon the deer fence. We should remove the poles. Lisa noted that the area is being taken over by phragmites.

Three members are still taking the Green Infrastructure Classes through Rutgers. It is almost time for the first spring weeding of our raingardens. The Rutgers classes provided a recommended schedule and suggestions for inspections to be done regularly.

The Environmental Resource Inventory will cost more than the annual professional services budget. In a future budget, we will need to request more money to update the Inventory.

National Night Out will be held on August 2.

Planning and Zoning Applications: There is a Zoning Board application for Maurice River Pkwy and Oak Rd. that involves tree clearing. The recommended comments are extensive, so will be edited and shortened. The use variance and the lot coverage are still important issues to keep in the comments.

TREE COMMITTEE:

John Pedersen will make a presentation to City Council on behalf of the Tree Committee tomorrow evening. We are asking for the annual Tree Plan to be approved.

Diane put in an application for one of the Salem Oak Seedlings. This was a record-size tree in Salem, which was removed and NJ Forest Service germinated its acorns. One seedling each will be available to each municipality. The seedling will be picked up with our other free seedlings. We need to decide where to plant it.

There are several requests for trees: Diane received the list of tree requests on Northwood Dr. She visited the street and made notes on locations of available spaces, locations of wires, etc. The requests total 11 trees. These would need to be installed.

For tree purchases only, the VDID is doing an Arbor Day Ceremony on April 29 in the southeast mini-park, and requested one tree for this. The VDID also would like additional trees to be planted in the same mini-park. The VDID had also asked about putting trees in the medians of two different city parking lots. The City Engineer has requested 6 tulip poplars for Landis Park near the Veteran's Circle. A teacher at VHS has asked for an Arbor Day tree.

A motion to have 11 trees installed on Northwood Drive was made by John Casadia and seconded by Lisa Fleming. Roll Call Vote: John Casadia, yes. Lisa, yes, with the suggestion that future plantings take social justice issues into consideration. Diane Amico, yes. John Pedersen, no.

A motion to purchase trees for the southeast mini-park for VDID and Arbor Day, VHS for Arbor Day, and 6 tulip poplars Landis Park, a total of 11 trees, was made by John Casadia and seconded by John Pedersen. All were in favor. We will order just the trees for now, and if we find that we cannot plant them ourselves, we can then pursue looking for an alternate way to get them planted.

Diane asked members for a volunteer to represent the Commission at the VDID Arbor Day Ceremony.

Lucia from the Littoral Society shared some things that are going on at the State level. She will forward information to be sent to all members.

Our next volunteer day will be held on April 9 at D'Ippolito School.

For the Free Seedling Giveaway, Steve Borek volunteered to help mark seedlings on the day before the event.

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