

Vineland Environmental Commission
Regular Meeting Minutes
April 11, 2022

The meeting was called to order at 7:25 p.m. by Chairperson Diane Amico. Present were: Diane Amico, John Pedersen, David Lowenstern, Ariana McTamney, and guest Public Works Director Jim Neher, Ellen Pedersen, and Steve Borek. John Casadia entered later. The public notice was read into record.

A motion to approve the minutes of the March 14, 2022 meeting was made by John Pedersen and seconded by Diane Amico. All were in favor.

The annual budget was approved by City Council and we have the same amount as last year. No Net Loss grant money will be used for Lawn and Garden Landscaping for the Northwood Drive tree planting, which will bring the balance down from about \$12,000 to \$6,000.

John Casadia entered the meeting. Diane spoke to Lucia of the American Littoral Society regarding the status of the Giampietro Park stormwater grant. She is still working on who will do the topographic survey. Rick Caudell has not gotten back to us on whether there are any wetlands restrictions. Ryan Headley visited the meeting briefly, virtually, and gave clarification on the drainage system of Shop Rite and how it interfaces with Giampietro Park. Planting of the riparian buffer a few years ago was part of a larger plan to help with flooding issues. The intention is for this area to become an extension of the woods. The City's Public Works maintenance crew participated in the most recent planting of seedlings in the larger area. This included 3 members of the mowing crew, who spaced the trees according to what they said was compatible for mowing. Jim Neher confirmed that the 6' spacing used is a good distance.

The American Littoral Society asked for, and received, a letter of support from the Commission for a grant they are seeking for the SJ Landscape Makeover Program. The funds would benefit Vineland residents in the Maurice River watershed by providing rebates for stormwater mitigation improvements on their property.

In order to move forward with Community Wildlife Habitat, a committee is needed. It is important for the committee to discuss the program with the City's Administration, and backyard habitats must be in compliance with the City's property maintenance ordinances. Ellen Pedersen, Steve Borek, David Lowenstern, and John Pedersen volunteered. A motion to proceed with paying the fee and registering with the Program was made by John Pedersen, seconded by John Casadia, and all were in favor. Diane will proceed with registering us on the website as a community. The committee will meet separately and report back.

The seedling giveaway is this Saturday, April 16. Diane ordered ribbon to mark the trees and will design the handout with the color key. We will need help marking them early that morning before the event. Volunteers should come at 8:00 a.m. The Master Gardeners are helping us this year.

John Pedersen has planted approximately 600 seedlings so far. If anyone can help, please call him. He forwarded maps with planting plans for Romano Park and some other areas to Public Works for approval. Jim Neher said if some poplars are forwarded to the Public Works crew, they can plant them where they want at Romano Park. It is important to stay away from sidewalks. A volunteer day was set up for Blackwater Branch to plant Atlantic white-cedars and modify the deer fence. A few hundred seedlings will go to Willow Oak to fill in areas decimated by pine bark beetle.

The sign for the Giampietro Park garden is ready for installation. Diane will forward the manufacturer instructions to Jim.

Vineland Green Fair, a Sustainable Jersey event, will be June 4 at VHS, and we will have a table. We need better supports for the educational signs. John and Ellen Pedersen and David Lowenstern volunteered to man the table.

The wildflower/milkweed areas have been listed, but we still need information that specifically delineates where the area is located in order to designate the areas officially. John will send the list to Jim Neher to review.

There are problems with the split rail fence at Willow Oak. It is preferred that it be fixed rather than removed. John Casadia had problems locking the Maple Avenue gate the last time he was there. He has made i.d. tags for the bluebird houses, after several bird houses were removed and replaced at the Cumb. Co. Tech Center. The mowing areas were reviewed with Jim. The main trail and the field perimeter road should always be kept short for walking. The field should only be mowed a couple of times a year, never in the spring, and never shorter than 12 inches. The controlled burns will be done more frequently now. John Pedersen will update the maintenance schedule to be forwarded to Jim. Jim will get a quote for fence materials needed and will meet with Jeff to discuss.

A schedule for maintenance of raingardens will be drafted. We are receiving feedback there is overall dissatisfaction with the appearance, since even when maintained, it may not appear to be as manicured as a regular garden. Diane spoke to Business Administration about keeping in contact for plans for the area. It was noted that last summer, the Annex garden did get weedy, but it looks better now. It would be good to put in some different vegetation that would be green throughout the winter.

Volunteer work days continued with last Saturday at D'Ippolito School where seedlings were planted. The day was a success. Upcoming volunteer activities include the seedling giveaway on 4/16, the Maurice River Pky on 4/23. Jim will talk to Jeff about taking some of the seedlings to be planted somewhere on City property.

After the controlled burn at Willow Oak, Diane sent thank-you cards to Quincy Jones, the Galettos, and Steve Mayo.

John Pedersen did give a presentation to City Council for the City Tree Plan, which was subsequently approved.

Site Plan Reviews: There was discussion on the Zoning application for the truck yard at Maurice River Pky and Oak Road in a Woodlands zone. There is a need in the City for tractor-trailer parking, but this may not be the right area.

Laury Office Expansion, 517 E. Plum St., Bl. 3018, Lot 15. No review done.

S.W. Blvd Real Estate, 46 S. West Blvd., Bl.501, L24, comments provided on Facts & Findings form and were forwarded.

Levari Bros. Realty Office – 396 N. Mill Rd., Bl. 2604 L.14 – No concerns, no comments

Diane provided a letter of support to Citizens United for their grant application for phragmites removal in the Manumuskin and Menantico areas of the Wild & Scenic River Watershed. We have been invited to participate in a Roundtable of stakeholders in Cumberland County.

City Council sent a letter to the Tree Committee asking for due diligence in following up on a request by the American Littoral Society and ANJEC's proposal to put green infrastructure in the Vineland Downtown Improvement District. Diane did a letter of support, but she did advise that the tree pits would be intended for the side streets, not Landis Avenue, and that the City Engineer would have to be involved in all design and location decisions.

Diane has received a lot of resident requests for street trees. There is usually not enough room between the sidewalk and curb. Each location will need to be evaluated individually and areas with sidewalks should be avoided.

We have received a Salem Oak seedling and it should be planted in a sunny spot, in a prominent location, with a sign, on City-owned property. Jim said either Landis Park or Romano Park are o.k.

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