

Vineland Environmental Commission

Minutes – Regular meeting

January 9, 2023

The meeting was called to order at 7:15 p.m. by Chairperson Diane Amico. The public notice was read into record. Present were: Diane Amico, Charles Valentine, Sue Fenili, John Pedersen, Lisa Fleming, Ariana Headley, and guest Ellen Pedersen. David Lowenstern entered later.

A motion to approve the minutes of the December 12, 2022 meeting was made by Sue Fenili and seconded by John Pedersen. All were in favor.

The chairperson gave the budget report. There is no printed budget because we are under a temporary budget and the line items currently all show as zero. Purchase order balances still open were reviewed. There was a question of whether there is a balance on the Vineland Produce Auction purchase order. Diane will look into it.

John Pedersen got a call from Citizens United regarding trails. The prescribed burn at Willow Oak is still scheduled for this winter. There was a write-up in the Utility newsletter on the volunteer work at the raingardens. There was discussion of whether there is positive acceptance of the raingardens and whether we should we continue maintenance. It was noted that we still need to return to remove the dead growth for the winter. The stalks should be cut back to about 12". A volunteer day was scheduled for Saturday Feb. 11 at the Library.

A volunteer event will take place at South Vineland Park this Saturday. No students have responded. Several members will attend.

Dave Orlandini's student group will be at Willow Oak on January 31 from 10:00 to 12:00 for trail clearing, and at Giampietro on February 7 from 10:00 to 12:00. We do not need to be there but would be helpful for oversight.

Citizens United did an online review of Willow Oak as part of their "match" fundraiser. Sue Fenili will be doing a walking tour there. John noted that the litter condition has been better recently, as the city has been maintaining it.

David Lowenstern entered the meeting.

Lisa said her plan was to get more raingarden plants for Giampietro for spring to fill in the bloom times. A motion to approve a purchase from Half Moon Nursery was made by Charlie Valentine and seconded by Sue Fenili. All were in favor. Lisa will get the quote.

It was noted that there were a lot of planning and zoning applications that came in just within the last few days.

Walmart is requesting to keep a row of shipping containers along the side of their building. It is unsightly. The description says seasonal, but their seasonal stock changes constantly year-round, so the containers would be permanent. It would be better if they would build a building there. There was discussion as to whether we should provide comments on aesthetics. It was noted that the ordinance for the Commission on the city website does mention environmental appearance is something we review. It is also a bad precedent to allow the current zoning violation to turn into a permanent approval. A vote was taken as to whether we should present comments to the Planning Board. Diane: yes, Ariana: yes, Charlie: yes, Lisa: no, John P.: yes, Sue: yes, and David: Abstain.

Development at Park and Delsea was reviewed. There are some variances, trees will be cut down, and lights will be installed. Tree protection during construction should be considered. Smaller less-effective landscaping is being proposed to replace what is there. Impervious coverage is already over what is allowed in the zone, and this will increase it again. There is enough space there that a reconfiguration could decrease the impervious coverage.

Ocean First Bank landscaping was discussed. There is currently a dead tree in front of the building.

Weaver Equipment application shows multiple tree/utility conflicts. A general comment will be made that these should be resolved.

2520 NW Blvd was discussed as it relates to the surrounding properties. The application, for a marijuana facility, says they will not be clearing trees, but there is a fence going through the tree-line that will require clearance to install. Odors could be a concern. If water containing fertilizers is discharged onto the ground, it could reach nearby wetlands. It already received its zoning approvals, so it is too late to comment.

Diane said the site plan review committee could meet before the meetings if desired, or can discuss online. Lisa will assist and will be added to the email distribution.

The Chestnut Avenue redesign survey is online for comments. The plan includes removal of approximately 200 street trees, leaving small 5' planting strip, which is not large enough. The plan does not show electric wires so it is unknown whether there will be utility conflicts.

Three trees were planted at Magnolia Road Park by John Pedersen with the assistance of Public Works.

Ellen said the Community Wildlife Program was granted 5 points for the outreach done at National Night Out. She will also submit pictures from the Green Fair. On January 8, the Audubon Society will be holding a webinar that could be shared for additional points. It is not a City event so would not be appropriate for the City Facebook page. Ellen will check with them to see if we send to the "friends" page, whether that would count, even though it is not a City page. The next event coming up will be the Green Fair in June.

It was decided to attend the Cumberland County EcoFair the first weekend in May. Diane will follow up on how to register the EC for a spot. The date for the Vineland Green Fair is to be determined. National Night Out is the third educational event this year in which we will participate.

The spending for the year should be planned in advance especially for the No Net Loss Grant. The larger trees are expensive to contract out for planting, and Public Works is not in favor of small seedlings because of difficulty mowing around. The pros and cons of running a city nursery were discussed. John said we can suggest to Engineering that city projects can be supplemented to help pay for tree protection and fencing during construction. For the Developers Tree Fund, which must be used for planting, it was suggested this can be used for Chestnut Ave in the event that Engineering does not have enough money to replant trees after the redesign. For the budget line item of professional services, we should be doing small tree inventories. Lisa said at training for Community Forestry Management, it has been mentioned the importance of doing tree inventories. Our budget is not enough to do large inventories. Landis Park is one location that could benefit from an inventory.

Tree Committee's Annual Tree Plan is due to City Council by January 15. Lisa will look at last year's that was modeled after the Community Forestry Management Plan. Diane said it would be good to include John's assessment of numbers of tree removals without sufficient replacement numbers, with specifics of what areas need more trees.

There is an open purchase order with County Line Nursery for trees. We can try to put around 10 at a time into the parks. Magnolia Road Park is an option, and we already discussed picnic areas with Public Works. Species discussed were London planetree, poplars, and dogwoods.

Seedlings are available from NJ State. It was decided to get some to nurture until they get bigger. A motion was made by John Pedersen to spend \$250 on seedlings from the State Nursery, and seconded by Charlie Valentine. All were in favor.

The Seedling Giveaway applications just became available, and our pickup date would be Thursday, April 27. It was decided to apply for seedlings and hold the event Saturday, April 29 at the same location as last year. Since last year there was a rush of cars that stretched onto the road, it was discussed to move the tables closer to Park Avenue in order to allow more space for the line in the parking lot.

Diane spoke with the Public Works Director regarding the tree clearing at South Vineland Park. This clearing did not come from any directive from him. As soon as he found out, he stopped the clearing.

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