

Vineland Environmental Commission  
Minutes  
Regular meeting – November 13, 2023

The meeting was called to order at 7:07 p.m. by Chairperson Diane Amico. Present were members Diane Amico, Charles Valentine, John Casadia, Ariana Headley, and Lisa Fleming, as well as guest Ellen Pedersen. David Lowenstern entered later. The public notice was read into record.

A motion to approve the minutes of the October 10, 2023 meeting, was made by Charles Valentine and seconded by John Casadia. All were in favor.

The chairperson reviewed budget balances for a final review for the year. A motion to purchase supplies for John Casadia to build bluebird boxes was made by Charles Valentine and seconded by Lisa Fleming. All were in favor. Diane is still working on getting the other items discussed last month. There was a hold-up on getting the kiosk sign for Willow Oak, as the City cannot order from ULine, however, Reuben Hardware can order it for us.

The 2024 meeting agenda has been sent to members. All in attendance were in approval of the schedule.

Lisa noted that some of the plants in back of the Library raingarden are still blooming. Diane said that ANJEC is putting in a raingarden at the Vineland Historical Society.

David Lowenstern entered the meeting.

Last Saturday was the second and final of the Fall Tree Plantings at Campanella Park. There was a total of 14 participants. A young man and his father travelled from Princeton to participate.

The Community Wildlife Habitat Program has earned 132 points. The movie screening took place at the Library and 14 people attended.

#### Site Plan Reviews:

Regarding GMR, it is noted that they have already totally cleared their property of trees. We submitted comments to the Planning Board. There was discussion of the new DEP model ordinance and the wording of the “look-back” period of 2 years. The new ordinance should say “shall” look back instead of “may” look back. During the Planning Board review of a previous project, Fabbri, the applicant came in with project revisions that were in agreement with the new model ordinance, and were told they did not need to follow it, as it has not yet been adopted. Then the applicant revised their project back to the old standards. The Nascolite site was originally part of the project, but now it is not.

It is unknown how the City will handle the new tree ordinance requirements. Diane will continue to follow up with the Planning Office.

Diane met with representatives of Citizens United, Rob Ferber of the NJ Conservation Foundation, and Deb Ein regarding the naming of a nature area after Mary Treat. After deciding on the large area owned by the NJCF, their administration subsequently declined. We are now back to seeking an appropriate parcel to be named, and leaning toward Bennett's Mill. The Commission could also offer a letter of support.

Lisa discussed the Maurice River Corridor Study focus group. Lisa, John Pedersen, Ellen Pedersen, and Kathie Hicks participated. She noted that the study was from a point of view of looking for areas to develop, not preserve. The Transportation Authority is also involved. There will be another meeting coming up.

There is a new City Policy that requires all volunteers and employees of the City who come into contact with minors to have background checks. Diane has inquired as to what we need to do and will advise when a response is received.

Diane discussed the new BPU and Federal Regulations that are spurring a lot of tree cutting around electric wires. The new regulations were developed after the fires in California, and direct electric utilities to keep the lines completely clear. At the NJ Shade Tree Federation meeting, three of six speakers at classes that Diane attended mentioned avoiding planting anything near electric wires, including small trees underneath, as they will likely be cut down. The new regulations are of high priority to utilities, and they do not have flexibility when it comes to allowing vegetation to grow near wires, including undergrowth. Lisa said there is extensive roadside clearing on her street, including on the side of the road where there are no electric lines, and approaching trees that are not near the road. It is unknown why the City would be doing this much clearing.

A motion to adjourn was made by David Lowenstern and seconded by Charles Valentine. All were in favor.