

Vineland Environmental Commission
Minutes
Regular meeting – December 11, 2023

The meeting was called to order at 7:08 p.m. by Chairperson Diane Amico. Present were members Diane Amico, John Pedersen, Sue Fenili, Ariana Headley, and Lisa Fleming, and guest Ellen Pedersen. David Lowenstern entered later. The public notice was read into record.

A motion to approve the minutes of the November 13, 2023 meeting was made by Lisa Fleming with two corrections in the last paragraph regarding roadside clearing on Maurice River Pky. Motion seconded by Sue Fenili. All were in favor.

The chairperson reported on the end of year budget expenditures. The outdoor kiosk sign was ordered, as well as the other items discussed for purchase. Diane took an online Rutgers course due to a last minute need for CEU's for the Community Forestry Plan. The already approved purchases for bluebird house materials and the ANJEC membership will be requisitioned after Jan.1.

Regarding the renaming parts of Bennetts Mill after Mary Treat, Diane is waiting for some activity on the part of the people who would like the name changed. The process of approaching Business Administration with the request includes an indication of who wants the name changed, including any petitions or letters of support.

David Lowenstern entered the meeting.

John said leaf-blowing took place at Willow Oak on the trails. The Maple Avenue sign is still not fixed and John has not heard back from Public Works. The sign needs major work and new support poles. It would be good to have some consistency in all of the City park signage. The kiosk sign will also need to be installed.

Lisa planted plants purchased from New Moon at the Library raingarden. This included coreopsis near the rocks, and moss phlox that will stay low across the front edge facing Temple Rd. Lisa was present at the Vineland Historical Society's raingarden planting. The plants used there were potted, as opposed to plugs, for quicker establishment. There was discussion of whether to clean out the dead growth at the Library. If we ever need someone to do raingarden maintenance, Diane picked up a flyer at the Shade Tree Federation from the NJ Tree Foundation, who is now doing raingarden maintenance, training, and tree planting for a fee. John asked about the future of all of the raingardens around town that need maintenance, including the Historical Society, Pilla School, and the Veteran's office at West & Landis that has been let go.

There was no December work day, so the next event will be on January 13 at South Vineland /Campanella Park.

It has been awhile since anyone had done work at the Blackwater Branch for maintenance on the tree tubes and deer fence, and it is likely that there is work to be done there. Diane will look into how to obtain access now since the EPA has turned the property over to NJDEP. It should be done in the winter to avoid bugs.

The Community Wildlife Habitat Program now has 137 point. They will be making a site visit to Willow Oak to observe invasive plants. Invasive plant removal at a park can earn points. Lisa said there is also a need to remove invasive plants at Giampietro, including mustard and honeysuckle. There is also bamboo, however, this is difficult to remove without spraying. It was noted that the field at Willow Oak is again coming up with sweetgum trees.

The City's Green Fair will be on May 18 at Vineland High School. A sign-up sheet for manning the table was passed around. There will be a lot of supplies to be carried down from the Annex. Diane said the ANJEC website has several free downloads for handout, such as coloring books.

There are several development applications that are either recently approved or pending, where tree clear-cutting is happening. Lisa discussed the GMR Development application on Oak Rd. which was approved at a special meeting. They did put in some additional landscaping but the tree removal issue was not addressed. Eagle Pallet, at the Garden Rd. Truck-stop was also approved at the special meeting and the property is being clear-cut. Next to the greenhouses on Garden Rd, clear-cutting is taking place all the way back close to the Blackwater Branch stream, as the applicant asked for a waiver from city stream buffers. It was also noted that the Senior Cottage project on Sherman Ave is clear-cutting all of the trees. The housing development on Orchard Road is clearing the woods to put in housing.

Diane is waiting for the city insurance office to give instructions on how to get background checks to comply with the new city policy on Protection of Minors. We are also waiting for an answer as to who the policy is applicable to.

When the new budget is received in January, Diane will follow up on the ERI update.

Diane attended a webinar where it was discussed how the current Green Infrastructure rules are being circumvented by developers who are coming up with creative ways to find loopholes. Examples are reclassifying soil categories, asking to supply soil test pit results at a later date, and splitting up basins into smaller sections when it is actually all the same basin. It was noted, as an example, that the development on Orchard Road has several basins all next to each other. The NJDEP is putting out notifications that these are not acceptable and ordinances will need to be updated.

The Salem Oak Seedling at Landis Park can use some mulch. Also, the multi-stem dogwoods planted 2 years ago need pruning to train them into one stem. These are located on Northwood Drive, Axtell Ave, and 4 at the southeast mini-park.

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