

Vineland Environmental Commission
Minutes – Regular meeting
March 13, 2023

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 pm by Chairperson Diane Amico. The public notice was read into record. Present were: Diane Amico, Sue Fenili, Charles Valentine, John Pedersen, Lisa Fleming (virtual), and guests Ellen Pedersen and Josh Aderholdt. David Lowenstern entered later.

A motion to approve the minutes of the February 13, 2023 meeting was made by Sue Fenili and seconded by Charlie Valentine. All were in favor.

The budget report is still reflecting temporary budget amounts of approximately half of what the full budget will be. The budget was passed around to members. The Developers Tree Fund has \$41,250 and the No Net Loss Fund has \$6,061. We are trying to use the No Net Loss money first.

David Lowenstern entered the meeting.

Events for the calendar were reviewed and sign-up sheets were passed around for table coverage. The Seedling Giveaway is April 29. The Cumberland County EcoFair for May 6 has no confirmed volunteers yet, so Diane has not registered the Commission yet. The Vineland Green Fair is June 3. Ellen is trying to have a separate table at the EcoFair for Natural Vineland but needs approval from the National Wildlife Federation. Diane noted that there is pending legislation in NJ for homeowner rebate money for letting their yard “go wild”.

For the Seedling Giveaway, Diane still has 6 different colors of curling ribbon leftover from last year. If we get more than 6 different species, we will need additional colors of ribbon.

A virtual Green Infrastructure meeting was held between ANJEC, DJ Maillet City Engineer, and Rutgers. They are working on locations for tree pits.

A Volunteer work day is coming up on March 25 for assisting Citizens United with cleaning up West Side Park. Diane put CU in touch with the Community Service program at the High School so they can look for additional volunteers. We have one set up on April 1 for clearing trails at Willow Oak, starting at 9 a.m. All are on the google calendar. John would like to paint trail blazes on the trees at Willow Oak and will need different colors. He will talk to Reuben’s about ordering some. John said it would be good to have a small sign board under cover of a small roof, like at State Parks.

Diane made the purchase of shrubs for the Library raingarden. There are 20 Oakleaf Hydrangeas. There may only be room for about 9 at the Library and the rest can be used somewhere else. They are starting to bud, so need to be planted soon. It was decided that members can plant the hydrangeas and a volunteer day is not needed. The back of the parking lot was discussed as a possible planting area, however, there is a lot of ivy coming in from the neighboring property. Lisa ordered raingarden plants for Giampietro, which includes flats of spring and fall blooming flox. This is low-growing and would work along the front perimeter of the Library garden.

John noted that someone is living in a tent on the wooded property west of Bennett's Mill.

There are new requests from Planning and Zoning for all comments on development applications to be submitted within 10 days. This creates an issue since there is not time for review to be done at regular meetings. It was reviewed that procedurally we use Roberts Rules of Order regarding committees, whereas committees can meet separately to compile reports to be brought back to the full group. Diane suggested following this for the Site Plan Review committee review, using the "Facts and Findings" full form to be filled out by the Committee, and then she can extract the "recommendations" from the end as the submittal to the Planning and Zoning Boards. Diane passed three newly received applications to John to be reviewed along with 2 sale of City properties requests and one wetlands delineation, for comments due this week. Comments were submitted for last month's application for a duplex at Chestnut Ave & West Ave.

Citizens United requested another letter of support, similar as last year's, for a grant that they are making a second attempt to obtain. This grant would be for removing invasive plants, specifically phragmites, from along the Manumuskin. It was noted that Vineland has no ordinance against nuisance plants. Several people are having issues with bamboo.

Diane attended an online Rutgers workshop for resident raingarden rebates, and noted that new designs do not automatically include pollinator plants. Residents can select different designs, since the primary function is mitigating stormwater, and designing as a pollinator garden is secondary.

Seedlings that we purchased from the NJ State Nursery will be available for pickup on March 29 at Parvins. This includes Atlantic white-cedar and beach plums.

At the Pinelands Shortcourse this past Saturday, Diane attended one session where there is a lot of scientific data available that would be useful to quote when making development application comments. For example, we are in an over-burdened community as assessed by NJ State, and decreased tree canopy and too much impervious surface are both data points that indicate a community is "overburdened". At this time, there is a lot of money available for tree planting. NJ Forestry is currently advocating diversity in tree species for plantings so that no more than 5% of the same species be planted in an area, due to an uptick in diseases and pests.

For this year's Arbor Day, Sue will go to one school to hold an Arbor Day Ceremony and help with the planting of a tree. The school is to be determined.

We have trees to be planted at Magnolia Road Park. This can be done as a volunteer day. We will not need Public Works to dig the holes if the trees are small. The schedule for April is full and hits spring break. It was tentatively scheduled for April 22 pending Diane contacting Public Works and arranging for trees.

The Chestnut Avenue Survey comments were distributed to members for review. It was decided to add a general comment addressing green infrastructure for stormwater drainage be included where possible, especially near the two streams, and to incorporate whatever adjustments can be made to save as many trees as possible.

The Tree Plan submission to City Council has not been completed. Lisa worked on this partially a while back, but it still does not include the required components that the City ordinance outlines, such as Tree Care, Pruning, and Removals. Diane forwarded the outline to John; the Committee will take a look and get something together. Maintaining a certain percentage of tree canopy in the City should also be included.

Types of signage for the Salem Oak Seedling were discussed.

A draft of specifications for Tree Care during construction has been forwarded to the City Engineer. It is currently not in a format that is usable.

The removals of trees at South Vineland Park was discussed and what can be done going forward to replant trees there. The Atlantic White cedar seedlings just purchased possibly could be put there.

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