

Vineland Environmental Commission  
Minutes – Regular Meeting  
July 10, 2023

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 p.m. by Chairperson Diane Amico. The public notice was read into record. Present were members Diane Amico, Lisa Fleming, Charles Valentine, Sue Fenili, John Casadia, John Pedersen and Ariana Headley, as well as guests Ellen Pedersen, Josh Aderholdt, Kerensa Loadholt, and Tiffany Falcone of NJDEP.

A motion to approve the minutes of the May 8, 2023 meeting was made by John Casadia and seconded by Charles Valentine. All were in favor. There was no meeting in June.

Tiffany Falcone of NJDEP spoke about the Community Collaborative Initiative where NJDEP staff are assigned as liaisons to different areas to assist cities with grants, support for projects, and connecting with NJDEP. Vineland qualifies for the program due to being an Overburdened Community. They have volunteers for weekday projects or cleanups.

The Chairperson presented the current budget balances which were passed around.

National Night Out will be held August 1<sup>st</sup>. Natural Vineland Committee will be attending with their own table.

John Pedersen discussed Willow Oak trail clearing that can be done this Saturday at the volunteer day. Mowing different areas was discussed. We should not hire someone to mow, but rather should discuss with Public Works what is needed.

David Lowenstern entered the meeting.

At Willow Oak, there is evidence of more nefarious activity and some questionable people walking around. We were planning to paint the entrance sign on Post Road, but it was discovered that some of the wood is rotted and there are algae and lichens growing in the wood. Public Works suggested that they bring the sign back to the Public Works yard to work on it. We can still paint trail blazes on Saturday.

Volunteer group participation and spots of illegal dumping were discussed. Tiffany Falcone said DEP is launching a program of providing cameras for illegal dumping. Diane will put her in touch with Sharon Flaim of Clean Communities, who would know best where the worst areas are of illegal dumping.

The library raingarden is in full bloom. There is an overabundance of Echinacea, and some might need to be culled next year. Lisa spoke about what plants are coming up. The Annex raingarden needs weeding, but some plants have not bloomed yet, so weeding should be planned for a later date so as not to confuse which plants to pull. West Side Park was discussed as a possible next spot for the August volunteer day.

Lisa said that one of the witch-hazels at the library has died. It was discussed what to plant in its place. We would first need the permission of the library to put a tree there. Tiffany discussed a long term tree plan grant where DEP would assist in assessing canopy and planting trees. It is partially geared toward schools, but since the Board of Ed is a separate administration, they would need to make their own application for anything to be done on school properties.

Lisa asked about availability of an edging tool for the library raingarden. One may be obtained from Ruben's Hardware on the open purchase order.

Ellen gave an update on progress made by the Natural Vineland committee.

John gave a summary of what site plans have come in for review. There is one proposal for a garage that may have some concerns. Another proposal for a restaurant lot expansion does not show much landscaping detail, however it is just a minor subdivision, not a site plan. He will put comments together for the garage on the Site Plan review form and forward to Diane. Diane received copies of two wetlands delineation applications; these were passed around for review. There were also several notices for sale of city property that were received last month. Since we did not have a June meeting, it is likely too late to comment on these.

The Green Fair was a success. Diane thanked members for helping that day with manning the table.

All of the oakleaf hydrangeas have been planted. The remainder were put along the wall at Giampietro Park near Lincoln Avenue with the assistance of Public Works and John Pedersen.

At the next meeting we will plan for a fall tree planting. Diane will find out what is County Line Nursery's fall schedule and John Pedersen will pick a location, and number and species of trees. Several locations were discussed.

Diane has spoken to Lucia of the American Littoral Society regarding picking up where we left off on the stormwater grant project at Giampietro Park. Lucia is facilitating hiring an engineer to do the topographic survey.

The problem of invasive species was discussed. There are no laws yet in New Jersey. There is a large stand of bamboo behind Giampietro Park. The township of Hamilton in Mercer County has a local ordinance that could be used as a model.

The Planning Office has asked for EC member participants for a focus group studying the Maurice River corridor. John Pedersen and Lisa Fleming volunteered to represent the Commission. Kerensa Loadholt was also interested. Diane will respond to Kathie Hicks.

John Casadia said that the Willow Oak field has rebounded well from the prescribed burn. Wildlife seems abundant and bluebirds are back. There have been deer in the field.

Diane said that getting tree inventories done has been an issue and the cost is prohibitive. Tiffany said that the NJDEP grants could take us through those first steps to do inventories, but that currently the grant money available would be tied to following up in a subsequent year with tree planting or the money would have to be returned. She said at a meeting at City Hall she was told that the City does not want any street trees due to sidewalk issues. The lack of places to plant along streets in center city was discussed.

Tiffany said she can have a group take a walking tour to survey where trees are needed, or can assist with anything else DEP related such as permits. They may also be available for a fall tree planting.

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

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