

Vineland Environmental Commission
Minutes
Regular Meeting April 14, 2025

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 p.m. by Chairperson Diane Amico. The public notice was read into record. Present were Diane Amico, John Pedersen, Lisa Fleming, Josh Aderholdt, Ariana Headley, and Charles Valentine. John Casadia entered later. Also present were guests Ellen Pedersen and Meredith Pichini of the NJ Tree Foundation.

Approval of the minutes of the March 10, 2025 meeting was postponed until later in the meeting.

The budget report was passed around. We still have approximately \$39,000 in the developer's tree fund, and our regular budget line items have now been populated with full 2025 amounts.

Meredith Pichini reviewed the NJ Tree Foundation's TreeKeepers program. There is some funding still available. The presentation to residents would be approximately 2 ½ hrs. long and could accommodate 20 people. We would need to provide a projector, and to determine whether there are any trees on the property available for demonstrative pruning. All were in favor of sponsoring the program. Diane will follow up with the Library and Meredith for scheduling on a Saturday morning.

Lisa Fleming made a motion to purchase brochures on mulch volcanoes for approximately \$30, if possible. Charlie Valentine seconded. All were in favor. Purchase is dependent on whether the source can register as a vendor for the city, or if there is another way to make the purchase.

The Environmental Resource Inventory is complete and online on the City's website. The file is too large to email but members can download from the web. Diane thanked Lisa Fleming for all of her work on reviewing and working with the consultant. It has been distributed to the Planning and Zoning offices, as well as to City administration and the Mayor. The vendor has been paid. Paper copies were not included in the proposal. Charles Valentine made a motion to purchase 2 paper copies at \$35 each. One for the permanent file, and one for borrowing and passing around. Lisa Fleming seconded. All were in favor. Diane will contact the vendor, and will also inquire as to whether we can get the GIS files.

The property at the corner of Union Rd and Mays Landing Road adjacent to Bennetts Mill has been purchased by the NJ Conservation Foundation. It would be something to keep in mind for future planning of trails that span both properties.

Diane spoke to Deb Ein regarding the previously discussed naming of a trail in Vineland after Mary Treat. We still need something in the way of support in order to present the request to the Business Administrator, such as a letter from an organization, as well as an indication of which trail they are looking to have named.

A request was received from Donata Dalesandro for trees to be planted at Gonzalez Park next to Sabater School, possibly including the students. There were no members who were able to facilitate a planting, therefore Diane will offer to her the 5 cherry trees that we have left from the giveaway if VDID would like to do their own planting, with the condition that they have a plan for watering and care afterwards. Lisa volunteered to oversee their planting for correct planting procedures.

John Casadia entered the meeting.

On Saturday, April 12, John and Ellen planted 8 trees at Giampietro Park. On March 15, volunteers removed invasive plants at Willow Oak including English ivy, Wisteria, and Autumn olive. The next volunteer day will be May 10, also at Giampietro Park, as there is a lot to do there including mulching trees and removing invasive plants. John Pedersen said that disc golfers are cutting trees, and have placed 2 baskets within the riparian buffer, and have also cut vegetation.

The field has been mowed at Willow Oak. There is still some greenbriar standing, but since we requested no mowing this late in the season, Public Works will not mow again until the fall.

Public Works has communicated that there has been a problem with ATVs at Willow Oak tearing up the parking lot, and the gate locks have been cut. Jim Neher replaced the lock, and if access is needed, Diane is to contact him so someone can open the gate. He is trying to be aware of who is going in there. West Side Park is temporarily closed while Public Works does work there. There are some personnel changes in Recreation, with Alex Gomez filling Dale Elbeuf's position, and with Jim Neher temporarily covering for John Hernandez for the tree crew. Recreation received a request from a community group that wants to plant seeds at Campanella Park, possibly wildflowers. Diane requested that we find out in advance what kind of seeds, so someone doesn't inadvertently plant something unwanted or invasive.

Lisa discussed two Planning and Zoning development applications received this past month. There seems to be a development trend of removing areas of trees from the middle of a developed area and placing one access road, resulting in infilling of small wooded sections in the middle of neighborhoods. The second application involves trees coming down, but the total disturbed area does not meet the ordinance threshold.

DunRite Sand & Gravel submitted an application to the City for a Class B Recycling Center at their Mays Landing Road site, located next to a stream. The area is zoned Woodlands and Recycling Centers are banned in that area by a city ordinance. The applicant submitted an Environmental Impact Statement, followed by the City hiring a consultant to develop a second EIS. Neither EIS indicated that the project would negatively impact the stream. The Commission was directly asked to submit comments by the City Solicitor, therefore comments on the Woodlands zoning designation were submitted. The application was subsequently postponed to a later Zoning Board meeting.

The prescribed burn at Willow Oak is postponed until next year. Bad weather, including several windy days and rain, in the weeks leading up to the end of March, prevented this year's burn from taking place in the required window of the burn season. We will need to submit a new application next year. NJ Forest Fire Service also requested we submit an application for the Maurice River Conservation area at the southern end of Union Road.

The American Littoral Society requested a letter of support for a grant they are seeking, and Diane did provide this to them.

Diane followed up on the previous discussion of cars and ambulances parking too close to newly planted trees in the Elmer Road tree pits, and in the medians in the City employees parking lot. After 3 drive-bys, no cars were seen parked too close to trees. If anyone sees this happening in the future, please take photos and send them to Diane for follow up.

Diane completed the Commission's Annual Report as required by City ordinance and submitted it to City Council for recording and filing, as well as sent it to the Mayor and Business Administrator.

A motion to renew the Shade Tree Federation membership was made by Lisa Fleming and seconded by Charles Valentine. All were in favor.

Diane was approached by The Vineland Voice, a new digital newspaper regarding doing a story on the Willow Oak invasive species removal project. Since there was no response to the request for photos and information on the results of the event, this was a missed opportunity. We can keep this news outlet in mind for future stories. All press releases and news stories must go through the City's Public Relations office. This includes for Natural Vineland, since it is an official Commission committee.

Members with renewed appointments and new appointments are reminded to contact the City Clerk's office to be sworn in.

Since the Tree Committee is down to 2 members, the Chairperson asked if any members were interested. Josh Aderholdt volunteered.

The Community Forestry Management Plan is due for updating. The new plans are required to be heavily dependent on the results of tree inventories. We have \$10,000 budgeted for professional services, which is not a lot for this. There may be some grant money available.

The leftover trees from the giveaway still need to be planted. There are only black cherry and blackjack oak left. We still have some tree diapers that can be used.

No Tree Plan was submitted this year to City Council as per ordinance. The last one done was in 2022.

A motion to approve the minutes of the March 10, 2025 meeting was made by John Casadia and seconded by Charles Valentine. Roll call vote: Charles Valentine: yes, Ariana Headley: yes, John Pedersen: yes, John Casadia: yes, Josh Aderholdt: yes, Lisa Fleming: abstain, Diane Amico: yes.

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