

Vineland Environmental Commission
Meeting Minutes
July 14, 2025

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Chairperson Diane Amico. The public notice was read into record. Present were Diane Amico, Lisa Fleming, Josh Aderholdt, John Pedersen, and Charles Valentine. Also present were guests Ellen Pedersen, Nora Zielinski, Tiffany Falcone NJDEP, and Jackson Hesley from the Vineland Voice newspaper.

A motion to approve of the minutes of the June 9, 2025 meeting was made by Lisa Fleming and seconded by Josh Aderholdt. All were in favor.

The budget report for the standard line-item budget was passed around.

Nora Zielinski presented Natural Vineland's proposal for a multi-year work plan to remove invasive plants from the Willow Oak area, and replace them with native plants. The project can be done in phases, and can be incorporated into the Second Saturday events, as well as possible additional events in between. The first phase includes removing autumn olive, honeysuckle, and multiflora rose from the main trail. This project will begin with the next two months' events, August 9th and September 13. For August 9, the time will be adjusted earlier to avoid the heat. Native plants and trees will be purchased for planting in fall to fill in the areas where invasives are removed. Various non-spraying methods of controlling resprouting of invasives were discussed.

Diane noted that a sign-in sheet with waiver is needed for every Second Saturday event, even if only members attend. Since the Protection of Minors City Policy has severely limited the ability of high school students to participate in monthly volunteer events, several members of the Natural Vineland Committee indicated a willingness to facilitate background checks. This would open up the possibility of holding a special volunteer event for them, the best time being around March/April when their community service hours are coming due to be submitted.

There are several issues at Willow Oak that need to be addressed, including unlocked gates, people cutting paths into the woods, and signs of nefarious activity. Diane will relay the concerns to Public Works.

The cleaning up of Tarkiln Branch is still an issue to be addressed in the fall when the water levels are lower.

Lisa said that plants are becoming established at the Library and Giampietro gardens. There are not a lot of weeds in the swale and it is very wet. There are blueberries fruiting. Coneflowers have taken over at the Library, and she cut some back. It was noted that there is a groundhog hole leading to under the building. There are some trees resprouting that may need to be removed.

Some Zoning applications had been received on paper and have not been reviewed yet. The housing development on Maple Avenue for which the Commission previously submitted comments came back with a completely revised design that did not require variances, subsequently was approved. The developer stated that he was in compliance with the tree ordinance, but that was not confirmed. The housing development on Orchard Road received final approval with a waiver on the Tree Ordinance.

Diane shared an email from Rick Tonetta to the NJDEP regarding the Dun-Rite Sand & Gravel conceptual plan application for a recycling center on Mays Landing Rd.

The property at the corner of Union Rd. & Mays Landing Rd. has been purchased by the NJ Conservation Foundation for preservation. Since this adjacent to the City-owned Bennetts Mill area, linked trails would be a good addition. It was noted that there are 2 dams and an historic house foundation that could be points of interest along the trail.

Diane said that Economic Development has moved out of our office at the Annex, but another office has been moved into there without our knowledge. This may have been an error, as the office across the hall was also vacant. Diane spoke to the Business Administrator regarding some notification when this second office staff will be done using the space so we can get back into our office.

The renewal of the Community Forestry Management Plan is still an open issue. The first step is to develop a Request for Proposals for a Tree Inventory and to decide on the area to be done. There are specific NJ State requirements for licensing to complete this inventory.

Adjournment by consensus.