

Vineland Environmental Commission
Regular Meeting Minutes
February 12, 2024

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, Charles Valentine, John Pedersen, Sue Fenili, Lisa Fleming, and guests Ellen Pedersen, Josh Aderholdt, and Tiffany Falcone of NJDEP virtually. David Lowenstern entered later.

A motion to approve the December 11, 2023 minutes was made by Lisa Fleming and seconded by Charles Valentine. All were in favor.

There is no budget report, as we are under a temporary budget. A motion to approve an open p.o. for \$400 for supplies for projects for Reuben Hardware was made by Diane Amico and seconded by Charles Valentine. All were in favor.

Tiffany from NJDEP is working with John Pedersen to arrange for a site visit at the Blackwater Branch planting area in preparation for a work day for removing tree tubes. NJDEP offers manpower for a quarterly day of service on a workday. DEP is still working with the City's Solid Waste Mgmt. division for placement of cameras, and associated training, for monitoring and enforcement of illegal dumping.

David Lowenstern entered the meeting.

Regarding the City policy for Protection of Minors, Diane looked into it, and IdentoGo would not accept a purchase order, but would require the City to set up a credit account. Background checks would be required each year. The city policy as worded includes anyone from the public participating in any event, which is impossible to comply with. It was noted that for other City Events, someone is using a general waiver form that volunteers must sign indicating that they know they must be in compliance with all city policies. Some options are to only have groups with their own chaperone do projects, and/or any minor attending any event must have their parent/guardian with them.

The next volunteer day will be March 16, 2024 at Willow Oak and will include installation of the kiosk sign.

The Willow Oak field has been mowed. It was confirmed that this is the correct time of year based on the instructions we gave them last year. It was noted that there is a large bamboo stand, which is too large of a project for our Public Works Dept. Various methods of controlling bamboo were discussed.

Lisa reported on the raingardens and the work she has done. There is another Raingarden Workshop presentation by Rutgers coming up through the Pinelands Preservation Alliance.

There is an issue in the current media regarding the NJ Plastic Bag Ban, after an article appeared that was critical of the program, and ANJEC responded. The article is using plastic production numbers as an indicator of success or failure, rather than the amount of litter, which has decreased significantly. Tiffany said that one other benefit of the regulation is changing human behavior.

Ellen said the Community Wildlife Program has accumulated 143 points, and recently the Boys & Girls Club has registered.

The Seedling Giveaway will be on Saturday April 6 at John's office. A sign-up sheet was passed around.

The Vineland Green Fair will be held on May 18th.

After brief conversations, there were no formal comments on site plan applications to be submitted. John attended and spoke at a Planning Board meeting last month, where the Board gave relief to a developer on the Tree requirements and Tree fund, but was there as a resident, not as a representative of the Env. Commission.

Our Natural Resource Inventory is to be done this year, and a committee is needed to work with the consultant. Lisa and John P. volunteered.

Diane was contacted by someone from Food & Water Watch, a non-profit organization, who is looking for support on pending green energy legislation which would require utilities to calculate carbon footprints and for display on customer's electric bills. Diane will forward the information to members, with a recommendation that we should include the Electric Utility before making any comments on energy legislation.

There are several multi-stem dogwoods in need of pruning this winter to train them into single stem. These are on Northwood Dr, 64 Axtell Ave, and at the southeast mini-park.

The NJDEP draft is out for the new tree ordinance requirements for cities, but we have not heard anything about a meeting between city departments. In the meantime, there have been some lawsuits at the State level regarding the requirements for trees on residential properties, and this could delay action if we are waiting for the outcome of these.

Planting trees at Landis Park this fall was discussed.

Diane reached out to the Littoral Society regarding stormwater mitigation plans for Giampietro Park. We are still waiting for the master plans being designed by Rutgers. It was noted that there are now more disc golf baskets, some being close to the raingarden.

Lisa discussed the amount of light pollution coming from the area of northwest Vineland.

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