



Verona Environmental Commission

600 Bloomfield Avenue
Verona, New Jersey 07044
www.veronaec.org

Verona Environmental Commission Meeting, September 16, began at 7:30 P.M., 2nd floor of the Annex Building in the Verona Community Center, 880 Bloomfield Avenue, Verona N.J.

Attendees: Gloria Machnowski (Chairwoman), Anthony Saltalamacchia (Vice-Chair), Virginia Citrano, Jessica Pearson (Treasurer), Martin Golan, Michael Foley (Planning Board) and Council Liaison Kevin Ryan.

MINUTES:

1. Call to Order and Roll Call. Chairperson reads notice of Open Public Meetings law. The agenda and notice of this meeting has been posted 48 hours in advance on the bulletin board in the IMunicipal Building. The agenda and notice of this meeting has been electronically transmitted to two newspapers circulating within the Township .
2. Members approved July 15, 2015 minutes after adding to point #6 "...coordinate with DPW to excavate the driveway to be able to install the walkway and plantings."
3. During the last meeting members asked to gather information about tree preservation ordinances in Essex County. Verona's Tree Chapter 136 only applies to trees growing in unimproved lots, meaning lots without a structure permanently affixed to the land (such as a house, shed, garage or fence). According to our master plan, Verona is 98% developed so Chapter 136 only applies to 2% of Verona or less. Members contacted ANJEC and several environmental commissions requesting details about how they implemented their ordinances.

Virginia prepared a comparative analysis of the private tree ordinances in Essex County: 14 of 21 municipalities have one (2/3). She put together an ordinance draft based on the commission's research and best practices. It should be easy to understand and effective to implement. Tree Protection ordinance for public and private trees are becoming popular in New Jersey.

The draft defines trees as "Any woody perennial plant having a caliper greater than four (4") inches measured at a point four (4') feet above the ground". Applicability: The provisions of this article shall apply to trees on all property within the Township. The application fee for a tree removal permit shall be \$50 per tree. A tree removal permit is not required when there is an immediate safety risk to person or property, or for removal of any tree growing on a utility right-of-way or pruning of branches growing over such a right-of-way, when such action is performed by, or under contract from, the public utility. A tree removal permit is also not required for the removal of any tree that is dead, diseased, or constitutes a hazard to the safety of life or property with written certification of this condition by a licensed tree expert or

licensed tree care operator. The exemptions granted under this chapter will not relieve any person of possible liability to others for hazards to safety of life or property.

Persons removing any tree shall replace said tree with a replacement tree as provided below. Replacement trees shall be two- to two-and-one-half-inch caliper and be limited to native species or species suited to urban environments. The Township shall prepare, publish and annually review a suitable species list for replacement trees. Any applicant who makes an application for a financial waiver and is granted one shall be exempt from the replacement provision, provided that replacement trees are not available through the Township. In lieu of providing a replacement tree, a contribution of \$250 shall be paid to the Township Tree Fund. Said fund shall be used to supplement public tree replacement in the Township.

The International Society of Arboriculture recommends a clear statement of goals. Goals such as "improve the quality of life" or "protect the health and welfare of the community" are not enough, they are too vague and can not be easily measured. They recommend quantifiable goals such as "establish maximum tree cover", so that progress toward the goals can be measured. Our urban forest serves a wide variety of functions, that includes conserving energy, improving air quality, reducing wind speed and noise pollution, providing habitat for wildlife, reducing storm runoff and soil erosion, increasing real property values, enhancing visual and aesthetic qualities and serve as a source of community image and pride. Benefits increase as canopy cover increases. By establishing and maintaining maximum tree cover, the community is able to realize the maximum benefits the urban forest can provide.

Michael Foley mentioned that including a performance bond is not a bad idea. This financial tool is used to guarantee that in the event of a developer or contractor's default, funds are available to finish the job. Members will keep working on the draft.

4- Visual list / flyer of Verona's recycling accepted materials for our website, brochure, etc. Chris is in Germany this week for work, but he had been working on this for a few months with a friend, Keith, who is designing this for free, We don't have a working draft yet but we'll have something at the end of this week. Chris approved the minutes.

Verona recently joined Remyndr, "reminder" is a free application that residents can install on their cellphones, it is available on the township's website and it communicates curbside collection schedules. Notifications tell you the pickup type, what to include, what to avoid. If things change (like a snow storm), everyone will be alerted.

Steven Neale and Tom Cherry can incorporate our recycling guide into the Remyndr app as well.

5- HBW and VHS Environmental Club reports. Tony and Gloria are planning to meet with the new Verona schools Director of Facilities, Mr. Trause. Talking points include reducing disposable water bottles and other waste, and increasing recycling in schools and sport fields,

On mid August Gloria contacted the Superintendent of Schools about the initiative to use reusable water bottles at schools instead of disposable, based on the Chatham model. He will share the info with members of their administrative team to see how they may coordinate a student led initiative this year.

Kevin mentioned that he is working with the Council, Stern and Helb to modify Verona's recycling ordinance (following Jerry's and SWAC's recommendations) in order to conform with State regulations. The VEC is also requesting details regarding Verona's recycling and waste management vendors and where everything goes after it's collected in Verona.

6. Steep Slope Ordinance:

The planning board sub-committee meeting in charge of reviewing the steep slope ordinance was scheduled to meet on Sep. 8 at 4 pm in Helb's office. Martin Golan went to the meeting and discovered that the meeting wasn't. He spoke to Helb, who told Martin that they haven't really gotten into it, and no one was meeting to discuss anything. On Sep.9 Michael informed Gloria that Jen Critchley was going to the meeting until Helb sent out an email, a few hours before the meeting, indicating it was unnecessary until he met with the Master Plan Implementation Committee. We don't know when that is or who is in that committee. Jessica recommended to ask Jim to do a presentation to the planning board about the draft. Gloria agrees and could request the board to include the presentation in the agenda, once Jim confirms that he is available.

The VEC members approved a draft in 2014 and submitted the draft to the Council members. It will empower local authorities to protect Verona residents and their properties from improper construction, building and development on steep slope areas. Disturbance of steep slopes should be restricted or prevented based on the impact of disturbing steep slopes on water quality and quantity, and the environmental integrity of landscapes. Many of our neighbors have similar Steep Slope legislation.

The Council recently passed a resolution requesting the Planning Board to study and adopt the ordinance. During the last planning board meeting the group asked a set of questions for Helb to research and present back at the next session. Then they would present their version. Some board members thought it's redundant to existing zoning, but Ryan and Roman articulated the need to preserve vegetation as well as preventing soil erosion. Other board members had concerns about fees to determine if work would be affected by the ordinance. The definition of steep slope was also challenged (5% or greater but draft says 8%). Helb suggesting 15-20% as likely minimum. Foley wants to do more research about it and talk to Jerry, who originally drafted the ordinance in 2014. Some board members oppose impositions on homeowners' renovations, although mentioned that the 1000 sq ft clause ought to cover most of these cases. The VEC's draft excludes 500 sq ft. VEC members are flexible but mentioned concern about too many exemptions that could render this ordinance meaningless.

7. 42 Grove Ave. Nature Preserve & Historic Park update.

Gloria, Virginia and Jess met with several neighbors to answer questions. Mrs. Zimmerman from 69 Personette Ave. wanted to know if the trail only goes to the creek and the frequency of ongoing maintenance of the park. Yes, the trail ends before crossing the creek. It is a very short trail because this will be a historic site and nature preserve. There are "No Trespassing" signs posted on both sides of the trail and at the end, by the creek. Gloria provided a schematic that shows the trail path no longer than the length of the adjacent property located at 40 Grove Ave.

Regarding maintenance, DPW cuts the grass in the front by the sidewalk and cleans up the garbage as needed. The Shade Tree Commission is in charge of all township trees, including these. And we'll keep cleaning up the woods with community volunteers, when necessary.

Following suggestions from neighbors, we'll not install a waste receptacle and we'll install a sign with the park rules.

Machnowski and Pearson submitted to the township requisition forms to order the following items (to be paid with the \$4,000 donations from the Juniors and Historical Society):

- a) Cast aluminum historic marker and post from Sewah Studios
- b) Wayside Exhibit panel and base from Envirosigns – Gloria donated panel design.
- c) Sign with the park rules from Amazon
- d) Slate for walkway from Curley Stone that Jessica got at discounted price (they closed store).

Town Manager approved, we placed orders. All materials were received at the DPW garage and inspected by VEC members. The trail and walkway are marked already. DPW will remove driveway to prepare area where walkway will be installed by skilled volunteers. Jess, Jack and Chuck are meeting to mark everything. Verona Juniors would like to help on the next cleanup, probably on the 26.

8. VEC 7th Annual School Poster Contest: Entries are due on October 7th. This year's theme is "Sustainable Verona". The contest is open to Verona Public School Students from Kindergarten to Grade 12. Entries will be on display at the four elementary schools, HBW and VHS. Gloria designed the flyer and sent it to members, mayor and town manager. Verona Superintendent of Schools included the flyer in the School District's Friday Folder. All school principals and secretaries were informed and asked to share the announcement with the school community. It's already on the VHS website. Jim printed flyers, and Gloria will post them around town and at the schools. She submitted announcements to newspapers, news websites, VTV, etc.

9. Adjournment – Next Meeting October 21, 2015.