



## Verona Environmental Commission

600 Bloomfield Avenue  
Verona, New Jersey 07044  
[www.veronaec.org](http://www.veronaec.org)

Minutes of the Verona Environmental Commission Regular Meeting on January 20, 2016 beginning at 7:30 P.M. in the 2nd floor of the Annex Building in the Verona Community Center, 880 Bloomfield Avenue, Verona, New Jersey.

Attendees: Gloria Machnowski (Chairwoman), Anthony Saltalamacchia (Vice Chairman), Virginia Citrano, James Loudon, Jessica Pearson (Treasurer), Chris Stark, Martin Golan, Michael Foley (Planning Board Liaison) and Mayor Ryan (Council Liaison).

1. Call to order: Chairperson reads the notice of Open Public Meetings law.
2. Minutes from the December 16, 2015 meeting were approved by members.
3. Plans for Grove Park (42 Grove Ave.) and Peckman Trail (behind F. N. Brown School). Members considered several possible funding scenarios to add new plantings, maintain and preserve both municipal open spaces. Mayor Ryan stated that both are township properties therefore DPW maintains both with help from the VEC, the Shade Tree Commission and community volunteers. VEC members don't know if there is any money allocated in the township's budget for such maintenance. Jessica proposed to work with Jim to estimate maintenance costs. Jim recommended to ask DPW for those numbers. The township could have a general fund set up in rolling basis for this purpose. Gloria will contact the town manager, DPW and the Shade Tree Commission to gather more information. Jim gave several ideas of how the maintenance could be done in the long term and stated that usually 20% of park installations are set aside for maintenance purposes. Virginia proposed to prepare an estimate, members approved.

In 2014 the VEC won an Open Space Grant from ANJEC to preserve the Peckman Trail. The VEC could apply for a grant to help with the cost of Grove Park new plantings. Applications are due April 1 for grants of up to \$1,500 for environmental commissions to support projects that advance local open space stewardship. No cash match is required to apply. Jessica and Gloria noted that the process is very time consuming. Chris stated that since we did one already, probably the next one will be easier. Michael explained that it will be as time consuming as you plan it to be, since you could save time by paying for professional services instead of tracking volunteers hours. Gloria mentioned that one of the requirements for the ANJEC grant is that commission members and local volunteers must provide and track a minimum of 80 hours of labor toward the project. Jessica stated that probably 80 hours were spent just doing paperwork for the last grant, and perhaps it will be more practical for the commission to accept local donations to help offset the cost of future plantings, instead of applying for another grant. Mayor Ryan concurred that if an entity were interested in contributing with the preservation efforts there would be a way to facilitate the contribution

and a recognition could be agreed to.

Gloria talked to Verona Park Conservancy President James McGregor. The benches that Verona uses cost about \$1,000 each and Verona Park charges \$1,000 to dedicate each park bench plaque. They use C and J Trophies & Promotions to do the engraving. The VEC was able to coordinate with the township the purchase of two benches for the price of one during last year's Memorial Day Sale. DPW installed both benches at Grove Park and each has a 4" x 6" brushed stainless steel dedication plaque. Gloria called C and J Trophies & Promotions, they would charge the VEC about \$15 to \$20 to do the engraving of each plaque.

Members talked about Nina Picurio's proposal. Nina is a Verona resident and also a member of the Juniors Woman's Club. Her family friend Brian Stevens lost his battle with brain cancer at the age of 36, in September 2015. Brian owned a home on Grove Ave but had to sell it shortly after he got sick to help cover the cost of his medical expenses. Nina contacted Gloria last year. Since Mr. Stevens home was on Grove Ave, close to the park, she proposed to honor his memory by dedicating one of the existing bench plaques "In Loving Memory of Brian P. Stevens". She needed authorization from the township before Mr. Stevens friends and family could send donations for this purpose. Gloria didn't ask Nina for an specific donation amount. In the past Matt Laracy informed Gloria that Verona Township has an account to receive donations for the VEC, and to donate people simply needed to write checks payable to "Township of Verona - Verona Environmental Commission" and a letter acknowledging the donation and its purpose, and give both to him.

Michael proposed to ask donors for a specific amount for the park bench dedication based on the amount needed to maintain the park. Jim mentioned that he is not a big fan of adding dedication plaques to benches and converting them in memorials, some plaques make benches even uncomfortable to sit on, but he stated that since both Grove Park benches already came with plaques, if somebody offered to make a donation and dedicate a bench he would recommend to accept the proposal.

Mayor Ryan explained that Gloria informed him about Nina's proposal back in October and he asked Town Manager Stern to consult with the township attorney, but the township had been very busy with other more important matters and the new Town Manager, Mr. Cavallo, is putting together a township policy for dedicating park benches. Once the policy is in place, the information will be advertised and made available to the public.

In 2015 the VEC presented Grove Park project at a Town Council meeting with the Historical Society and Verona Juniors. Jim produced a landscaping design for the front area of the property. The plan was presented to the Town Engineer, the Shade Tree Commission Chairman, the DPW Manager and it was approved by the Town Manager last year. Jim also provided a list of recommended trees and plants. Gloria showed members an estimate from Cedar Grove Garden Center to buy the trees recommended by Jim: one Pink Dogwood 6'-7' (\$148) and four Vanderwolf Pine 4'-5' (\$185 each), Peat Moss (\$10.95), six Top Soil Bags (\$6.99 each) and Labor to Plant (\$450) for a total of \$1,390.89 (without taxes). The VEC could use other nurseries, or plant the trees with help from DPW and volunteers to save on labor cost, and use that money to purchase the recommended plants and bushes.

Mayor Ryan reminded members that the Town Council and Town Manager have the final word but the Shade Tree Commission needs to be informed about projects involving township

trees. Gloria mentioned that she met Mr. Dickison, Shade Tree Commission Chairman, several times to discuss this project last year, they walked the property together and she showed him Jim's plans on June. Mr. Dickison had some suggestions that were discussed with Mr. Helb and Mr. Molinaro before the town manager approved the plan and directed DPW to install benches and signage and remove the old driveway to install the new walkway. Gloria will contact Mr. Dickison again regarding the trees before the next VEC meeting. She will also contact the Town Manager to talk about the project and she'll ask the Hilltop Conservancy for suggestions.

4. Mayor Ryan mentioned that the Steep Slope Ordinance draft approved by the Planning Board will be introduced on the February 1<sup>st</sup> Town Council Meeting, the second reading will take place in March. The ordinance was listed in the preliminary agenda for the January 28<sup>th</sup> meeting but it was pulled to finish first with the BOE plan and dedicate more time to the steep slope matter in February. Regarding the tree ordinance draft, Virginia recommended to send the VEC's preliminary draft to the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Shade Tree Commission, VEC commissioners agreed.

5. Environmental Club Reports. Tony shared that lately club member attendance has been a challenge. There have been a number of contributing factors such as scheduling conflicts and a declining interest in picking up after others as a major club activity. The kids want to do other projects beyond collection. In the past the club members made posters for display in school to raise environmental awareness. There have been plans for members make videos to help explain recycling procedures. Gloria mentioned that her children shared similar sentiments. Tony explained that the custodial staff has been very helpful in the collection process especially during weeks when club attendance low. He also stated that he has had discussion with student council advisors regarding devising a collection plan that would engender more school-wide participation which would bring more awareness to the program and make it easier for everybody. Commissioners agreed. Gloria asked if a 3 bin system could help make the process easier, something similar to the 3 bin system used in the community center. Tony mentioned that it could help to have 3 bins especially for the rooms where there are no sinks to dump partially used water from containers. Gloria recommended to suggest ways for all to help reduce waste and offered the VEC continued support.

6. Mayor Ryan mentioned that the recycling ordinance was approved and new procedures are in place. Commissioners expressed how thrilled they are with this and the new curbside pick-up for all paper recyclables including paperboard and corrugated cardboard. The new recycling information is available in the township and the VEC websites and social media.

7. Adjournment 9:30 pm – Next Meeting February 17th, 2016.