



Verona Environmental Commission

600 Bloomfield Avenue
Verona, New Jersey 07044

Minutes of the Verona Environmental Commission Regular Meeting on March 16, 2016.
2nd Floor Room, Annex Building, Verona Community Center, 880 Bloomfield Ave., Verona N.J.

Attendees: Gloria Machnowski (Chairperson), Anthony Saltalamacchia (Vice Chairman), James Loudon, Jessica Pearson, Martin Golan and Mayor Kevin Ryan. Guests: Sarah O'Farrell, Walter Steinmann, and Sean DiBartolo (Verona residents).

1. Chairperson calls the meeting to order and reads the notice of Open Public Meetings law.
2. Minutes from the February 17, 2016 meeting were approved by all present members.
3. Grove Park plans: The VEC application for the NJ Tree Recovery Campaign was accepted. The commission is planning to distribute 150 free native tree seedlings on April 30 from 9 am to 11 am at Grove Park (42 Grove Ave.). There is a lot of garbage on the south side towards the back of the property and the stream area needs to be clean up. Members agreed to hold a clean up with a group of volunteers during the same day. The Essex County Earth Day celebration is from 11 am to 4 pm so there is no scheduling conflict.

Christine McGrath, current president of the Verona Juniors, contacted Gloria. Erika Grothues will be the new Juniors President starting on March 31st and they are available to help the VEC on the cleanup. The VEC will also invite the Environmental Clubs from Montclair University and VHS.

Gloria will bring a 10 by 10 event tent to set up a table and the seedlings in the shade, so they don't dry up. The VEC have some cleaning supplies from past events and will contact Mr. Molinaro to coordinate. The trees will be available for pick up on Friday, April 29 from 9 am to 3 pm at the Essex County Environmental Center in Roseland. Mayor Kevin Ryan mentioned that if needed DPW could pick up the trees. Gloria asked members to save the date and let her know who is available to man the table and help at the event. Members need to set up at 8:30 am and divide the trees on bundles of 5. The 1' to 3' feet high bare root tree seedlings will come with instructions on how to store, care for, and where to plant them. The giveaway is open to all property owners. Gloria received a Promotion Packet and Event List and she'll contact local media and post on twitter. Jess will post on Facebook. Jim printed flyers and posters to advertise the event. Members will hung them around town.

About 130 Municipalities are participating this year, in Essex County 3 towns are participating: Maplewood, Newark and Verona.

Recently during a storm one tree fell over another tree near the trail on the north side of the

property, Gloria called Chuck Molinaro from DPW and they took care of the trees on foot, no need to drive into the property. Mr. Knight, the neighbor, saw them walk the pieces out.

During the winter some sand and gravel in the walkway washed away, on the right side border, and some slate pieces are loose. Gloria asked Jess if she could take a look with Jack, and coordinate with Chuck to fix it anytime before the April 30 event. Chuck could deliver some sand and fine gravel if needed.

Recently Gloria visited Grove Park with Walter and Sean. Sean put together a report that includes the following points:

a) We observed three discharge pipes with outfalls directed towards this lot from the south (listed from east to west).

-Blue ~8 inch diameter SDR PVC pipe with a ~4 foot cast iron extension at end. The pipe appears to run beneath wood shed located on the Block 78, Lot 44 property (2 Orchard Street). Minimal effluent was discharging out the pipe. It is possible that, given the size of the pipe, this is connect to a catch basin located at the bend in Orchard Street.

-Black ~4 inch diameter HDPE pipe that runs between a row of short trees and a timber crib retaining wall. The pipe runs through the bottom of the retaining wall. It appears that the pipe line may be associated with the pool located on the Block 78, Lot 46 property (6 Orchard Street).

-White ~4 inch diameter PVC pipe that runs along the bottom of a retaining wall. It appears that the pipe line may be associated with the pool located on the Block 78, Lot 48 property (10 Orchard Street).

b) We observed a guy wire extending from a utility pole (60198 VA) on the east side of Grove Street and anchored to a tree approximately 20 feet above the ground in Grove Park approximately 60 feet west of the sidewalk. Portions of the tree appear to be visibly rotted. The entity that owns the utility pole should be contacted to have the guy anchor moved to an alternative location. It is non-standard practice to anchor guy wires to trees.

c) The intent of this public space is as a nature preserve, any tree that should happen to fall is part of a natural process and should not require a crane. Personnel on foot can be mobilized to any portion of the preserve to safely and responsibly fell any tree posing a perceived risk . The felled tree need not be removed, it supports wildlife habitat, should be allowed to degrade where it had fallen. As a nature preserve, not needed for vehicular access any longer.

Gloria explained that Virginia sent pictures of the pipes to Chuck from DPW last year, we didn't get a response. So Gloria recently contacted Tom Jacobsen, the Code Enforcement Officer and submitted the information and pictures. Tom will visit the property with Chuck to take a look at both, the pipes and the guy wire, then he'll report to the town manager and engineer and notify the VEC.

Mayor Ryan mentioned that Chuck Molinaro only needs to drive back to clean the creek of debris when there is risk of flood and that happens once every two or three years. The Mayor added that there is no need to be concerned about the possibility of trucks damaging the slate walkway since DPW will fix or repair it if needed.

Jim met with Bob from the Shade Tree Commission and mentioned that the VEC can either disagree with his plan or accept it, it doesn't matter what it is planted there, the important thing is to plant something, he added. After the meeting Bob sent a plan to Gloria, the Town Manager, Town Engineer, etc.:

- a. Plant larger shrubs (2) on corners of woods – *Chionanthus virginicus* (White Fringe Tree).
- b. Plant shrubs (5) behind north bench – or Witchhazel (*Hamamelis virginiana*).
- c. Look for native Dogwood in woods to promote – there are some on north-side.
- d. Keep lawn area open for view from benches.
- e. The benches are in front of the front of the houses – no need to screen.
- f. Keep driveway open and clear.
- g. If flower beds are included who will maintain them?
- h. Who will maintain the pathways and the trees around them?
- i. The entire “Park” should be of very low maintenance.
- j. Japanese Maples will not be used, they are an invasive species.

Bob also mentioned that a perennial garden will be marked during the spring at the sign area. Gloria said that she is glad that Bob chose native species. Jim mentioned that there are good and bad trees and the Commission doesn't need to necessarily plant native species, just good trees and not invasive species. The Mayor thanked the members for helping establish and maintain the park but mentioned that DPW is in charge of the maintenance and the Shade Tree Commission is in charge of planting trees and bushes, pruning and removing hazardous trees.

Gloria recommended to reseed the lawn at the beginning of September for the best results. Japanese Maple trees are listed in the New Jersey Invasive Species Strike Team 2015 Do Not Plant List. Al De Old offered to donate 3 from his yard. Gloria will contact him to thank him but the Commission will not use the trees.

Jim would like to choose the trees and select big specimens. Gloria mentioned that Bob only included 2 small trees in his plan (White Fringe Tree) and that it would be nice if Jim could select not only the trees but also the bushes and perennial plants. Bob clearly told her that the Shade Tree Commission will not pay for any plant materials. Mayor Ryan explain that this is not decided yet and if the Shade Tree Commission wants to choose the planting materials they should pay for it as well. Jessica agreed, the VEC recognized the Shade Tree jurisdiction and the Shade Tree could pay Hillcrest Farms to purchase and have the trees and bushes planted. Gloria mentioned that to save money the VEC did all the planting with volunteers in the past and used a whole sale tree nursery in Edison.

Jim explained that he is not concerned too much with Bob's plant selection but he doesn't like the layout that he proposed. Jim's design has sense of geometry, the plants are arranged in a circular layout that Bob's proposal totally ignores. Members questioned why the Shade Tree Commission wants to create a new design since the VEC's design was approved by two town managers last year.

Gloria said that Bob doesn't want to plant any evergreens because he wants to stick with what is already there, deciduous trees, but she noticed that there is a big evergreen in the front of the property as well as next door on the neighboring property. Jim added that h is design called for several evergreens because the property feels naked during the winter and

evergreens will frame the park in a very nice way.

Gloria reminded members that the Commission still has an available balance of over \$1,000 donations for the park. Mr. Cavallo is putting together a policy for people that want to donate money and dedicate a park bench located on municipal property. Once the policy is in place the VEC will be able to advertise the program and potentially receive more funding for Grove Park. Gloria mentioned that Nina Piccurro recently contacted her and she is still interested on dedicating one of the benches in Grove Park to Brian Stevens.

Mayor Ryan mentioned that hopefully the Town Council will finish with budget matters soon which will free up some time to solve this planting issue before May.

4. Peckman River-Trail cleanup and maintenance: Gloria proposed a woods and river cleanup for June 4, before school is over and once the Japanese knotweed is already out to pull it, and the water is warm. She visited the property with Walter and Sean and she did a small cleanup with her family 2 weeks ago. The drinking party moved from the trail to the circle of benches behind the school field and she installed there a recycle bin chained to the fence. Gloria asked if somebody could make holes in the bottom of the bin for drainage. She notified the principal and school custodians will periodically empty the bin.

Sean also prepared a report about this property (Block 62, Lot 100.01):

- a. He observed a storm sewer line that runs alongside the Peckman River within the Peckman Trail.
- b. We had discussed the possibility of constructing a foot bridge across one of the ravines that feed into the Peckman River to maintain a trail alongside the river itself.
- c. We discussed that to complete the trail loop it would seem that a path from behind the bench circle headed south on or at the base of the slope would be ideal as long as the path is kept above the areas typically flooded in the Peckman Trail area.

5. Chairperson Report. Gloria reminded members that Chris Stark resigned from the VEC due to his very busy work schedule and a third baby on the way. The last 6 months have proven to be a lot busier than he expected. He is very committed to the VEC efforts and will continue to participate in meetings and events whenever he is available.

Mayor Ryan asked Martin Golan if he will accept to move from Alternate I to regular member, Martin gladly agreed. Verona residents Walter Steinmann, Sean DiBartolo and Sarah O'Farrell applied for the vacant Alternate Member positions. Resumes were sent to the Mayor and Town Manager. No decision was taken yet and resumes are still welcome.

Gloria submitted to the township the paperwork to pay the Association of New Jersey Environmental Commissions' membership due on March 24, 2016. The annual membership is \$300 and covers 7 members. The town manager approved.

The VEC's operating budget is only \$500, nevertheless Mr. Cavallo recommended to renew the \$300 membership, and maintain the projects that the VEC usually runs every year. He mentioned that the township would find a way to help if needed.

ANJEC workshop coming up: Fundamentals for Effective Environmental Commissions – anjec.org - Saturday, March 19 - 9am – 1:30pm - Morris County Cultural Center - 300

Mendham Road - Morristown - \$35 for ANJEC Members

During the last meeting Historian Bob Williams talked about the long property that corresponds to the former rail line located behind Green Acres apartments and Brookdale Avenue School. He said that it would be interesting to know who owns the property since it could be a nice preserve.

The Verona Environmental Commission did cleanups in that area a few years ago and for future projects we would like to know who is the owner. The information is not online but Pam Piscoe from the tax office informed us that the property is known as block 709 lot 28 (formerly known as block 27.01 lot 28). The owner is: Green Acres at Verona, Inc. -18 East 22nd Street New York, NY 10010. Jessica mentioned that the stream area has probably an easement. Sean said that the Commission could see if this area is included in Blue Acres flood zone. Jessica added that there is usually a buffer zone around these water bodies and there are steep slopes in the area as well.

Jessica also asked if the Commission could encourage VBSL President Rich Williamson to organize an Everett Park cleanup because there is a lot of litter. Sarah O'Farrell mentioned that the cleanup will take place soon and she'll inform the Commission.

Members approved to participate in Verona's 2nd Annual Green Fair on Saturday, May 21st from 11 am to 4 pm in the Verona Civic Center Square. Gloria submitted the registration form to Steve Neale and confirmed with Chuck that he has about 100 recycling bins and barrels available for the Commission to distribute at the fair. He'll bring the bins and new recycling brochures to the VEC table at the fair. The giveaway will be open to Verona residents only. The VEC could also use the same tent that will use at Grove Park on April.

During the last meeting members talked about Chapter 16: Environmental Commission of Verona Code, which has some old dates: "Members shall serve for terms of three (3) years or until a successor is appointed and qualified, except that of the first members appointed, the terms of three (3) members shall expire on June 30, 1993, the terms of three (3) members shall expire June 30, 1994, and the term of one (1) member shall expire June 30, 1995." Members recommended to contact Mr. Cavallo to fix this. Cavallo informed Gloria that this section of the code is correct. Those dates reference the first VEC commissioners that were appointed. This section has to remain unchanged with regard to dates.

Gloria is a member of Verona's Green Team, they organized a Hilltop Reservation Cleanup on April 16th from 9am-1pm meeting at the Verona Community Center by Veteran's Field (grass field) and take a short trail up to the site. Focus Areas: Area & trails surrounding Prisoner's Pond and the shooting range.

Verona Park Conservancy Spring Clean-up is April 9th at 9:00 am. All are welcome to join and help. The Rain Barrel site has been finalized and it's ready to start publicizing.: <http://rainbarrelprogram.org/verona> – Walter mentioned that rain barrels are obligatory in Australia.

6. Steep Slope Ordinance. Mayor Ryan explained that the ordinance will be discussed during the first Council Meeting of April. He is confident that since the planning board approved the draft with unanimous vote the Town Council will approve it as well, but a second reading is

needed and a 30 day comment period is also required. Mr. Steinmann asked if this ordinance will prohibit him from selling his steep slope property to developers, he is counting with that money to send his kids to university. Gloria explained that the ordinance has many exemptions. Jessica added that most likely it will not apply to the majority of single family home owners or small properties. Kevin added that the master plan makes reference to steep slopes but doesn't give a clear definition and this ambiguity doesn't help. Mr. DiBartolo mentioned that it is a good start to have something in the books, the ordinance could be amended if needed in the future.

7. Public Participation: the public was allowed to participate during the meeting, there were no further comments.

Adjournment – Next Meeting April 20th, 2016.