



Verona Environmental Commission

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

Minutes of the Verona Environmental Commission Regular Meeting on June 15, 2016 – 7:00 P.M., conference room, Verona Community Center, 880 Bloomfield Avenue, Verona N.J.

Attendees: Gloria Machnowski (Chairperson), Anthony Saltalamacchia (Vice Chairman), Virginia Citrano, Martin Golan, and Mayor Kevin Ryan (Town Council Liaison). Guests: Sarah Yauch O'Farrell, Walter Steinmann and Sean DiBartolo.

1. Call to Order - Chairperson reads notice of Open Public Meetings law. Roll Call.
2. Members approved the revised minutes from the May 18, 2016 meeting.
3. The Peckman River Cleanup on June 4 went very well. About 25 volunteers attended. Chuck Molinaro delivered the cleaning supplies. The group pulled out Japanese knotweed, and worked cleaning up the woods and river. Volunteers also did some trail maintenance and fixed the kiosk background. This event was part of the New Jersey Clean Communities Clean Water Challenge; they supplied garbage bags and sturdy working gloves. Volunteers removed lots of garbage, rusty pipes, lamps and lead acid batteries. Lead acid batteries should be disposed of as hazardous waste. A single lead-acid battery, if disposed incorrectly, could contaminate 25 tons of municipal solid waste.

Kimberly Williams Manis contacted Gloria; her daughter is in F. N. Brown School. She wanted to find out if the VEC is a 501(c)3 for tax purposes and what is the best way to make a donation to the VEC. Matt Laracy, Verona's CFO informed Kimberly that a donation to the VEC can be made by writing a check to the Township of Verona with "VEC Donation" in the memo line. He'll deposit the funds into the VEC trust fund to be utilized by the Commission. The Township is not a 501-c-3 so there will be no tax deduction. He added that the donation can be given directly to the Commission or drop at Town Hall, or mailed to him at 600 Bloomfield Ave. Gloria proposed to include this information on the website. Members approved. Mrs. Williams Manis donated \$50 dollars to the VEC.

4. Verona's 2nd Annual Green Fair took place on May 22. Due to the rain day there were no food trucks. About 65 vendors and organizations participated. The VEC distributed about 80 recycling bins and barrels to Verona residents, including those delivered by DPW to 25 households after the event. The town sold about 70 rain barrels and Green Point Jucery was recognized as Verona's first green business. All vendors were invited to fill out a survey, about 25 did and most of them were happy with the event and the turn out. Some complained that the music was too loud, others suggested having a beer garden next year.

5. Community Garden: Tim Newton, head of the Verona Waste Water Plant, and Town

Manager Cavallo informed that the Waste Water Plant and its greenhouses are not available for a Community Garden. Mr. Cavallo is looking at other possible locations. Mayor Ryan mentioned that most of the township properties are wooded. Gloria indicated that it is important to preserve and reforest wooded areas, and make clear that the Commission do not want to clear cut wooded areas to install a community garden.

Virginia proposed a new location for the community garden, the grass area located at HBW Middle School, behind the parking lot near Park Place. Sean connected his laptop to the TV screen and showed the exact location from Google Maps. All present members liked the idea. This is a very accessible location, raised beds and a fence will be needed. Mrs. Thomas, HBW Science teacher, is also interested on a vegetable garden for her students. Mayor Ryan will talk about this location with Mr. Cavallo and the BOE.

During the last Sustainable Verona meeting Steve Neale and Christine Liakus proposed sending a survey by email to residents to see how many people are interested to have a garden plot and volunteer at a community garden. Gloria mentioned that it would be interesting to see how many residents are interested in taking care of a plot in a community garden. She presented a sample Garden Plot Registration from the American Community Gardening Association. The sample has a volunteering section asking people to also help with mailings, phone calls, maintenance, construction projects, watering, etc Each gardener is expected to help during the season with general chores.

6. Mayor Ryan mentioned that he talked to the Town Manager about the suggestion to purchase a cardboard compactor for the recycling center. The town pays by tonnage, not by volume, so using a compactor will not provide significant savings. He added that with the new cardboard pick-up the amount of cardboard dropped at the recycling center diminished. Mr. Cavallo also provided information about a company that sells "Dry Cell Battery Recycling Kits" for \$19.95: <https://www.thinkgreenfromhome.com/batteries.cfm> You can use the recycling box to store 9 volt and smaller used alkaline, carbon-zinc, NiCad, and NiMH batteries. The kit includes a pre-paid return shipping label, so when the box is full you can seal it and place by your mailbox for postal pickup.

7. Grove Park plans: Mr. Cavallo met with Mr. Jacobsen, Mr. Molinaro and Mr. Helb and the properties surrounding Grove Park are not draining water from their pools into the park. Mr. Cavallo thinks that the removal of the broken cement slab from the stream is only for aesthetic purposes therefore the township will not remove it. That slab had been there for many years and it doesn't block the flow of water. Gloria mentioned that people used it in the past as a foot bridge to walk into what is now the nature preserve, but probably the newly installed signage will be enough to stop foot traffic in that direction.

Due to a family emergency Jessica was not able to attend the meeting and asked Gloria to table the discussion about the new flower bed for the park. Gloria mentioned that there is no rush since the Commission is planning to do a fall planting and the matter can be discussed during the July meeting. Members can present proposals and estimates (from vendors that accept purchase orders) at the Commission's public meetings and after members approved them, proposals are presented to the town manager for approval.

8. Presentation on leaf blower resolution: Martin Golan presented the recently approved pilot resolution from Maplewood Township. The resolution prohibits the use of leaf blowers by

commercial lawn maintenance business from June 1 to August 31. Violators will be subject to a \$100 fine for a first offense, a \$200 fine for a second offense and a \$500 fine for any subsequent offense. This resolution states that the use of leaf blowers by commercial lawn maintenance business create a health hazard and it is an annoyance to area residents and therefore the township committee of Maplewood wishes to implement a pilot program to further regulate that will apply only to commercial lawn maintenance businesses. Martin mentioned that the average home owner is not creating the noise and pollution that commercial lawn maintenance businesses create. All present members liked this resolution.

Mayor Ryan mentioned that Mr. Cavallo contacted Maplewood to check on the compliance and we'll have feedback about it soon. He added that an ordinance will take longer than a resolution but it will have more weight. He will consult with the township's attorney.

Sean asked if the DPW and BOE use leaf blowers. Gloria mentioned that they do and that in the past she contacted the Superintendent of Schools and the BOE Director of Facilities because BOE staff was using leaf blowers around elementary school students while they were lining up before entering school. Therefore the Superintendent of Schools directed staff to avoid using leaf blowers during school drop off and dismissal times.

Martin explained that he was involved in the half year ban in Montclair and none of the problems that opponents predicted happened, lawn maintenance business didn't go out of business and prices didn't go up. He explained that there is always opposition to good change, like the smoking ban in airplanes or schools or using seat belts, but eventually people get used to it and adapt.

Mayor Ryan mentioned that there is nothing wrong with using a broom or mulching lawn mowers, especially during the months that there are no leaves on the ground.

Martin presented a summary of the dangers associated with leaf blowers and showed an educational video during the meeting: <http://www.zapla.org/present/video/LBP2009-LeafBlowerPollution.mov>

Martin explained that as the Greenwich story mentions, Los Angeles convened a grand jury to study leaf blowers, and ended up banning them year-round. A leaf blower is defined as any motorized tool (gas, electric, or battery powered) used to propel fallen leaves and debris for removal. Leaf blowers pose multiple health risks due to air pollution attributed to their use. The pollution comes in the form of unburned fuel, from the inefficient combustion process inherent in such devices, and from a mixture of fine particles blown into the air, particles that can go deep into the human lungs. To address these concerns and others, many cities have banned leaf blowers. Leaf blowers generate large amounts of airborne dust, including mold spores, allergens, dried animal feces, pesticides and fine particles that increase the number and severity of asthma attacks, cause or aggravate bronchitis, or other lung diseases, and reduce the ability to fight infection. The EPA and the California Air Resources Board, in their brochure "Particulate Matter Air Pollution: A Threat To Our Health," advise us; "Avoid using leaf blowers." Leaf blower motors are large emitters of carbon monoxide, nitrogen oxides, hydrocarbons, and fine particles too small to be eliminated by the body's defenses. The gas-oil mixture that fuels two-stroke engines is especially toxic. The American Lung Association reports that a leaf blower motor releases as much smog as 17 cars. This pollution is known to cause cancer and cardiopulmonary disease. The noise from a leaf blower can reach 90-100

decibels at the operator's ear. According to the World Health Organization, there is an increasing risk of irreversible hearing damage from noise above 75 decibels. Hearing protectors do not necessarily prevent the damage.

Martin added that leaf blowers pose the greatest threat to the health of landscape workers who use them on a daily basis, and often without adequate protective equipment. Unfortunately, the workers themselves tend to exaggerate the benefits and deny the risks of using leaf blowers. Decades of lobbying by their manufacturers, the two-cylinder engines that drive leaf blowers have never been regulated by any Federal or State agency.

Mayor Ryan mentioned that younger parents tend to be more open to change especially now that Verona's kids' population is higher. He recommended scheduling a VEC presentation during a town council meeting. Virginia said that all the mentioned facts are environmental issues and she recommends the Commission to talk to landscaping companies and focus the presentation on financial benefits and the fact that several towns are restricting its use, and it is an accepted practice that doesn't damage business.

Martin is not available to do the presentation in July or August. Tony volunteered to do the presentation. Gloria suggested keeping it simple and recommending the town council to try a pilot resolution like Maplewood did. Mayor Ryan added that there is no rush since it is too late to adopt it for this summer and most likely it could be adopted for the summer of 2017.

Walter mentioned that people need to know the risks involved on using leaf blowers and generating large amounts of airborne dust, especially dust that contains animal feces, fertilizers and pesticides. Sarah mentioned that it is also very bad to cut poison ivy with weed wackers and then spread it in the air with leaf blowers because then you breathe in poison ivy. Tony said that it makes sense to avoid using leaf blowers during the summer, when people spend more time outdoors and have their windows open.

Also Ozone is produced on hot, sunny days by a chemical reaction involving volatile organic compounds. These pollutants are released from motor vehicles, lawn and garden equipment, and other activities that require fuel combustion. Avoiding the use of gasoline-powered equipment will reduce air pollution. Tony also mentioned that leaf blowers affect neighbors because they blow dirt into other properties.

Members agreed that a restriction during the summer months will not be a burden during the fall, when there are actually leaves to cleanup. Martin added that many people work from home, or spend many hours at home, such as kids during the summer and they will benefit from having less noise and less pollution in their neighborhoods.

Gloria added that today she attended the NJ Sustainability Summit. Decreasing greenhouse gas emissions and risk to human health are listed among the main goals set forth during the summit. Overall New Jersey is currently moving in an unsustainable direction for 27 out of the 57 goals. Sarah mentioned that students from HBW won a Climate Change video competition from Rutgers University and Verona recently joined Sustainable Jersey so it makes more sense now than ever for Verona to support programs to cut greenhouse emissions and pollution.

Adjournment – Next Meeting July 20, 2016.