



Verona Environmental Commission

600 Bloomfield Avenue
Verona, New Jersey 07044

Minutes of the Verona Environmental Commission Regular Meeting on October 19, 2016 - 7:00 P.M., conference room, Verona Community Center, 880 Bloomfield Avenue, Verona N.J.

VEC Attendees: Gloria Machnowski (Chairperson), Anthony Saltalamacchia (Vice-Chairman), Martin Golan, Sarah Yauch O'Farell, Walter Steinmann. Guest: resident Frank Ceccacci and Carolyn Rubinfeld, NJWAP Watershed Ambassador WMA 4, NJDEP, Passaic Valley Sewerage Commission.

1. Chairperson calls the meeting to order and reads the notice of Open Public Meetings law.
2. Minutes from the July 20, 2016 meeting were approved by all present members.
3. The award ceremony for Walk/Bike to school Day Poster Contest will take place at the Town Council meeting on November 7 at 7 pm. Gloria and Tony set up school poster exhibits and distributed letters inviting winning students and families to attend. The VEC is editing a short video with a sample of the entries. Some principals announced the winners at school.

The 2016 winners are: Taylor McClain from Brookdale Avenue School for "Be kind to others". Dylan Frey from F. N. Brown School for "It's cool to walk, bike, skate, scoot to school!". MacKenzie Powley from Forest Avenue School for "I love the Earth! And you should too". Luke Latson from Laning Avenue School for "Ride your bike if you would like or use your feet on the street!". Graham Weber from H. B. Whitehorne Middle School for "She is our sunshine, our only sunshine, make her happy instead of gray. Just bike or walk to school". Serena Henderson from Verona High School for "Be green and plant a tree".

4. Outcome of Sep. 30 ANJEC Congress: VEC Chairperson and Verona Mayor attended the Congress at Mercer County College and received an Environmental Achievement Award for the VEC project Grove Park - Nature Preserve and Historic Park.

ANJEC Workshops included Preparing Community for Climate Change, Trash Free Waters, Site Plan Review for Smart Development, GO Solar NJ, Blue Star Program, NJ: Garden or Pipeline State? All Workshop Presentations and Handouts are on line at <http://www.anjec.org/Presentations.htm>

Rutgers Cooperative of Extension table had information about Permeable Pavement and other Green Infrastructure such as bioretention facilities (cells, swales, or planters) and rain gardens. Both facilities consist of shallow depressions combining vegetation with amended or designed soils to filter and absorb water like a forest floor. The soil mix and vegetation enhance the infiltration, storage and removal of pollutants from stormwater.

Gloria showed VEC members the new NJ Green Infrastructure Guidance Manual, a tool for planning and design professionals looking to retrofit green infrastructure practices into existing development. It is available online at <http://water.rutgers.edu/GreenInfrastructureGuidanceManual.html>

VEC Commissioners talked about Green Infrastructure with NJWAP Watershed Ambassador Carolyn Rubinfeld, who collaborates with Rutgers. Green infrastructure is an approach to stormwater management that is cost-effective, sustainable, and environmentally friendly. Green infrastructure practices capture, filter, absorb, and reuse stormwater to help restore the natural water cycle by reducing stormwater runoff, promoting infiltration. Walter suggested to research the possibility to divert runoff that goes to the Peckman into rain-gardens. He also recommended to look into river festivals that take place in other municipalities to celebrate local rivers, featuring entertainment and offering fun with a purpose, all proceeds benefit conservation efforts.

According to Rutgers some communities remain hesitant to adopt green infrastructure practices and require further guidance. To address this need, the RCE Water Resources Program developed this green infrastructure manual to help communities become aware of opportunities for green infrastructure and encourage its adoption.

New Jersey has covered 12.1% of the land with impervious surfaces, which is 1,055 square miles of impervious cover or 675,200 acres. During a one-inch rainfall event, 18.3 billion gallons of stormwater drains from these surfaces. Many of these impervious surfaces are directly connected to our local waterways, rain that lands on these surfaces drains directly to a stream, river, lake or bay without any treatment or having the opportunity to infiltrate into the soil. Pollutants accumulate on these impervious surfaces and are washed into New Jersey's waterways during storm events. Additionally, these impervious surfaces prevent rainfall from infiltrating into the ground to replenish the state's aquifers. Limited infiltration of rainwater results in reduced base flow to the local streams that rely on groundwater during the dry summer months.

The manual shows a map of NJ with the total percentage of impervious cover per municipality. Impervious cover in Essex County municipalities range from 10% to over 50%. Frank noted that the most urban and populated areas have the most impervious cover. Carolyn pointed out that even in urban areas there are plenty of opportunities for green infrastructure, she added that those strategies could also help reduce algae bloom in water bodies such as Verona Park Lake. VEC commissioners agreed and will put together a list of potential sites in Verona to propose to put green infrastructure.

5. According to VEC standing rules any member absent from regular meetings for three consecutive times will be contacted to determine whether there is still interest in serving in the Commission and the matter will be referred to the Mayor and Town Council. The last time Planning Board Liaison Michael Foley attended a VEC meeting was on April 20, so far this year he missed 7 of 9 meetings (February, March, May, June, July, September and October). Gloria informed members that Mayor Ryan will talk to Mr. Foley.

6. Oct. 3rd Town Council: Mayor Ryan presented the ANJEC Environmental Achievement Award for Grove Park and thanked the VEC, the Junior Woman's Club of Verona, the Verona Historical Society, DPW and all parties involved. Everybody who helped us create Grove Park

was invited and recognized during the meeting. Also, a group of residents presented a petition signed by more than 200 residents asking the town council to please adopt a Complete Streets policy in Verona to calm speeding traffic and provide safety to pedestrians, cyclists and runners, children and seniors. Information about Complete Streets can be found at <http://www.state.nj.us/transportation/works/njfit/complete.shtm>

7. Essex County Environmental Commission Roundtable Oct. 13, presenting on acquiring grants to fund municipal priorities (with a focus on the environment). Gloria brought the VEC award and display to the meeting, Martin and Walter attended. They stated that a speaker from Millennium Strategies, a service grant writing firm, presented an overview of their service, and gave examples of recent and upcoming grants.

Martin noted that they offer to get grants for municipalities, for money of course. The cost is typically a monthly fee based on the scale and scope of the work and government purchasing laws/procedures apply to how a service grant company becomes hired by a town/county. Then everybody talked about what our commissions had done the past year. Always useful to hear the struggles and successes of others in Essex who do what we do. Martin talked about Verona's Grove Park, all the effort and organization it took and showed the photo display. Walter joined in, and also went into the FN Brown cleanup and other activities. Walter also mentioned that it's unclear who would get a grant if Millennium helps several municipalities to get the same grant.

5. The VEC will join the Sustainable Verona team and the Hilltop Conservancy to help clean up an area in the Hilltop Reservation on Saturday November 19th - 9 am to 1 pm. We will meet at 8:45 am in the parking lot located by the water tank up on the right side of White Rock Rd. and walk to the location just behind the apartment complex. All ages welcome.

We'll plan the West Essex Trail Cleanup for the Spring, leaves are already falling. Gloria will contact Mr. Cavallo to ask Essex County for authorization and coordinate with Cedar Grove Environmental Commission Chairperson Mara Silgailis.

6. Applications for the NJDOT Transportation Alternatives grants are due November 10 and the America Walks grants' applications are due November 18. Members talked about bike lanes to connect HBW, VHS and the West Essex Trail, and bike racks for the Community Center, the Freedom/Liberty Field Complex, the Pool, and Municipal Parking Lots. NJDOT applications for TAP are to be submitted online through SAGE (System for Administering Grants Electronically). Currently there is only one in ground bike parking rack in Verona, it is located on HBW property, and there are two free standing racks (at VHS and the Pool).

Tony mentioned that a high percentage of elementary school students walk to school in Verona, less students walk to HBW and everybody drives to VHS. He added that even though it sounds logical to pay insurance for a car seating all day at the VHS parking, for many students it is a way to show their independence and status. Walter suggested to give awards to the students that walk the most or assign the best parking spot at VHS, some kind of "Employee of the Month" recognition. Sarah mentioned that there are students with walking impediments or other disabilities who will never win such contest so it is important to keep in mind everybody.

Gloria mentioned that the VHS recently expanded its parking lot, cutting down an area of the

woods by the tennis courts. Members agreed that there is a need to calm traffic down and change the driving culture by making our community more pedestrian and biking friendly. Martin added that the Town should provide infrastructure to make walking and pedaling more appealing.

7. Community Garden: During recent months the VEC has been working with the Township to find a suitable location to install a Community Organic Vegetable Garden. A few months ago members proposed a grass area located at HBW by the parking lot, near Park Place. Gloria submitted the proposed location to Rui Dionisio for consideration. This location is very accessible. A fence and raised beds can easily be installed there. Also, last year, HBW Science teacher Mrs. Thomas expressed interest on using a raised bed with her students. We talked to Mayor Ryan and Mr. Cavallo.

Bob Williams said that another possibility could be installing the community garden on the Hathaway house on 190 Grove Ave. (doing something similar to Morgan's Farms). There is about an acre of land there, he has approached the Township about purchasing it. He told Gloria to talk to Michael Nochimson, but Virginia mentioned that the Hathaway house is not going to be for sale, the owners plan to preserve the house and generate some income from the site, and she added that anyway the town wouldn't buy it because they have to spend money on property to replace the firehouse across from Everett. The building is approaching structurally unsound. Cheryl Nardino and Virginia have talked about the HBW site before and Virginia will bring it up again. Sean estimated that the area could accommodate a half acre garden. Sometimes the area is used for lacrosse drills.

Frank offered to help and members agreed that a "champion" for this project is needed. Walter said that Verona could have a Garden Club to take care of the community garden. Tony added that the Board of Education doesn't have money for this so the Township could apply for a grant to install the garden. He added that Joe Trause contacted him to include him in the upcoming School Green Team to join Sustainable Verona for Schools. Also, members agreed that a survey to check the interest on a community garden could be sent to residents through the township's email system.

8. Mr. Cavallo approved to order polo shirts for VEC members to wear at events. Chuck Molinaro gave Gloria the information of the town vendor, Dean DeFilippo, American Wear Uniforms. The total cost for 8 polo shirts will be \$106 (\$12.95 each and \$15.54 for extra large sizes) – No pocket, color maroon with the VEC white logo on front.

Adjournment at 9:30 pm.