



Verona Environmental Commission

600 Bloomfield Avenue
Verona, New Jersey 07044
VeronaEC.org

Minutes of the Verona Environmental Commission Regular Meeting on November 15, 2017, starting at 7:00 P.M., at the Conference Room, Verona Community Center, 880 Bloomfield Avenue, Verona N.J.

Attendees: Gloria Machnowski (Chairwoman), Anthony Saltalamacchia (Vice Chairman), Members Jessica Pearson, Sarah Yauch O'Farrell, Sean DiBartolo, Martin Golan, Walter Steinmann (Alternate I), Frank Ciccacci (Alternate II). Guest: Julia Bresnan (NJWAP Watershed Ambassador).

1. Chairperson calls the meeting to order and reads the notice of Open Public Meetings Act. There is a quorum to hold an official meeting. Chairwoman mentions that Mayor Ryan is not present since he is attending the League of Municipalities event in Atlantic City.

2. Minutes from the October 18, 2017 meeting were approved by members.

3. The award ceremony for the VEC Walk and Bike to School Poster Contest took place at Verona Town Hall on October 23. This year marked the 20th anniversary of National Walk to School Day, organized to raise awareness of the need for safe, pedestrian-friendly communities. Mayor Ryan and VEC Chairwoman presented the awards and a 3 min. video. Winners received \$50 dollars and an award certificate. The winning posters are on display at the community center.

4. Gloria recommended members to read the Montclair SAFE (Streets Are For Everyone) Complete Streets program. It was presented at the November 13 Montclair Council meeting by the DOT planner Bill Riviere and NV5 engineer Mike Dannemiller. In many cases it won't take much money to implement parts of the plan, just paint to add markings to local roadways. The recommendations include pedestrian and bike improvements regarding safety. The plan is available here for download:

[https://www.montclairnjusa.org/UserFiles/Servers/Server_5276204/File/Government/Departments/Engineering%20Bureau%20\(Traffic%20Calming,%20Paving%20&%20Curb%20Evaluations\)/Montclair-SAFE-CS-Presentation.pdf](https://www.montclairnjusa.org/UserFiles/Servers/Server_5276204/File/Government/Departments/Engineering%20Bureau%20(Traffic%20Calming,%20Paving%20&%20Curb%20Evaluations)/Montclair-SAFE-CS-Presentation.pdf)

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During that meeting the local governing body also gave final approval, on second reading, to reduce the speed limit on Grove Street in Montclair to 30 mph from 35 mph. Essex County officials will now have to sign off on lowering the speed limit on Grove Street, which is a county road. Gloria mentioned that Verona authorities could also reduce the speed limit on certain streets in Verona, such as Fairview Avenue in Verona, to make it safer, with Essex County approval.

5. Updates:

- Organic Community Garden: Steve Neale was not able to submit the grant on time, due to lack of information. The town engineer didn't do any soil tests yet, so Mike DeCarlo, the new assistant engineer, will take care of the soil testing at the two proposed sites, HBW and VHS. They like the HBW site better since there is no soil contamination nearby. Rutgers New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station will provide the test kits and help with the garden design. Walter thinks that a lot of people will be interested to have a plot.

Once the results are ready, DeCarlo will present them to the Superintendent of Schools and hopefully confirm a site. Mr. Cavallo initially intended to run the garden through the Recreation Department with DPW help, but we'll probably need volunteers or a master gardener too. Frank contacted Steve and offered to help, as well as his wife Diane, who is an avid gardener. Mayor Ryan's wife is a master gardener and members asked if she might be interested to help. A good example of an organic community garden is the garden at Clinton Township; which is managed by a Garden Committee appointed by the Township Council: <http://clintontownshipocg.wixsite.com/theocg> - <http://www.clintontwpnj.com/index.aspx?page=149>

- Regarding the VEC's Trust Account, Matt Laracy, Verona's CFO applied to the State of NJ to allow Verona to keep the VEC Trust separate from Recreation. The VEC trust account was never in its own bank account. Most of Verona's trust accounts are included in one bank account and tracked separately so that we know each individual balance. This will continue to be the case regardless of whether he needs to merge VEC with Recreation. Interest earned in trust accounts is required to be transferred to the Current Fund, so none of the trust accounts like the VEC's earn any interest.

- Essex County has separated out the Verona Park Tennis Court Improvements from the parking lot construction in a new proposal (Bid 17-166). Members appreciate that the County had taken the Council's vote into consideration and decided not to pave a green open space. The county liaison announced this at Verona's October 23rd town council meeting. The tree removed at Lakeside Ave. was dead for many years and it was marked for removal. The temporarily fence installed along Park Ave. is protecting children from running into the street, there is no sidewalk there.

6. Recycling programs: Gloria contacted Lisa Freschi from the BOE to see if the Verona School District could provide students, parents, faculty, and custodians information about the school's waste reduction and recycling procedures. Essex County mandatory list of Recyclable Materials for schools includes the following: Newspapers, Glass food and beverage containers, Aluminum beverage containers, Leaves, Old corrugated containers, Office paper (all marketable grades), Used motor oil, White goods, Lead acid batteries (vehicle batteries), Plastics (#1 and #2), Steel/Tin Containers and Ferrous Scrap. http://www.ecuanj.com/mandatory-recyclable-materials_2011.html

Essex County intends to meet the 50% Municipal Solid Waste recycling goal by increasing the amount of recycling of currently designated materials. Looks like HBW is doing a much better recycling job than VHS right now. Tony agreed that if procedures are written down and shared with everybody, then compliance will be easier. Maybe, instead of having the same few kids from the Environmental Club collecting and sorting recyclables year after year, we could come up with a plan to rotate responsibilities so each week, or month, a different grade does it. Sarah is a Science teacher, and she mentioned that unfortunately the schools are overwhelmed with the school curriculum, there is no available time during the school day to implement other activities, and that's why is so important to include recycling in the curriculum.

Recycling has been mandatory in New Jersey since 1987, and there is a Recycling Manual for New Jersey Schools <http://www.state.nj.us/dep/seeds/recycle.htm>

The BOE could include the recycling procedures in the the student/parent manual, newsletters, announcements, and back-to-school mailing packets. Lisa will talk about this with the whole board. She mentioned that the Verona Public School District registered with Sustainable Jersey for Schools and formed a Green Team: <http://www.sustainablejerseyschools.com> - Tony explained that he is a member of the schools' green team, they met several times during last school year. Joe Trause, director of facilities, bought several color coded containers. Joe contacted Gloria yesterday and they'll meet soon, he is the contact person for recycling and they are working on getting bronze certified. An important action to complete is a school waste audit, usually performed by students and teachers. Tony mentioned that he performed a waste audit at HBW in the past and he'll try to locate the report to compare with future audits.

Jessica mentioned that she attended the last BOE meeting where Lisa mentioned that Gloria contacted her and talked about the Sustainable Jersey program for schools, as well as plans to have a more robust recycling program. During the meeting Jim Day said that new trees will be planted around VHS. Sean asked to include the effective date on the current and future Verona visual lists of accepted items for recycling. Mem-

bers agreed. Gloria added that the township is currently contacting all recycling vendors to update the list, which often changes, and will include more items starting on January 2018. Jessica said that Councilman Nochimson proposed to implement Styrofoam recycling, but there are so many types of Styrofoam that it is not plausible. Members asked who is Verona Township's current Recycling Coordinator. Gloria will find out.

7. The VEC received letters from neighbors stating opposition to development of 111 Mount Prospect Ave. in Verona. They point out that a stated goal of Essex County's Park, Recreation and Open Space Master Plan is to "expand the County Park System, giving particular attention to including sites or lands contiguous to existing County parks." They fear that development of 111 Mount Prospect would greatly harm Eagle Rock Reservation, suggesting that Essex County should consider purchasing the property and annexing to Eagle Rock Reservation. Jessica noted that the property is not currently for sale, its estimated value is 2.5 million dollars, and they are still in court. Sean suggested to research the Blue Acres program regarding available funding to protect wetlands.

Verona resident Herb Lev from 45 Summit Road (973-986-3513) sent the VEC, the Township Council and the town manager a copy of the 2 letters signed by 71 local residents, which they mailed to the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection and County Executive DiVincenzo, opposing the intended development of the 14-acre, wooded parcel. Signers included homeowners on Mount Prospect Avenue, Summit Road, Ravine Road, and Robert Court. They sent it to others, such as a representative of the neighbors' coalition that was formed to oppose development of the large parcel along the Peckman River at 25 Commerce Court, that parcel is held by the same party that owns the land next to Eagle Rock Reservation. Their note conveyed local residents' gratitude for the work the Township is doing to prevent high-density construction on the Mount Prospect site. They expressed optimism that the Township, neighborhood, and other environmental advocates will work together to attain that shared goal. Mr. Lev asked Gloria to thank the Environmental Commission for the outstanding work performed to raise environmental awareness among people of all ages throughout Verona. He attended the Oct. 23 Town Council meeting, and was very moved by the entries, the awards ceremony, and the video that was produced in conjunction with the Walk and Bike to School poster contest.

8. Members discussed complying with NJ stormwater regulations by using Green Infrastructure as a Stormwater Management Strategy and expressed the need to update Verona's Master Plan and Ordinances to advance green (low-impact) development components in our community. Green Development Checklist and enabling ordinance could be part of the Site Plan and Subdivision approval process, including VEC's Low Impact Design/Construction Checklist. Gloria and Jessica contacted ANJEC, they checked with Chris Obropta from RUTGERS, who recommended the Cranford Ordinance as a good model. Some highlights of the ordinance include the following:

- Detailed stormwater management requirements, structural BMP, special flood hazard areas.
- Ordinance applies to major and minor development.
- Major development of 1,000 square feet or more of disturbance.
- Minor development between 450 and 1,000 square feet of disturbance.
- Both major and minor development require development plans.
- All development occurring in hazard flood areas requires a development plan.
- Standards apply both to new development and development increasing impervious cover by 450 sq feet or greater.

Sean mentioned that this is indeed a very good model for Verona. Members discussed some important points from this ordinance, such as the following:

§136-39 Scope, purpose and objectives; findings.

A. Policy statement. Flood control, groundwater recharge, and pollutant reduction through nonstructural or low-impact techniques shall be explored before relying on structural BMPs. Structural BMPs should be integrated with nonstructural stormwater management strategies and proper maintenance plans. Nonstructural strategies include both environmentally sensitive site design and source controls that prevent pollutants from being placed on the site or from being exposed to stormwater. Source control plans should be developed by a professional engineer licensed in the State of New Jersey. These plans will be based upon physical site conditions and the origin, nature, and the anticipated quantity or amount of potential pollutants. Mul-

multiple stormwater management BMPs may be necessary to achieve the established performance standards for water quality, quantity, and groundwater recharge.

§136-41.2 Design and performance standards for stormwater management measures.

A. Stormwater management measures for major development shall be developed to meet the erosion control, groundwater recharge, stormwater runoff quantity, and stormwater runoff quality standards in §136-42. To the maximum extent practicable, these standards shall be met by incorporating nonstructural stormwater management strategies into the design. If these strategies alone are not sufficient to meet these standards, structural stormwater management measures necessary to meet these standards shall be incorporated into the design.

9. Upcoming Events:

- Verona Fair in the Square is December 2, noon to 5pm (Rain Date December 3) at the Verona Civic Center. Setup begins at 10 am. The VEC will have a table at the fair, and make pine cone bird feeders with visitors. The Commission will also have a display about vehicular idling at the fair and a Pledge to “End Unnecessary Vehicle Idling in Verona”. This pledge is posted on the VEC's website: Ready to clear the air? Pledge Now to End Unnecessary Vehicle Idling in Verona - An idling vehicle emits 20 times more pollution than one traveling at 30 miles per hour. Breathing exhaust fumes is linked to increases in asthma, allergies, heart and lung disease, cancer, and autism. Kids are especially vulnerable because they inhale more air per pound of body weight. We recognize that excessive emissions from idling are a threat to the health of children, neighbors and the environment. To protect the community from harmful vehicle emissions, we voluntarily pledge:
 - To turn off engines immediately (when not in traffic), especially at schools, parking lots, drive through windows, and other idle frequent locations.
 - To eliminate morning warm-up idling greater than three minutes.
 - To maintain vehicles to eliminate any visible exhaust, and encourage others to end unnecessary idling.

Last month Captain DePoe asked Sgt. John Lecreux, head of the from Verona Police Department Traffic Bureau to come up with a plan to address excessive idling around the schools. Sgt. Lecreux reviewed the VEC's webpage, video and pledge, and told Gloria that it looks great. The VEC's pledge is for regular residents, vehicles that are actively performing emergency services, such as fire, police, snow removal, and utility vehicles are exempted from the 3 min. idling law.

- The VEC organized a tour of the permeable pavement installations and rain gardens at the EPA Environmental Center in Edison, with Amy Rowe on Wednesday, December 6 at 10:30 am. Verona Town Manager, Mr. Cavallo, the new town assistant engineer, Mike DeCarlo and Sustainable Verona Chair, Steve Neale already confirmed their attendance. Councilman McEvoy sent a text to confirm his attendance during the VEC meeting. The VEC also invited the Mayor, all Verona Councilmen, BOE administrator Cheryl Nardino and members of the Planning Board and Board of Adjustment. The Commission needs to provide the names of all attendees in advance since this is a secured facility. Amy Rowe, Ph. D. (Associate Professor) serves as the Environmental County Agent with Essex County Cooperative Extension. She is well versed in Low Impact Development (LID) practices for Stormwater Management and is best suited to advise in Green Infrastructure planning. Members think it would be beneficial to have people get firsthand exposure to these different technologies for stormwater runoff management.

<https://www.epa.gov/water-research/experimental-permeable-pavement-parking-lot-and-rain-garden-stormwater-management>

10. New Business: Gloria proposed to move the public comment period to the beginning of the VEC's meeting agenda from now on. Sean liked the idea but was concerned with the possibility of people derailing the meeting. There are two types of comment period. One is when comment goes to a specific agenda item, Tony said the Commission could require this. Secondly, there is a class of public comment which pertains to items which are not on the agenda for that day. Gloria suggested to allow the public to talk freely about their concerns, even if the item was not in the meeting agenda. Members agreed. Sean made a motion to move the public comment period to the beginning of the meeting with the amendment to limit public comments to four minutes per speaker. Tony seconded the motion. Members voted and approved unanimously.

11. Public Participation: Julia Bresnan (NJWAP Watershed Ambassador) mentioned that the November 4 West Essex Rail Trail Fall Cleanup was great. Julia and several VEC members participated in the event with Sustainable Verona. Over 25 volunteers removed a truck-load of trash, including construction debris. Gloria mentioned that next year the VEC could have another spring cleanup, which will be easier without having leaves covering the ground. Julia added that with Mayor Ryan they found an illegal dumping site. Sean said that the trail total width is 30 feet. Frank added that the garbage near Aquabot is mainly in their own property. Walter mentioned that this is a fire hazard and a code enforcement issue.

Adjournment – Next Meeting December 20, 2017.