



Verona Environmental Commission

600 Bloomfield Avenue
Verona, New Jersey 07044

www.veronaec.org

Minutes of the Verona Environmental Commission Regular Meeting on Wednesday, April 18, 2018 starting at 7 pm, at the Conference Room, Verona Community Center, 880 Bloomfield Ave., Verona N.J.

Attendees: Gloria Machnowski (Chairwoman), Anthony Saltalamacchia (Vice Chairman), Jessica Pearson, Martin Golan, Sean DiBartolo, Walter Steinmann, Frank Ceccacci, and Mayor Kevin Ryan (Council Liaison).

1. The Chairperson called the meeting to order and read the notice of Open Public Meetings Act.
2. The floor opened to public participation. Jessica moved the motion, seconded by Sean, and approved by all. There were no public comments.
3. Minutes from the March 27, 2018 meeting were approved by members. Sean moved the motion, seconded by Walter, and approved by all present members.
4. Updates :
 - Verona Park Cleanup was on April 14. Gloria, Tony, Walter and Frank manned the VEC table and collaborated with the Verona Park Conservancy. Over 40 volunteers participated. Walter worked with waders in the water and Tony rowed the boat with several children aboard. Students from Montclair University attended as well as Verona Boy Scouts, Verona High School Science National honor society girls and HBW students. The group spotted several Eastern Painted Turtles on the lake. Jessica mentioned that Walter did a great job during the last council meeting talking about the cleanup. The Mayor said that unfortunately the County Liaison was not present.

Walter explained that there is a large amount of nutrient runoff coming probably from the golf course. He recommended to remediate the situation by creating a wetland buffer upstream from where the source water empties into the lake. He observed no vegetation in the bottom of the lake. Algae is already starting to grow in the lake, which will negatively impact conditions in the future. Wind blows down the hill Styrofoam and plastic bags with dog waste that end up in the lake as well. Walter recommended to coordinate efforts with the County and the Verona Park Conservancy (VPC) to work with the Montclair Golf Club to mitigate the amount of runoff that enters the lake. More oxygen is needed in the lake. Solar power aerators could be placed on the south side of the large stone bridge, cost of one of these ranges from \$2000 to \$7000. The county should clear the areas, on a regular basis, on the east side of the lake that accumulates large amounts of trash due to prevailing winds. A lily pad area near the confluence of the two feeding streams (Peckman River and Gerdes Brook) with Verona Lake would also help reduce the nutrient level. This area would also give a protective habitat for fish and other aquatic life.

Sean asked who do we recommend this to. Mayor Ryan explained that the VEC can come up with an informal list and send it to the VPC. Members agreed with Walter's recommendations. The Mayor made sure the County took care of hazardous trees before the event. Frank recommended to test the water. During the cleanup he talked to fishermen, they are eating the fish they catch there. Mayor Ryan agreed and mentioned that the lake was stocked with fish recently. Sarah added that perhaps the fish do not live long enough in the lake to absorb

chemicals present in the water.

- Gloria mentioned that the VEC registered for the NJ Clean Communities cleanup challenge and she picked up recycling and garbage bags, first aid kits and gloves received at the Water Treatment Plant. She also submitted the VEC Rain Garden application to ANJEC for an Open Space Stewardship Grant on April 12 and Steve Neale submitted the letter of endorsement signed by Town Manager Matt Cavallo.

- Sean is trying to coordinate with Mike DeCarlo and Christopher Perez to visit the site of the upcoming parking lot at the end of Park Pl. Mayor Ryan mentioned that Mike and Matt are on vacation. Sean is not sure if the land survey was done already, or if Mike has a preliminary design ready. Gloria recommended preserving existing trees and planting more to enhance the riparian buffer as much as possible. Scientific studies concluded that "forest buffers should be at least 30 meters, or nearly 100 feet, wide to adequately protect streams".

- Walter will look into Verona's MSW recycling rates and prepare a report. If necessary he will contact Lenny Waterman, the township's new CRP. He will also contact Verona resident Paul Mathewson about recycling initiatives for carpet and ceiling tiles. He mentioned that looks like recycling amounts are increasing in general, including vegetative waste composting.

- Gloria asked Steve Neale to share with the VEC the Natural Resource Inventory draft prepared by the Land Conservancy of NJ, once it is ready. Mayor Ryan added that the Planning Board didn't meet yet and they could have news too.

- Official Email Addresses, VeronaEC.org: most of the VEC members already switched to the new email accounts. Gloria didn't hear from Michael Foley. Frank will contact the IT department. Gloria recommended members to set up their regular email accounts to get notifications when they receive VEC emails.

- The township will submit a grant for an Organic Community Garden (OCG) and bicycle rack in the near future. Jessica said that she asked the Town Manager to reconsider installing the OCG in the Verona Community Center. She mentioned that the town council approved to take down the shed by the playground. Gloria added that the recreation Department had other plans for that area, and therefore the middle school site was the proposed site. Frank asked if Steve is championing the OCG. Mayor Ryan said that it is the VEC, but it is a collaborative effort.

5. Upcoming Events:

- The VEC will celebrate Earth Day with a Tree Giveaway and a Cleanup at Grove Park (42 Grove Avenue) on April 21 from 9 am to 12 noon. Gloria explained that the cleanup will take place only if the town is able to take care of hazardous trees first. On March 24 Bill Knight from 40 Grove Ave. called Gloria and said that he was concerned about a few leaning hazardous trees by the walking path in Grove Park. Gloria shared this information with Bob from the Shade Tree Commission and Chuck Molinaro. Chuck mentioned that DPW is busy with street work so they were not able to take care of the park trees. He recommended to host the seedling distribution in the front but not the cleanup of the park. Gloria contacted Matt Cavallo and asked to place caution tape, to warn visitors. People walk their dogs there often. Sean agreed, the trail should not be opened to visitors if there are hazardous trees in that area. Mayor Ryan will ask if Caputo could take care of this before the cleanup. The tree seedlings are greenhouse grown by the State Forest Service and come in 8" recyclable tubes. The VEC will have native trees such as Eastern Redbud, Oaks, and Eastern White Pine. Gloria called the State Forest Service, she will receive 3 boxes, each with a different tree species. Each box has 98 seedlings and cost \$35 including shipping (total \$105). Species are chosen and sent based on region. Gloria made copies of the planting instructions to give with packs of 6 seedlings (2 of each species) -they estimate that 2 seedlings survive of every 5 planted. Martin is not available to help on April 21. Jessica, Walter, Sarah, Tony, Frank and Gloria will run the event.

- Verona Kids Rock will have a Walk & Bike Event on April 29 at 11:30 am at the Recycling Center located at 10

Commerce Ct. The event is a fundraiser for Sustainable Verona. Gloria, Sean and Jessica will attend.

- The Essex County Environmental Commission is hosting its biannual Environmental Roundtable on Monday, April 30, 2018, 7 - 9 pm at the Essex County Cedar Grove Park, Robert J O'Toole Community Center, 199 Fairview Avenue, Cedar Grove, NJ 07009 - Register at

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/ecec-environmental-roundtable-april-2018-tickets-44460367155>

The April 2018 Environmental Roundtable, Breaking Free from Disposable Plastic, will spotlight single use plastic bags and provide model fee ordinances for municipal commissioners to enact. N. Dini Checko, Plastic Pollution Project Director for the Association of New Jersey Environmental Commissions, will share statewide initiatives, and Patricia Canning from the South Orange Environmental Commission will detail the recent townwide single use plastic reduction efforts. Refreshments will be served. Gloria will probably attend with Green Team member Marie-Agnes Michellod, they prepared the plastic bag presentation. Martin Golan will attend. Frank mentioned this will be a good opportunity to talk about the plastic pollution in Verona Lake.

- Green Fair & Open Streets Fest: May 19, 11am-4pm

Gloria recommended to have at least two VEC members at the VEC table in the civic center and two more at Gould Street, with two shifts, from set up at 10 am to 1 pm and from 1 to 4 pm and break down. The VEC will focus on reducing plastic pollution, and distribute reusable water bottles, reusable grocery bags and recycling bins as usual. Martin and Sean can attend in the afternoon. Jessica can be there at 11 am. Tony probably set up only.

The Green Fair got bigger this year with an Open Streets event on Gould St. so kids can ride, and Cycle Craft is coming to do bike mechanic inspections for free, Electric Spokes will bring bikes to demo, the Essex Offroad MTB Team will set up a fun riding course and the Verona Police will do helmet checks.

- Gloria received an email from ANJEC on May 15 offering Free Milkweed Plants to the first 25 Environmental Commissions who contacted Pinelands Nursery. Their "Milkweed for Monarchs" program donates a flat of 50 common milkweed plugs and a mixed flat of other wildflowers to 25 environmental commission in New Jersey. The plants should be installed on township property, such as at a library, school or municipal building. Gloria immediately contacted Pinelands Nursery, Fran Chismar told her they will ship them out in May. Jessica recommended to plant them at Grove Park around the park signage. She added that deer do not eat milkweed. Gloria asked if a border will be needed to protect the plants and define the area. Sean suggested to place flags for demarcation. Sarah said that dirt from the back of the park could be used to make the flowerbed.

- The Peckman Trail / River Cleanup is scheduled for June 2 (National Trails Day - 50th anniversary) from 9 am to 12 noon. As usual volunteers will meet at the trail entrance behind F.N.Brown School at 9am. To assist in the promotion, the NJ Recreational Trails Program will be compiling a list of events for National Trails Day, which will be happening throughout New Jersey on public and private trails. Gloria submitted a form with the event details. Walter will not be available.

- New Jersey Sustainability Summit will be on Thursday June 21, 2018 - 8:30am - 4:00pm at the College of New Jersey - Register at <http://www.sustainablejersey.com/events-trainings/2018-sustainability-summit/>

The summit will explore how individual and community behaviors can impact the quality of necessities for better or worse, such as our air, water, health, economy, and so much more. The event attracts over 300 diverse participants from across New Jersey.

The 2018 Sustainability Summit will focus on research, successful models, and available resources that contribute to each of us working together to build local capacity for change. Sustainability Sessions: During the afternoon, you will have the opportunity to learn, listen and discuss topics of interest to you. You will be asked to select the breakout sessions you would like to attend during the registration process. You may change your mind at the event. \$35: Elected and appointed officials, public and non-profit employees, and green team volunteers. \$100: All other attendees Stay connected! #SustainableStateNJ

- The West Essex Trail Cleanup will take place on September 15 or 22 (TBD). Frank mentioned that he will continue cleaning the trail all summer long, as he usually does.

6. New Business:

- Jessica suggested to research mini cell towers. In June of 2017 plans to install a mini cell tower at 378 Bloomfield Ave. went in front of the Board of Adjustment. Gloria mentioned that the VEC reviewed the plans and submitted comment. Mayor Ryan explained that a neighbor, Mr. Prout, complained and the hearing was postponed four times. Mr. Prout couldn't attend but filed an appeal. Commissioners talked about cancer clusters along Route 17. Sean mentioned that noise can be muted with sound barriers but radiation risk is a more serious matter.

Jessica explained that Verona doesn't require an environmental impact study for most applications to the land use boards, and doesn't have the expertise within our town to help with protecting residents and property values, and the overall health of the community regarding cell towers. At this time, cell towers are prohibited in all zones of Verona, but variances may be granted by the Board of Adjustment. Jessica recommended to learn more about 5G Wireless and "Small" Cells, and mentioned that Verona could require environmental impact studies and bonds to pay for them like other towns do. The Smithtown Council in New York won't vote on cell tower until an environmental impact study is done. There are concerns about possible radiation from the towers, and potential health risks that include insomnia, attention deficit and headaches, among other problems. Verizon says there are no health risks from cell phone repeaters and already installed dozens of repeaters in places like Huntington, and plans to install dozens more. The Town of Oyster Bay is now calling on the federal government to fund a study to evaluate the potential health effects of the cell phone transmitters. Members agreed to research this matter.

- Martin talked about the Hillside Community SWAP, which takes place 2-3 times per year at Hillside School, 54 Orange Road, Montclair. The organizer is Jane Marcus (janeson094@aol.com), and you can contact her to find out the date of the next SWAP. This event helps people to swap clothing, sports equipment, baby gear, books, DVDs, CDs, new, unopened puzzles & games. You do not need to donate to shop.

Adjournment – Next Meeting May 16, 2018.