



# Verona Environmental Commission

600 Bloomfield Avenue  
Verona, New Jersey 07044

[www.veronaec.org](http://www.veronaec.org)

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

**Attendees:** Gloria Machnowski (Chairwoman), Jessica Pearson (Planning Board Liaison), Sean DiBartolo (Site Plan Review), Frank Ceccacci (Alternate I), Michael Auteri (Alternate II) and Town Manager Matt Cavallo. Guest: Julia Bresnan, NJWAP Watershed Ambassador.

**1. Call to order:** the Chairperson called the meeting to order and read the Open Public Meetings Act notice.

**2. Public Participation:** The floor opened to public participation, Sean moved the motion, seconded by Frank, and approved by all. Julia Bresnan, who lives in Nutley and is the current NJWAP Watershed Ambassador for WMA 4, thanked VEC members for teaming up with her in several projects. She mentioned that the new Watershed Ambassador will start on September and will contact the Commission then.

**3. Minutes approval:** the revised minutes from June 20th, 2018 meeting were approved by members. Sean moved the motion, seconded by Jess, and approved by all present members.

#### **4. Updates :**

**a) VEC's new roster:** Gloria welcomed Michael Auteri to the VEC. The Town Manager, Matt Cavallo, appointed Walter from Alternate I to full member, Frank became Alternate I, and Michael (Mike) Auteri was appointed as Alternate II. Mike is a Senior Software Engineer at Penske Media Corporation and participated in several VEC events in the past.

The Verona Council appointed Jessica as the Class IV - Planning Board Member effective 7/1/18 through 6/30/21, replacing Michael Foley. Jessica resigned from the Site Plan Review committee of the Verona Environmental Commission until the local finance board gives confirmation as to whether or not there is a direct conflict. She absolutely can listen to the commission findings and discussion on applications, she will not vote on any application findings that the commission makes and therefore is fine to vote on the planning board decisions. The law is a bit vague, while ANJEC thinks that the reason the law calls for a common member to be on Planning Board/Environmental commission would be so the environmental commission input is part of the decision, it's not exactly specified. VEC members approved to have Walter, if he agrees, to serve in the Site Plan Review committee of the VEC, with Gloria and Sean, Jess moved the motion, seconded by Frank and approved by all.

Frank asked what is the difference between the Planning Board and the Board of Adjustment. Jessica explained that the Planning Board has 9 members and it is charged with addressing permitted land uses. It

is also responsible for the Township of Verona Master Plan. They meet on the 4th Thursday of each month at 7:30pm in the Verona Community Center Ballroom. The Zoning Board of Adjustment reviews applications to utilize property in a manner not consistent with municipal zoning laws. They meet on the 2nd Thursday of each month at 8:00pm in the Verona Community Center Ballroom. Sean added that when applicants ask for variances to get approved to build in a way that doesn't comply with Verona's zoning laws, the Board of Adjustment looks at those applications. The Verona Environmental Commission and other commissions such as the Shade Tree Commission and the Verona Historic Preservation Commission also review those applications and submit comments.

Sean asked Matt Cavallo about the Salt Tax. Matt explained that New Jersey State implemented a law that allows local governments to accept property taxes in the form of charitable contributions for specific purposes. The legislation would authorize to create charitable funds that could be used as a revenue source. Local governments could give tax credits to residents who contribute to the fund, allowing them to offset a percentage of their own property tax bills and take a write-off on their federal income taxes. The approach would create a workaround to the \$10,000 cap on state and local tax deductions imposed by the new federal tax code. The loss of the full Salt write-off hit New Jersey and other high-tax states harder than others. Matt explained that municipalities are not using it yet since it is not tax deductible. It is unclear whether the Internal Revenue Service will allow New Jersey to implement this workaround or not.

**b) ANJEC selected the VEC project to install a Rain Garden**, the grant is for \$1,500 - the deadline to submit the paperwork to accept the grant is on September 1st. Liz Ritter from ANJEC explained that the grant will not be available unless the property is open space, or the town declares open space the 300 square feet where the rain garden will be installed. ANJEC is not interested in funding projects that could be demolished for future building expansions etc, so that's why that is specified.

Unfortunately the VEC can't accept the grant. Matt Cavallo doesn't see how any rain garden could be built in town, adjacent or near to any building which has a requirement that the area be declared open space. Therefore Gloria proposed to pay for it with the donations that the VEC has in its trust account, and Sustainable Verona offered to contribute money for the rain garden from their trust account as well. The new site for the rain garden at the library is a lot smaller than the original site at the community center. A general rule of thumb is that rain gardens average about \$5 per square foot, depending on soil conditions, density and types of plants used. The new site at the library is about 300 square feet, the site at the community center was about 500 sq ft. Depending on the plans that Mike DeCarlo creates, the installation at the library could probably cost about \$1,500 instead of the original estimated \$3,000. Mike is still going through all the records in the office in search of site drawings in the proposed area, and he is calculating a general size of the rain garden based upon the roof area. Sean offered to help Mike creating the new plans, he had some questions regarding the drainage situation by the library's foundation and basement.

VEC members voted to declined ANJEC's grant. Sean moved the motion, seconded by Frank and approved by all present members.

**c) Upcoming parking lots:** The town plans to install new parking lots at the end of Park Place and at Verona Pool (Cedar Grove approved). The parking lot at the end of Park Place will replace a small gravel lot, and will be designed for 30 or 40 cars, which is probably double the amount that can park right now. Gloria asked Mike DeCarlo if the footprint of the parking area is going to increase and how much. She was told that most likely conventional impervious pavement will be used on the new parking lot, and asked how much the impervious surface will increase and how many trees will be removed. The Impervious Cover

Assessment Prepared for Verona by Rutgers in 2016 recommends reducing impervious area in Verona at least a 10% in order to repair our waterways, reduce flooding, and minimize erosion. The VEC recommended this to the town last year. Mike will prepare a concept and proposed to meet and discuss all concerns once he gets that done. Frank mentioned that he is worried about the possibility of a new parking lot in Verona Park.

**d) Natural Resource Inventory:** Gloria informed members that she contacted Steve Neale about the new Natural Resource Inventory; and the VEC should receive a draft by the end of the month.

**e) Verona Lake:** Gloria asked Mr. Cavallo if he heard any news from the County about the second aerator for Verona Lake. He met with the Director of Essex County Dept. of Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs, Dan Salvante, on July 13. Mr. Salvante is discussing the VEC's concerns with several of his Department Heads and will get back to Matt on what items are addressable. As of right now, the Aerators/Bubblers are an issue due to lack of funding. VEC members approved a letter (Attachment A) of recommendation and a figure created by Sean to be sent to the Verona Council, after Sean provided some suggestions, and Gloria modified point 8 to clarify the salt substitute sentence, following the Mayor's suggestions. The motion was moved by Sean, seconded by Mike and approved by all.

## 5. Events:

**a) New Jersey Sustainability Summit:** Over 350 people attended the summit on June 21, at the College of New Jersey, in Ewing Township. The one-day sustainability summit included a keynote address from First Lady Tammy Snyder Murphy, and a total of 12 breakout sessions. All presentations from the Plenary and Breakout Sessions have been posted on the 2018 Speaker Presentations page.

<http://www.sustainablejersey.com/events-trainings/2018-sustainability-summit/2018-speaker-presentations/>

**b) Complete Streets:** Mike DeCarlo, Steve Neale and Jack McEvoy attended the complete streets seminar that took place on June 26 at the North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority, in Newark. Sustainable Jersey, the Voorhees Transportation Center at Rutgers University, the North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority and Together North Jersey offered free training and technical assistance. The concept of complete streets is to design streets for all users, including motor vehicles (cars, buses, and trucks), bicyclists, and pedestrians of all ages and abilities.

In order to be eligible to apply and receive Complete Streets Grants and Technical Assistance, Verona must first adopt a Complete Streets policy. A few years ago about 200 Verona residents signed and presented a petition to Verona Council asking to adopt a Complete Streets Policy.

Sustainable Jersey provides this Model Complete Streets Resolution for Local Governments:

[https://www.changelabsolutions.org/sites/default/files/ModelCompleteStreetsResolution-FINAL\\_20150729\\_0.docx](https://www.changelabsolutions.org/sites/default/files/ModelCompleteStreetsResolution-FINAL_20150729_0.docx)

Gloria proposed to recommend Verona's governing body to adopt this policy, which was already adopted by Essex County and several towns like Montclair, Newark, and Jersey City. VEC members approved to send the model resolution to the Town Council and recommend them to adopt a Complete Streets policy. Mike Auteri made the motion, seconded by Sean and approved by all.

**c) Green Fair & Open Streets Fest:** it was rescheduled for October 13th. The previous weekend is Columbus Day weekend and people might be going away. The VEC will participate.

**d) West Essex Trail Cleanup:** Gloria contacted Steve Neale, he thinks that September 22 is a good day for it. Frank and his wife Diane did a cleanup of the West Essex Trail on June 9 from Fairview Ave. in Verona to Bowden Road in Cedar Grove. The trail was relatively clean but the Aquabot site was still heavily littered so Frank and Nick Zamloot did a major cleanup of that area too.

**e) Proposed Waterway Cleanup:** The VEC is considering to organize a waterway cleanup behind Annin Flag, and access the area through Wayne Gallagher's driveway, at 30 Douglas Pl. with his permission. According to NJDEP the VEC doesn't need to request any permits to do the usual clean ups, but needs to follow the rules and get approval from the township. Matt Cavallo and Steve Neale said that the cleanup should be fine but they wanted to meet at the site to make sure there are no obstacles or anything dangerous, so Walter walked the stream area with Matt and Wayne. During the visit Walter observed: several large fallen trees and pieces of foundation in the stream, and mass wasting (rocks and soil moving downhill) have fall from the sides, which restricts flow causing the stream to overflow. Home owners have thrown grass clippings along the banks, causing some issues with flow. The stream needs to be cleared of trees and rocks to facilitate water flow. Walter observed a discharge of motor oil floating on the surface that seems to be coming from the area of the Exxon Express. Matt mentioned that DPW will be investigating the possible oil runoff situation at that site.

Sean visited the site on July 17 to get an idea of the conditions during a storm that dropped about a 1/2 inch of rain. He presented photos of his site visit as well as a video he recorded of a walk-through. Sean observed that there were at least three obstructions in the stream bed that could constrict the stream profile, increase flow rates, and promote an increase rate of stream bank erosion. Sean mentioned that there is a lack of soil erosion and sediment controls for the Annin construction project. There are no silt fences or hay bales along the boundaries of the construction site to protect the downgradient streams. He observed sediment-laden runoff from the site entering the streams, which are tributaries to the Peckman River. Sean will contact Mike DeCarlo and share this information with him, as this will need to be addressed by the contractor as soon as possible. Sean recommended to add the New Jersey Developer's Green Infrastructure Guide to the VEC website: <https://developersguide.njfuture.org/> -Mike suggested to also post it on social media and pin important events at the top. Members agreed to the recommendations.

## **6. New Business:**

**a) Plastic Bags:** Municipal Action Needed on Plastic Bag Legislation. ANJEC's Executive Director, Jennifer M. Coffey, sent an email to the VEC saying that Governor Murphy is still considering what action to take on the single-use bag legislation (A.3267/S.2600). Matt mentioned that if the Governor doesn't act on it, it will become law in 45 days. ANJEC has created a resolution for municipalities to offer support for a stronger bill. Frank mentioned that Whole Foods eliminated plastic bags long time ago. ANJEC encourages municipal officials and environmental commissions to customize this resolution and email (or mail to: Office of the Governor, PO Box 001, Trenton, NJ 08625) a signed version to the Governor's office. VEC members approved a resolution to be submitted (Attachment B). The motion was moved by Sean, seconded by Frank and approved by all present members.

**b) "Emerald Ash Borer confirmed in Verona" press release:** Shade Tree Commission Chairman Bob Dickison and Gloria put together a Press Release on the EAB (Attachment C). It's a modified version of the previous press release (published Jan 17, 2017) to include that the insect is already in Verona. It's signed by Gloria and Bob, he already approved and the VEC needs to vote, if it is approved Steve Neale will published it. Jess moved the motion, seconded by Sean, and approved by all present members.

## ATTACHMENTS

### A) Recommendations for Verona Lake

Dear Verona Mayor Ryan, Mr. Cavallo, and Council Members,

The Verona Environmental Commission (VEC) petitions the Verona Township governing body to consider submitting this letter to the Essex County Board of Chosen Freeholders.

On April 14, 2018, the Verona Park Conservancy sponsored a clean-up event at Verona Park. Noting a significant amount of trash in the lake, the Verona Environmental Commission pledged support by organizing a group to help clean up the Verona Lake itself. To achieve our goal, we arranged to use Essex County Parks' boat, and came equipped with nets and waders so we could collect as much trash as possible. During the event we noted some issues, and we would like to share with the Freeholders our findings and recommendations for improving the water quality and habitat of the Verona Lake.

Findings: 1) There is extensive eutrophication, excessive richness of nutrients, occurring in the south side of the lake, between the footbridge and the Montclair Golf Club (MGC) [Verona Block 601| Lot 1 and West Orange Block 151 |Lots 1, 5, 7, 11, 14, 15.01, 23, 34, 37, 41, 45.01, & 49]. There is very little underbrush to filter the waters there. Algae growth was significant, even before the onset of the warm weather months, which will most likely worsen as we progress through the summer. Stagnation or lack of oxygen in the water may be a major cause of this condition, as well as possible nutrient runoff (fertilizers) coming from the golf course.

2) We noticed that MGC has removed many mature trees on their property, and the impacts have been felt at downgradient locations in Verona. When these mature trees are removed, the filtering and absorption of waters is decreased and the runoff of unfiltered water into the Peckman River and subsequently Verona Lake significantly increases. Flooding during recent rain events is beyond what we usually witness in town.

3) There was a great deal of trash in the lake. Found among the trash were all sorts of fishing equipment, lawn chairs, Styrofoam containers, plastic cups and straws, recyclable plastic bottles, bottle caps, juice boxes, plastic cutlery, plastic single-use grocery bags, aluminum cans, glass bottles, cigarette buds, aerosol cans, food packaging, and most offensively, a car tire and a slew of small plastic bags filled with dog poop that were cleaned up by volunteers.

4) The wall below the dam shows deterioration, there are trees and shrubs growing out of the grout, which could cause major damage to the retaining walls.

The Verona Environmental Commission recommends the following measures to be taken:

1) Perform an updated bathymetric survey to document the lake bottom levels and probe the bottom of the lake to measure thickness of sediments that have accumulated in the lake since its last dredging back in 2001.

2) Install aerators and bubblers on the south side of the footbridge, between the bridge and the MGC. Aerators work only at the surface level, and that's not enough, bubblers are needed at the bottom of the lake. Aerators and bubblers will introduce oxygen to the water, decreasing algae growth and increasing the aquatic wildlife. Solar powered aerators and bubblers make installation easier in locations with no electricity.

3) Create a wetland buffer on the property of the MGC, where the runoff from the MGC are introduced into the Verona Lake. This would help to filter out the excessive amount of fertilizers that harm the ecology of the lake.

- 4) Install deer fencing surrounding the areas of these wetland buffers on the MGC so the underbrush and plants have a better chance to survive and filter the waters flowing into the lake.
- 5) Plant native trees around the lake and lily pads on the Verona-side of the inlets from the MGC. This will help further reduce the nutrient levels coming from the Golf Club, as well as provide a protected area for fish and wildlife. Streams and lakes health is dependent on the presence of woody vegetation along its banks. Riparian forest buffers filter sediment during storm events; remove nitrogen and phosphorus leaching from adjacent land uses; provide stability to the bank; shade and modify water temperatures, critical for habitat and pollution reduction; provide habitat; reduce water velocity and downstream flooding.
- 6) Repair and perform proper maintenance of damaged retaining walls and regularly remove trash from the lake and its banks. Remove accumulated debris that ends up on the east side of the lake due to the prevailing westerly wind. When branches are trimmed near the lake, they should be removed rather than allowed to drop into the lake.
- 7) Perform regularly scheduled water testing of the lake, especially on the south side to monitor levels of nutrients and pesticides (insecticides, herbicides and fungicides). Perform testing in the Peckman River and Gerdes Brook at the southernmost location on County property and in the Peckman River just before it flows on MGC property (see attached Fig. 1). This testing will help document the effect of runoff from the MGC property to water quality of the Peckman River before it enters Verona Lake.
- 8) To melt ice and snow in Verona Park during the winter, consider using a salt substitute that is environmentally friendly and kind to pets and wildlife, such as Alfalfa Meal or Organic Salt-free Deicer. Salt is harmful to animals, the environment, and vegetation. Pets get salt on their paws, which causes cracking, salt corrodes metal, damages concrete and wreaks havoc on gardens and lawn. With spring melt, all the accumulated salt ends up in waterways where the local wildlife may not survive the onslaught of salt.
- 9) Require the Verona Park Boathouse food vendor and anyone organizing events in the park to use reusable or biodegradable items, such as reusable water bottles, recycled paper bags, or paper plates and cups instead of using Styrofoam containers, plastic straws, plastic bags and other single-use plastic items.
- 10) Reach out to park visitors during large events -and remind them to reduce waste by using reusable water bottles, and properly dispose of their garbage and recyclable items. Keeping the park and lake free of plastic pollution, discarded fishing equipment, dog waste bags and other litter is a team effort.
- 11) Enforce the Stormwater Management Rules (NJAC7:8) in MGC and other neighboring properties. This would include limiting use of fertilizers and pesticides as well as planting new and necessary native trees that would aid in mitigating runoff quantities.

Best Regards, The Verona Environmental Commission

### **B) PLEDGE of Support for New Jersey's Comprehensive Single-Use Carryout Bag Policy**

WHEREAS, on average, one person uses 500 single-use plastic bags per year, 4 billion plastic shopping bags are used annually in New Jersey and 102 billion are used nationwide; and,

WHEREAS, windblown plastic bags degrade our land and waterways, and 80% of the plastic and trash that finds its way into our oceans comes from the land; and,

WHEREAS, 12 million barrels of oil are used annually to make the plastic bags that Americans use; and,

WHEREAS, according to EPA, seabirds, fish, and other marine and land-based animals mistake plastic for food, while others can become entangled in the trash, leading to exhaustion, starvation, and eventual death; and,

WHEREAS, plastic breaks down into microplastics that measure 5 millimeters or less, which are ingested by shrimp, plankton, fish, birds, turtles, and other sea animals. Microplastics absorb toxic chemicals, harms marine life, and can be consumed by humans via seafood and potable water; and,

WHEREAS, it is beyond dispute that the use of single-use, plastic carryout bags has a severe and negative environmental impact on the local and global environment as a result of the greenhouse gas emissions emitted to produce such bags, the land-based and ocean-based pollution created, the hazards posed to wildlife, the hazards posed to sources of water for humans, and the negative impact on the ecosystem and food chain as a whole; and,

WHEREAS, very few single-use carryout bags are actually recycled (it is estimated that less than 5% of all plastic bags are actually recycled and some estimates are as low as 1%); and,

WHEREAS, the Township of Verona taxpayers currently bear the costs associated with the negative effects of single-use carryout bags on the solid waste stream, drainage, litter, and the negative consequences of the foregoing environmental impacts; and,

THEREFORE, the Verona Environmental Commission, resolves to support Governor Murphy's ban on all single-use plastic carryout bags, with a fee on recycled paper bags, therefore encouraging the use of reusable bags.

ROLL CALL:

AYES: Machnowski, Pearson, DiBartolo, Ceccacci, Auteri

NAYS:

Adopted at the regular meeting of the Verona Environmental Commission held on July 18, 2018.

### **C) Press Release: Emerald Ash Borer Confirmed in Verona**

We would like to take this opportunity to notify the Verona residents of a very destructive pest that is affecting some of our local shade trees. The Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) is a devastating insect pest to all Ash trees and the White Fringe Tree. At this point in time there aren't any natural controls here in North America.

The insect was detected in Montclair in 2016 and has already reached Verona. Three different local tree experts recently confirmed that some ash trees in Verona show signs and symptoms of an EAB attack.

Symptoms include dieback of the upper and outer crown, new growth at the base of the tree and on the trunk (often just below where the larvae are feeding), bark vertical splits caused by callus tissue that develops around larval galleries and woodpecker feeding aggressively on larvae under the bark.

Signs include D-shaped holes (about 1/8 inch in diameter) created by EAB adults emerging from under the bark, as well as S-shaped larval galleries created by larvae feeding under the bark. Most of the Ash trees in town are on private property and wooded lots. It is recommended that

homeowners contact local tree experts to assess their trees and to develop a plan of action. In Verona we have very few Ash trees as street trees.

The Emerald Ash Borer is a small greenish insect, 0.3 to 0.5 in length, which lays its eggs on the stem and branches of the Ash tree. The eggs then hatch and the larva burrow their way in to the cambium layer of the tree. This is where it feeds and develops. The channels that it makes while feeding disrupts the flow of water and nutrients throughout the tree, killing the tree in two to four years.

If no action is taken then it is almost certain death to the Ash tree. The ash tree dies by drying out, its wood is brittle because the borers cut off the vessels that carry moisture out to the branches. A dead or dying ash must not be left standing in your yard. A falling tree or branches could harm people or damage buildings and cars.

There are chemical controls but it is a program, twenty years or more in length. The New Jersey State Forest Service recommends that any pesticide treatments to save ash trees from EAB should be done sooner rather than later, as treatments are most effective prior to EAB infestation. Homeowners need to assess the value of the Ash trees on their property while developing a plan of action against the Emerald Ash Borer.

For more information visit [www.emeraldashborer.nj.gov](http://www.emeraldashborer.nj.gov)  
For a list of NJ Certified Tree Experts contact [njtreeexperts@gmail.com](mailto:njtreeexperts@gmail.com)

Best,

Gloria Machnowski, Chairwoman, Verona Environmental Commission & Bob Dickison, Chairman, Verona Shade Tree Commission.

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Adjournment: There is no meeting in August - Next Meeting September 12, 2018.