



Verona Environmental Commission

600 Bloomfield Avenue
Verona, New Jersey 07044

www.veronaec.org

December 20, 2017

Dear Mayor Ryan, Mr. Cavallo and Verona Councilmen,

Please see below the Verona Environmental Commission (VEC) Annual Report:

Current Roster: The VEC has seven members plus two alternates, Gloria Machnowski (Chairperson), Tony Saltalamacchia (Vice-Chair), Jessica Pearson, Sean DiBartolo, Martin Golan, Sarah Yauch O'Farrell, Walter Steinmann (Alternate I), Frank Ceccacci (Alternate II) and Michael Foley (Planning Board Liaison). All members are Verona residents and serve without compensation. Mayor Ryan is our Council Liaison.



Public Meetings: The public is welcome to attend our public meetings on the third Wednesday of each month (except August) at 7 pm in the Conference Room of the Community Center, 880 Bloomfield Ave. There is a public comment period at the beginning of our meetings. This year many of our members also attended Verona Town Council meetings, Essex County Environmental Commission presentations, Sustainable Verona events, and ANJEC workshops.

Volunteer Night: the VEC participated in the January 24th event at the Verona Community Center. Residents learned about our programs and signed up to participate on our upcoming events.

Emerald Ash Borer (EAB): We collaborated with the Shade Tree Commission to review recommendations from the NJ State Forest Service, and provide Verona residents with helpful information to take care of infected ash trees in Verona.

Climate Change: We released a statement in support of the Essex County Board of Freeholders' Climate Change Resolution on January 2017. The Freeholders pledged to increase renewable energy requirements to 80% by 2050, auditing County greenhouse gas emissions and reducing emissions 80% by 2050, buying at least 50% of the County's energy from renewable sources, incentivizing renewable purchases for County residents, easing the solar power permit process, and updating building codes to promote increased energy efficiency for county and municipal buildings. The VEC statement shows support for the goals of the County in which Verona sits and plans to help meeting those goals.



West Essex Trail Cleanup: We organized a massive trail cleanup on April 2nd. We teamed up with the Cedar Grove Environmental Commission and NJWP Watershed Ambassador Carolyn Rubinfeld, who gave a guided tour to the Peckman River. Verona Public Works Department and Essex County Parks provided trucks, tools and supplies and sent several employees to help. The Passaic Valley Sewerage Commission donated trash bags and work gloves. Volunteer turnout was fantastic, over 70 people participated, including students for MSU, NJIT, members of the Hilltop Conservancy, Sustainable Verona, and the local youth bicycle team. Ten full truck loads of trash from years of accumulation were hauled away. VEC member Frank Ceccacci even found a buried pickup truck, which was removed by the County Parks Department. We also participated in the fall trail cleanup organized by Sustainable Verona.



Grove Park Cleanup and Tree Giveaway: To honor Earth Day we hosted a tree seedling giveaway and community cleanup at Grove Park on April 22nd. The tree giveaway was open to all New Jersey residents as part of the New Jersey Tree Recovery Campaign. We worked with the municipal government and the Department of Environmental Protection to distribute 300 free tree seedlings with planting instructions. We hosted another cleanup at Grove Park on October 14. Volunteers performed trail maintenance and planted an Eastern Redbud tree purchased by the Commission.

Green Fair: We participated in Verona's 3rd Annual Green Fair on May 20. We distributed free recycling bins and barrels to Verona residents and played a recycling game with visitors. Edward Selimi, a Verona 8th Grader, displayed a bicycle at our booth, that he built almost entirely from used parts.

Peckman Cleanup: Our annual cleanup behind F. N. Brown School took place on June 3rd. Community volunteers helped cleaning up the woods, restored trails, installed a fallen bat house, fixed a foot bridge, pulled out invasive Japanese knotweed plants and mulched the trail entrance. The Verona Kids Rock group participated in the event. The Verona Department of Public Works removed the collected materials.



Recycling Visual List: We collaborated with Sustainable Verona to put together the first visual list of items accepted for recycling in Verona. We obtained details from recycling vendors such as Atlantic Fibers, and added plastic containers stamped with #5 to the accepted plastics list, in addition to #1 and #2. Additional materials will be accepted starting January 1st and a new visual list will be created.

Council Honors Environmentalists: At VEC encouragement, the Town Council honored Anne Stires and Jerry Shimonaski on August. Both are former members of the Verona Environmental Commission and were recognized as “Verona Environmental Pioneers”. Benches were dedicated to them in Grove Park, Verona’s Historic Park & Nature Preserve located at 42 Grove Avenue.

Walk & Bike to School Day: Hundreds of Verona students and parents joined the celebration on October 4th. Verona Public School students from Kindergarten through 12 Grade participated in the 9th Annual Poster Contest sponsored by the VEC. The theme this year was: How can we stop Climate Change in Verona? Students' artwork was displayed at all participating schools. The award ceremony took place at Verona Town Hall on October 23. Winners received \$50 dollars and an award certificate. The VEC also presented a 3-minute video.

Site Plan Review: Every year we receive and review site plans and subdivision development applications to evaluate the potential environmental impacts and to advise the Planning and Zoning Boards. This year the VEC submitted seventeen sets of comments regarding applications for 10 Howard Street, 460 Bloomfield Ave., 85 Personette Ave., 59 Morningside Rd, 50 Sunset Ave., 19 W. Lincoln Street, 378 Bloomfield Ave., 37 Depot Street, 23 South Prospect Ave., 110 Fairview Ave., 31 Derwent Ave., 460 Bloomfield Ave., 32 East Lincoln St., 71 Afterglow Ave., 776 Bloomfield Ave., and 25 Chestnut Road. We also reviewed letters from the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, and provided comments about the Flood Hazard Permit Application for 271 Grove Ave.; the Remedial Action Plan and Cap Areas' Map regarding Hilltop Parcel 5; and Letters of Interpretation for 111 Mount Prospect Avenue and 25 Commerce Court. Additionally, we reviewed the renovation plans for the Verona Public Library.





Verona Impervious Cover: Rutgers Cooperative Extension Water Resources Program prepared an Impervious Cover Assessment for Verona Township. The report states that the primary cause of the pollution, flooding, and erosion problems is the quantity of impervious surfaces draining directly to local waterways. It recommends implementing Green Infrastructure and provides plans for proposed rain gardens at the Verona Community Center, a permeable pavement parking lot at the Public Library, and a Community Garden with a Water Cistern at the H. B. Whitehorne Middle School. The report concludes that setting a goal of a 10% reduction of impervious area would be a reasonably achievable reduction for each subwatershed in Verona. The VEC formally extended those recommendations to the Verona governing body in July 2017. New Jersey has the highest percent of impervious cover in the country at 12.1% of its total area. Based upon the 2012 NJDEP land use/land cover data, approximately 31.5% of Verona has impervious cover, suggesting that the streams in Verona are likely non-supporting.

Greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions: Not only municipal operations contribute significantly to GHG emissions, municipalities also play a key role in influencing GHG-emitting behavior in the broader community. On July of 2017 the VEC formally petitioned our governing body to adopt a resolution stating its commitment to implement measures aimed to reduce GHG emissions. Seeking Energy Star certification of municipal buildings, transitioning to a "Green Fleet", and providing residents with a Renewable Government Energy Aggregation Program are some examples. New Jersey's Global Warming Response Act calls for an 80% reduction of GHG emissions from 2006 levels by the year 2050. To meet this target, New Jersey will have to reduce GHG emissions at a rate of 3.6% a year, every year.

Verona Park Construction: The VEC held a special meeting on September 14th to talk about the construction at Verona Park. Our members approved a Position Paper, asking Essex County to reduce impervious area wherever possible, and to consider using Green Infrastructure such as Permeable Pavement, instead of impervious materials, to minimize stormwater runoff and nonpoint source pollution. We met with Essex County Executive Joe DiVincenzo, and Essex County Parks Director Dan Salvante, and presented our recommendations on September 20.

Social Media: The VEC maintains its website up to date (www.veronaec.org), and has a Facebook page (@veronaenvironmental), and a Twitter account (@GreenVeronaNJ). We provide helpful information and free publicity for town-sponsored initiatives, expanding opportunities to communicate with residents about environmental matters.



Verona Fair in the Square: The VEC had a table at the fair on December 2nd, and visitors made about 100 bird feeders using natural pine cones collected around town. We also had a display about the negative environmental and health effects associated with vehicular idling. About 80 people signed our Pledge to “End Unnecessary Vehicle Idling in Verona”. Residents can also sign the pledge on our website.

EPA's Tour: The VEC organized a Tour of the Permeable Pavement Installations and Rain Gardens with Amy Rowe and Tom O'Connor at the EPA's Environmental Center in Edison, on December 6. Amy serves as the Environmental County Agent with Essex County Cooperative Extension, and Tom is an EPA Environmental Engineer. They are well versed in Low Impact Development practices for Stormwater Management. Tour attendees included Verona Town Manager Matt Cavallo, Assistant Engineer Michael DeCarlo, Councilman Jack McEvoy, Sustainable Verona Chairman Steve Neale, VEC Members Sean DiBartolo and Walter Steinmann, and VEC Chairwoman Gloria Machnowski.

We would like to thank Verona residents and the Township for supporting our programs and helping make Verona a more sustainable community this year. For more information please visit www.VeronaEC.org or contact us by email at veronaenvironmental@gmail.com

Regards,

Gloria Machnowski
Chairwoman, Verona Environmental Commission
600 Bloomfield Avenue, Verona, New Jersey 07044