



Verona Environmental Commission

600 Bloomfield Avenue
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www.veronaec.org

Minutes of the Verona Environmental Commission Regular Meeting on May 18, 2016 – 7:30 P.M., conference room, Verona Community Center, 880 Bloomfield Avenue, Verona N.J. Attendees: Gloria Machnowski (Chairperson), Anthony Saltalamacchia (Vice Chairman), Virginia Citrano, Jessica Pearson, Martin Golan, and Mayor Kevin Ryan (Town Council Liaison). Guests: Walter Steinmann and Sean DiBartolo.

1. The Chairperson calls the meeting to order and reads notice of Open Public Meetings Act.
2. Minutes from the April 2016 meeting were approved by members after Virginia explained that this sentence in section 3 is not accurate: “Maybe once a year about one hundred gallons from the pools are dumped into Grove Park”. According to on-line pool calculators the amount of water discharged from pools into Grove Park could be a lot more. For example, an above ground pool 15' Round (52" deep) holds about 6,000 gallons of water.
3. The Verona Green Fair is scheduled for May 21. Over 60 participants registered. The rain date is Sunday, May 22. Mayor Ryan is not available to attend on Saturday, but he is available on Sunday. Verona Deputy Mayor Michael Nochimson will take care of the official opening on Saturday. The VEC has table #21, Gloria showed the fairground map. All non-profits are going to be located on the west side of the Civic Center.

The VEC will distribute free recycling bins and barrels. DPW will set up the tables at 8 am. Non-Profits will set up at 10 am. Gloria will bring a 10' by 10' event tent, a game about climate change and a display to encourage people to sign up for the June 4 Peckman Cleanup. Tony and Gloria are planning to set up. Jessica will help during the morning. Sarah, Sean and Martin will help during the afternoon. Virginia will man her company table. All VEC members and volunteers are welcome to help.

4. The free tree seedling distribution at Grove Park went very well on April 30. About 40 people picked up Red Oaks, Dogwoods and Douglas Fir tree seedlings. The VEC distributed all 150 seedlings by 11 am. A group of volunteers removed garbage and metal items, and cleaned up the stream. Gloria thanked Tony, Jess, Sarah, Walter, Sean and Mayor Ryan for helping during the event. Amy Heckel, 8th Grade HBW Science Teacher, attended the event with her students. They are making a movie about Verona's efforts to tackle climate change for a Rutgers University state-wide competition. The students recently interviewed Gloria, Steve Neale, Lisa Freschi and Fred Krupp. HBW Science teacher Carol Thomas also came to the event. She is installing raised beds at VHS courtyard, by the green house. Mrs. Thomas inquired about funding to install a rain barrels sold by the township. The VHS SCA will purchase it. Joe Trause also approved to install a rain barrel at HBW and their SCA will buy it. The deadline for on-line orders at half price (\$73) was May15.

Gloria met Mr. Molinaro at Grove Park a few days before the cleanup to talk about installing the Nature Preserve sign and the removal a broken cement slab from the stream. DPW installed the new sign shortly after but there is no access to drive a jack hammer and compressor back there to break down the cement slab. Gloria suggested to rent a portable jack hammer for DPW. Mayor Ryan recommended contacting Mr. Cavallo, and asking DPW to take care of it to avoid the possibility of volunteers getting hurt.

The old path has broken loose pieces that are a tripping hazard and would be better to remove those pieces. Jessica offered to check with Jack if they could use old slate found in the property to repair it. Members agreed.

Gloria mentioned that Theresa Trapp from the Hilltop Conservancy offered an antique cement bench for Grove Park. The bench is in the former Essex County Hospital grounds and it has footings cemented in place. She showed a picture. Virginia recommended leaving it where it is.

Theresa visited Grove Park and recommended planting deciduous tree saplings in the back, there is plenty of room since some trees fell and DPW removed other dead and hazardous trees. Gloria mentioned that Mr. Dickison agreed with this reforestation plan. Theresa has a lot of experience with reforestation projects and she recommended using Octoraro Nursery in Pennsylvania, an inexpensive source of high quality native tree saplings.

Jessica recommended to finish the planting of the flowerbeds in the front area first. Gloria explained that the Commission presented a planting plan created by Jim that included creating flowerbeds. The Shade Tree Commission didn't approve the plan, and they presented a new plan that was approved by Mr. Cavallo. Mr. Dickison recently directed the planting of a few bushes by the tree line in the front area of Grove Park. He switched from White Fringe trees to two Viburnum for anchor plants and planted four Witch hazels behind the right side bench and one by itself by the property on the north side.

Jessica added that the flowerbed by the front signage and new path was approved and she will meet with Jim to put together a list of plants for that area that will include milkweed from Morgan Farms in Cedar Grove, irises and other drought and deer resistant species. She added that Jim so far only presented a list of trees and bushes for Grove Park, not a plant list. Gloria noted that flower beds need some maintenance. Virginia mentioned that Jim needs to also determine the tree spacing requirements. Sean mentioned that the spacing of the trees depends on the tree species, which are already approved by Mr. Dickison.

Mayor Ryan explained that township trees, bushes and plants should be purchased with the Shade Tree Commission's budget, which is \$125,000. Virginia noted that usually Township Trees are those planted in the grass curb strips along the streets.

Regarding the reforestation plan, Gloria explained that the goal is to replace dead trees that were removed or fell in recent years. Octoraro Nursery's inventory is posted at www.octoraro.com -Gloria presented a printout with a list of available saplings: 5-6' red oak, red maple and hackberry trees 4-6', in 3 to 7 gallon pots cost about \$40 or \$50 each, depending on shipping fees determined at the time of ordering on line. This is a great deal, the Commission could buy 8 or 10 trees for less than \$500. Octoraro's minimum order is \$250 and they work with municipalities and accept purchase orders. The Commission still has more

than \$1,000 in donations available for Grove Park. The nursery is located at 6126 Street Road, Kirkwood, PA 17536. Jessica suggested driving there to choose the materials. Gloria suggested to organize a fall planting with volunteers.

Mayor Ryan reminded members that township trees are under the jurisdiction of the Shade Tree Commission and Mr. Dickison approval is required. Gloria explained that she already contacted Mr. Dickison about the tree sapling plantings and he approved and said: "No problem. Just keep them spaced 30' to 50' apart. So they can develop individually. Maybe put a wooden stake near them for protection". Virginia, Tony and Martin support the idea of planting trees in Grove Nature Preserve. Tony also mentioned that the Commission could plant both in the future, trees and plants.

5. The Peckman Cleanup is scheduled for June 4 from 9 am to 12 noon. Gloria contacted the Town Manager and the Superintendent of Schools; Joe Trause and F.N. Brown School Principal, they all approved the event date. School custodians will mow the lawn by the trail entrance, deer ticks cling to tall grass. The Commission plans to pull out non-native, invasive Japanese Knotweed, maintain the trails and work cleaning up the river and the woods.

The event is also advertised in the schools and VHS TV's. VHS Science Teacher Carl Cascone is planning to attend and invite his students. Paula Ramos runs the Marine Biology club; she is not available but she invited her students. Robert Maher, Community Service Coordinator, will invite students as well. This year the cleanup is part of NJ Clean Communities Clean Water Challenge, and they are providing garbage and recycling bags as well as gloves for volunteers.

Tony and Jessica are not available to attend. Virginia, Martin and Walter will participate. The event flyer is in the Friday Folder, the VEC's website, Facebook and Twitter. Jim printed posters and Gloria will post them around town and in the schools.

6. Chairperson report: Gloria thanked all Commission members for working on the Steep Slope Ordinance, which was approved 4-0 last April. This is something that the VEC worked on for the last 10 years. The new recycling ordinance is on the town website. Gloria's and Jim's term will expire on June 30, and the Commission should vote to choose Gloria or other member as Chairperson. Virginia asked what Jim's plans are, members don't know.

Gloria mentioned that she is working with Jennifer Kiernan and Mary Farrell to reserve the conference room for all future VEC monthly public meetings, starting at 7:00 pm on the third Wednesday of every month -except August. In order to publish one annual meeting notice in the two designated newspapers, the VEC needs a consistent venue for the whole year, and cannot be switching back and forth between the conference room and the Annex. The main reason for doing this is to save money by publishing one annual legal notice, instead of monthly notices, and continue to comply with the open meeting act. Gloria asked members if the Commission meetings could start at 7 pm instead of 7:30 pm. All present members agreed. Gloria will check with Jim and Michael, who were not present.

7. New Business: Virginia explained that the VEC had a lot of opposition from the former Town Manager Joe Martin, but the new administration is willing to help the Commission. Mayor Ryan added that the VEC is one of the most active and effective commissions in town and thanked all members for getting so much done.

Virginia proposed to explore the possibility of having a community garden in Verona; this was an old idea from Teena Schwartz, former VEC Chairperson and Verona Mayor. But years ago the town manager only offered Teena a contaminated area that was not suitable to grow organic vegetables. Virginia proposed to put the community garden in the grassy area along the Peckman River, behind Mr. Helb's office, in the Water Treatment Plant, at 10 Commerce Court. She added that raised beds will be needed, as well as fencing to protect the area from deer and a greenhouse to prolong the planting season. Virginia explained that now Verona has a food pantry in town and fresh vegetables are always needed.

Gloria mentioned that she could talk to Julie Ostering from Morgan Farms; they start their plants in the Cedar Grove Garden Center's greenhouses. Gloria added that when she made the VEC's Water Treatment Plant video in 2012, she visited the two big greenhouses there. Gloria will ask Tim Newton and Matt Cavallo if the greenhouses are available for a community garden, members agreed. If those areas are not available, the Commission will explore other possible locations for a community garden.

Virginia noticed that the greenhouses are near the methane burner, which could mean heat for year-round operations. Walter asked how many glass panels are broken. Gloria doesn't remember but she recalls that trees were growing inside the greenhouses.

8. Public Participation: Walter proposed to purchase a cardboard compactor for the recycling center to reduce waste hauling cost. Used or refurbished compactor prices start at \$ 2,000 or \$3,000 and Walter thinks that in a few months the town could recover that money in savings from reducing cardboard pickups. Commissioners are not sure the saving will be so significant since now the town has curbside cardboard pickups. Tony said that Verona Schools have no budget to buy one but perhaps the township could purchase one with a grant and then share services with the school district. Mayor Ryan recommended contacting Mr. Cavallo and checking on the feasibility of this idea, considering the terms of the current contract with the corrugated cardboard recycling vendor.

Walter also suggested giving a digital voltmeter to the recycling center employee to measure the state-of-charge -by voltage- of the batteries dropped by residents. He suggested to reuse or perhaps re-sell the batteries that still have charge in bags for one dollar.

Mayor Ryan explained that even though many residents keep bringing household batteries (AA, AAA, C, D, 9V) to the recycling depot, those batteries are not longer recyclable. Most of its heavy metals were removed long time ago, and are no longer classified as Household Hazardous Waste, therefore residents are no longer prohibited from disposing of them as garbage.

9. Adjournment – Next Meeting June 15th, 2016, VCC Conference Room.