



Verona Environmental Commission

600 Bloomfield Avenue
Verona, New Jersey 07044
www.veronaec.org

Verona Environmental Commission Meeting Minutes - Wednesday, November 14, 2018

1. The regular meeting of the Verona Environmental Commission, held at the Conference Room of the Community Center, 880 Bloomfield Avenue, Verona, New Jersey, was called to order at 7:00 pm by Gloria Machnowski, Chairperson. The Open Public Meetings Act Statement was made.

Present: Gloria Machnowski (Chairwoman), Anthony Saltalamacchia (Vice Chairman), Jessica Pearson (Planning Board Liaison), Sean DiBartolo, Martin Golan, Sarah Yauch O'Farrell, Frank Ceccacci, Michael Auteri (Alternate I) and Mayor Kevin Ryan (Council Liaison).

Absent: *Timothy Kiernan (Alternate II)*

Guests: Olivia Le Warn Watershed Ambassador for Watershed Management Area 4, Richard Larsen and Ellen Berkowitz from Citizens' Climate Lobby.

2. Public Participation: Motion by Jessica Second by Sean

Richard Larsen and Ellen Berkowitz from Citizens' Climate Lobby began their presentation on petitioning the State's municipalities and the Federal government to place a price on carbon- or a carbon tax in order to create a national incentive to move away from fossil fuels and towards renewable energy sources. Richard, the 11th district of NJ liaison had met with our newly elected Congresswoman Mikie Sherrill but does not know whether he has her endorsement yet. His hope is that this movement gains a bipartisan vote as it will benefit the entire country.

The tax would start out as a \$15.00 per ton fee on carbon emissions produced from extracting fossil fuels from the ground. That fee is proposed to increase \$10.00 each successive year. The proposal includes redistributing those collected fees back to needy families as a dividend. The numbers were not conclusive as to which incomes would qualify and how much of a dividend would be accredited to those families, but IRS records of tax returns would be the way in which these decisions would be made. As such, it was agreed that the price of that fossil fuel would likely increase due to the tax, but the redistribution of the funds would ideally make the proposal revenue neutral.

Many other larger international economies already use a carbon tax including Canada, China and India. They have found that it is positive for the economy, it reduces emissions and overall directs energy solutions towards sustainability.

Other municipalities in the state that have passed resolutions of support for this program include Jersey City, Morristown, South Orange, and Milburn in our area.

The commission decided to research the various resolutions passed in NJ found at <https://citizensclimatelobby.org/endorsements/municipal/> and if agreed upon, to tailor it to the Township of Verona for a proposal for the Council to pass a similar resolution in support of the Carbon fees.

3. Minutes: The minutes of the meeting held on October 10th 2018 were approved, following a motion by Sarah seconded by Tony All members were in favor.

4. Events:

a) Outcome Green Fair & Open Streets Fest 10/13/18.

The 4th Annual Verona Green Fair was held on Saturday, October 13, at the Verona Civic Center, 600 Bloomfield Ave. The Environmental Commission focused on Green Infrastructure, played a clean up game and distributed reusable grocery bags & reusable water bottles to help residents reduce plastic waste. People also signed up to receive free recycling bins. The fair had over 40 different vendors, family & kids activities, food and live music. Organizers asked people to ride their bikes to the Green Fair. Gould Street was closed to motor vehicles and open for riding, helmet and bike check, and other free activities. EZ Ride fit and distributed more than 30 free helmets and Cycle Craft fixed dozens of bikes for free. This means more and safer riders and less GHG emissions. Five kids won the VEC free raffle and took home t-shirts, a bamboo saddle, helmet, gloves and other biking goodies donated by Pedal Montclair. Mr. G Welding 101, Ron Grosinger's welding lessons, were a big hit at Verona Green Fair. The event was free of charge.

b) Essex County Environmental Commission Roundtable 10/29/18 - Report by Frank Ceccacci.

Local Sustainable Food Initiatives

"Linking Community with Agriculture" : Meredith Taylor, Rutgers University Research Associate in the Office of Agriculture and Urban Programs, provided a PowerPoint presentation on the many benefits of urban community gardens with a special focus on the Newark area.

These benefits include:

- Promoting social engagement and wellbeing.
- Enhancing community spirit.
- Increasing fresh food access.
- Providing education on nutrition.
- Presenting potential enterprise opportunities.

Community Gardens : Jose German-Gomez, of Northeast Earth Coalition made a presentation about the benefits of community gardens.

He also described Montclair's three (3) community gardens, one of which is overseen by a local church and on their property. Jose mentioned that the key to the success of community gardens is quality volunteerism.

Farmer's Markets: Gray Russell, co-chair of the ECEC, made a presentation on the value of local farmer's markets, including:

- Making locally grown and manufactured food items available to local residents
- Providing enterprise opportunities to local growers and producers
- Increasing local foot traffic, resulting in additional sales for brick & mortar stores.

Gray spoke specifically about the Montclair Farmer's Market and its approach in admitting vendors as well as its marketing and overall success. Estimates range from 800-1000 attendees at each Montclair Farmer's Market Saturday event.

Roundtable discussion:

Jennifer Duckworth, Millburn: Complete Streets implementation, resulting in the reduction of annual bike and pedestrian accidents from 34 to 3. In addition, NJ Safe Routes to School program was also discussed.

Ann Marchioni, Caldwell: Leaf bag initiative, Open Space initiative

Joe McCarthy, West Orange: Working on securing funding for six (6) acres through Open Space

Bill Barnes, Newark: Discussed the serious lead problems in Newark schools and the attempts to address them. In addition, he mentioned a Healthy Port initiative addressing idling trucks in the Newark port. Lastly, he inquired about the possibility of utilizing Open Space to help maintain a historic Newark cemetery

Frank Ceccacci, Verona: Green Fair & Open Streets Festival, West Essex Trail Cleanup, Annin Flags cleanup, Walk & Bike to School Day, Poster Contest, and Natural Resource Inventory. Actions also taken related to Verona Lake, Clean Streets and Single Use Bags.

Following the meeting, Gray Russel asked Frank to convey to me that the ECEC would love to have someone from Verona on their Commission. If Frank is interested to join them I think that it will be great for him to be a member of both commissions. The ECEC is a commission like the VEC, but at the County level, with members from other commissions, for example Ann Marchioni is a member of the Caldwell Environmental Commission, and a member of the ECEC. <https://www.essexcountyparks.org/facilities/environmental-center/partners>

Responsibilities include attending their meetings:

- Meetings are held at the Essex County Environmental Center at 6pm on the 1st Monday of the month unless that Monday falls on a County holiday, in which case it will be the following Monday (2nd Monday of the month). Roundtable months, October and April, the meetings will be held at the Essex County Verona Park Boathouse (senior room) on a date to be determined, and the December meeting will be at the Essex County Codey Arena or Satellite Office in West Orange on the eve of the County Executive's holiday gathering, also to be determined. Finally, there will be no August meeting.

In addition, Sandy from the Verona Green Team was at the meeting.

Mayor Ryan said that he would check with Manager Cavallo to see if Frank would need a mandate to join as Verona's representative.

c) Walk and Bike to School Poster Contest Award Ceremony 10/29/18 - Report by Chairwoman.

The VEC celebrated Walk and Bike to School Day with the 10th Annual Poster Contest on October 10, 2018. The poster contest is a way to get students thinking about the importance of a healthy lifestyle and making changes that benefit the environment. The contest was open to Verona Public School Students Grade K through 12. Artwork was displayed at all participating schools. Six students from Verona's public schools won the contest and were honored at the Town Council meeting on Oct. 29. The VEC presented a video and the winners received \$50 dollars and an Award Certificate from the Mayor.

The 2018 winners are:

- "Walking to School Makes you Rule!" by Dante Palmer, from F. N. Brown School, 4th Grade.
- "Be Kind to the Earth. Walk or Ride Bikes to School!" by Nick Nazzaretto, from Laning Avenue School, 4th Grade.
- "Walk or Ride 2 School", by Karina Squilanti, from Verona High School, 10th Grade.
- "Walk or Bike, so your parents can sleep late!" by Ivy Liaukus, from H. B. Whitehorne Middle School, 5th Grade.
- "Verona is a clean and healthy town" by Zoe Flores, from Forest Avenue School, 2nd Grade.
- "People walking" by Emily Ten Broeck, from Brookdale Avenue School, Kindergarten.

Travelling by car is the largest single source of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in Verona leading to Climate Change and affecting our air quality. As many children are driven to and from school, physical inactivity is becoming a serious concern. In addition communities with higher rates of walking and bicycling tend to have safer streets with lower crash rates for all travel modes. Walk or bike to school more often!

d) Verona Fair in the Square

The Commission decided against participating in Fair in the Square as they already participate in the Green Fair, numerous clean ups, Earth Day seedling give-away, etc. The official opening of the Verona Public Library will also occur at Noon on December 1st.

e) NJ Tree Recovery Application due December 14, 2018.

The application is due December 14. If we sign up, for Essex County seedlings must be picked up on Friday April 12 from 9 am to 3 pm at the Essex County Environmental Education Center (in the back parking lot by the greenhouses) at 621 Eagle Rock Road, Roseland, NJ 07068 - (973) 228-8776.

Seedlings need to be distributed on Saturday April 13 in Grove Park as usual. Please notice that Verona Schools Spring Break is the week of April 15 and some of us will not be in town, so we need at least one VEC member to confirm that he/she will take care of this. As such, the commission decided to only order 200 seedlings for this Earth Day celebration event. Sarah agreed to help with the picking up the seedlings the day before the event for seamless distribution the following day.

5. Updates:

a) Cameco Press Release. – The township of Verona is interested in the purchase of Cameco, a closed factory building and its surrounding property in order to provide for required Fair Share Housing. The benefit of the site is that it is on Bloomfield Ave, near all transit and the site was previously developed.

b) Environmental Resource Inventory. – A presentation at the next Planning Board meeting will be given by the Authors of our Environmental Resource Inventory report. All commission members are welcomed to attend this presentation at the Verona Planning Board meeting, December 6th, 2018 at 7:30 pm in the VCC Ballroom.

c) Site Plan Review. A Site Plan Review Ordinance is being worked on by Mike DeCarlo. No further information has become available on his progress.

d) Tree Ordinance. The Commission sent a suggested Tree Ordinance to Mike DeCarlo and Matt Cavallo for their review. No further information has become available on their progress.

6. New Business.

Adjournment – Next Meeting December 12, 2018.