



Verona Environmental Commission

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

VEC Public Meeting: February 18, 7:30 pm to 9:30 pm, VCC Annex Building, 2nd floor.

Attendees

Members: Gloria Machnowski, James Loudon, Anthony Saltalamacchia, Virginia Citrano, Jessica Pearson, Chris Stark and Council Liaison Kevin Ryan.

Guests: Gerard Shimonaski, Bob Williams (Verona Historical Society) and Masha Guzner (Environmental Club at Montclair State University).

MINUTES

I. Members approved the January 21, 2015 minutes.

II. Peckman Woods/River cleanup: members decided to hold the event on Sat. April 11th from 9 am to 12 noon (before spring break). Rain Date: Sunday April 12. Julia agreed by phone. VHS Environmental Club students and teacher Carl Cascone couldn't attend the meeting but will participate in the cleanup. Julia will distribute permission slips to VHS students. Gloria and Kevin will contact Martin to confirm the event date and DPW support.

Masha Guzner, a Verona resident and Montclair State University student attended the meeting representing MSU Environmental Club. The club is planning to participate in the cleanup. Gloria gave Masha printed information about the meeting location, what to bring, recommended clothing, etc. Masha also expressed interest about visiting the Verona Water Treatment Plant with the club. Gloria and Jerry gave her the contact information for Tim Newton, the plant Supervisor; as well as the link to the online Water Treatment Plant educational video that the commission made.

Jessica, the VEC treasurer, informed members that there are \$298 left to complete the VEC Open Space Stewardship grant from ANJEC by May 2015. The commission will not build a footbridge, Eagle Scouts' candidates are working on other projects. Members suggested to design a new poster for the showcase and other signage, including the new trail map, and print/laminate it at Staples.

Chris is putting together a VEC geocache to be placed in the trail. Geocaching is an outdoor recreational activity, in which participants use a GPS receiver or mobile device to hide and seek containers, called "geocaches" or "caches", anywhere in the world. A typical cache is a small waterproof container containing a logbook (with a pencil). The geocacher enters the date they found it and signs it with their established code name. After signing the log, the cache must be placed back where the person found it. Caches also contain items for trading,

usually toys or trinkets of little financial value. Jim recommended to add some more native plants and Jess asked him to send her the list. Members will also install a QR code (Quick Response Code) at the trail entrance, linked to the commission's online trail guide.

III. 42 Grove Ave. Nature Trail Project with the Junior Woman's Club of Verona and the Verona Historical Society:

The Junior Woman's Club of Verona approved to donate \$2000 for the VEC's Nature Trail Project in the municipal lot located at 42 Grove Ave. Kevin made the announcement at the town council meeting. The main goal of this project is to preserve the existing woods while making it accessible to residents with a nature trail (narrow dirt trail). Gloria contacted the Town Manager and Mayor about this project on December 2014 and they expressed their support. The town manager back then mentioned that a landscaper would produce the layout on January 2015.

Jim offered to help and produce a concept plan. He visited the property with Gloria but it was covered with snow and Jim needs a cadd file, property survey or lot dimensions to be able to produce the concept so he recommended to produce a list of items first. Kevin and other members asked Gloria to contact Martin and Helb to request the cadd file or other available maps. Kevin explained that he talked to Martin and he would like to meet with VEC members to discuss the project details.

Gloria also contacted Mr. Laracy, Chief Financial Officer, who informed her that the Juniors should make the check payable to "Township of Verona - Verona Environmental Commission" and present it with a donation purpose letter. Gloria informed the Juniors and they would like to present the check at a Town Council meeting as soon as possible. They are available to do this short presentation at the the March 16 Council Meeting. VEC members asked Kevin to make sure that the township informs neighbors about the plans before the meeting takes place.

Mr. Laracy also told Gloria that he believes we have a trust account set up for the VEC. And he already has the paperwork completed by the VEC to pay for the commission's 2015 ANJEC membership.

During the VEC January meeting, members recommended to contact Ben Blinder and the Verona Historical Society to obtain historical information about the lot and recommendations for the name of the trail. Gloria contacted Ben and met with Bob Williams, the president of the Verona Historical Society. Bob is a historian and author of the book Old Verona, he came to the meeting and suggested the name "The Grove". He also explained the following:

This property located at 42 Grove Ave. was settled by the Personett Family on the mid 18th century. Their homestead stood on present-day Personette Street. Joseph Personett had a stand of trees there that took on the name "Personett's Grove." During the early 19th century this had become a favorite gathering place in the community for celebrations, picnics and religious gatherings. Later on Verona Park replaced it. The homestead of Dr. Stephen Personett, Verona's second country doctor, stands to the west on Grove Avenue. He went into retirement after the Civil War and Dr. Henry B. Whitehorne was called to serve in Verona. A graduate of Albany Medical School and a founder of the Mountainside Hospital, he served in the Civil War on the gunboat Wyalusing. He built his house on this site in 1894.

Bob provided pictures to Gloria and she scanned them at high resolution to include them in an interpretative sign. The house was taken down after a fire, Bob has medicine bottles that were buried in the property. He recommends to install an Aluminum Cast Historical Marker out along Grove Avenue and a display and other posts markers on the property.

Members agreed that the site should be preserved as a nature trail and historical site. The recommended project includes purchasing and installing the following items in the front grass area of the lot (near the sidewalk):

Interpretative Wayside Exhibit, National Park Service style (about \$1,000), Park Bench (\$900), Trash Receptacle (\$400), Lid (\$90) and Native Tree/s and/or plants/wild flowers. A Nature Trail Sign or Aluminum Cast Historical Marker should be installed by Grove Ave. (over \$2,000). We could mark the trail with help from volunteers during a spring event.

Gloria showed members information of benches and cans made with recycled content from township vendors, Wabash Valley and Kirby Buitt. The companies' contact information was provided by Steve Neal and Chuck Molinaro. Gloria also presented options for the interpretative wayside exhibit (National Park Service style) from EnviroSigns and Kirby Buitt (viewing centers). Bob will supply the contact info for the foundry that cast the markers for the Centennial Commission in Verona, as well as the wording for the markers and signage. Members agreed to ask Martin if the township could provide the required additional monies, others suggested to contact other historical organizations or Essex County to cover the additional costs. Gloria and Kevin will contact Martin.

IV. Steep Slope Ordinance update. As decided during the last meeting, Gloria asked Larry to investigate what is the formal procedure to introduce the VEC draft at the Planning Board meeting. Larry is working on it.

One more time Kevin expressed the need to have this ordinance in place. He will keep requesting the town manager and town engineer to study the VEC draft and present it to the rest of the council members. The VEC made a formal recommendation over a year ago and Jerry had been bringing up the need of this ordinance since 2009, when the Master Plan called for one. Kevin expressed frustration about the inconsistency with the master plan that talks about steep slopes but doesn't define what it is. Kevin also mentioned that the first town council meeting on February was canceled. He also explained that if the township can act quickly changing the zoning of an area, like they did last night, then why the township couldn't take care of the steep slope ordinance since 2009?

V. Verona recycling: Gloria explained that Verona has a text list of accepted recycling materials, but it is recommended to have a visual/graphic list. Virginia mentioned that the Verona Green Team could take care of that. Gloria asked if any VEC members would like to volunteer to design this graphic, and then she could implement it with help from Steve. Chris volunteered to do it. Here are some examples:

http://www.cityofchesapeake.net/Assets/images/departments/public_works/Recycling+Infographic.pdf

<http://www.wgfishers.com/recycling.html>

VI. Next Meeting: March 18 – 7:30 pm at the VCC Annex Building, 2nd floor.