



Verona Environmental Commission

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

Verona Environmental Commission Meeting, November 12, began at 7:30 P.M., 2nd floor of the Annex Building in the Verona Community Center, 880 Bloomfield Avenue, Verona N.J.

Attendees: Gloria Machnowski (Chairwoman), Jessica Pearson (Treasurer), Chris Stark, Michael Foley (Planning Board Liaison) and Kevin Ryan (Council Liaison).

MINUTES:

1. Chairperson Call to Order and Roll Call. Notice of Open Public Meetings law.
2. Members approved October 21st, 2015 minutes.
3. Poster Contest wrap-up. Town Hall's Award Ceremony went well, the Mayor presented the program, VEC Chairperson made a video with a sample of the entries, the video was presented during the ceremony. Some school principals attended the event. We received over 200 entries from all Verona Public Schools Five of the 2015 winners attended with their families: Jack Latson from Laning Avenue School for 'It's Cool to Walk to School', Tigerlily Fischer from H. B. Whitehorne Middle School for 'Bike to School'; Nishini Fernando from Brookdale Avenue School for 'Green Up Verona'; Reese Falcone from Forest Avenue School for 'Be Kind to the Earth'; and Christopher Caldera from F. N. Brown School for 'Replant Because it's Fun'. VHS winner Annaliese Tietjen, author of 'Live Green', was not able to attend, she was participating in a Verona High School Soccer Team State game in Secaucus. Her dad received her award. The winning posters are on display at the Community Center.
4. Update: Grove Park, 42 Grove Ave., Nature Preserve & Historic Park. "Ribbon Cutting" ceremony planned for November 21 at 10 am with the three sponsor groups and town officials. Mr. Molinaro from DPW said they'll clean up the park the day before. Sandra Smith from the Verona Historical Society and Christine McGrath from the Junior Woman's Club confirm that they will attend. Gloria invited Bob Williams to give a talk about the history of the site and will put together an evergreen garland to cut with garden shears. Kevin mentioned that he sent the invite to all council members and didn't hear back yet. He was contacted by a landscaper that offered his services. He asked township attorney and manager about the possibility of accepting donations to use towards planting during the spring and in recognition dedicate a park bench plaque. Jessica and Jack finished the transition between the new and old walkway last Sunday.
5. VEC plans to participate in upcoming events:
 - Volunteer Night, December 1st from 7 to 9 pm at the Verona Community Center: Gloria and Jess are available to "man the table". Gloria will prepare displays about VEC programs.

-Verona's Fair in the Square, December 5, noon to 5 pm. (set up at 11 am): Only Martin Golan is available. Jessica recommended to skip it and focus on Volunteer Night instead, a good opportunity to meet residents and other organizations and enlist more volunteers.

6. The VEC received a new draft for a Steep Slope Ordinance on October 23rd from Greg Mascera, Planning Board Attorney. The new draft is very similar to the first draft and Gloria shared it with VEC members so they could study this and give feedback to prepare and submit formal comments. The Planning Board draft:

Exempts from the provisions of this ordinance all properties in the following zones: R-40 (Very High Density Single Family); R-50 (High Density Single Family); R-50B (Medium/High Density Single Family); R-60 (Medium Density Single Family); P (Public); SP(Semi Public); T(Transportation). Considers a Minor disturbance 500-1000 feet. And a Major disturbance over 1,000 feet. Precautionary Slope means 15% to 25%. Allows 100% disturbances on slopes that are up to 25% on areas up to 500 sq ft on single family home additions. Allows all disturbances on all slopes up to 25% on areas up to 1,000 sq. ft. on all properties after submitting requested paperwork. Allows 50% disturbances on all areas over 1,000 sq ft on slopes up to 25%. Allows 5% disturbances on what they call "prohibited slopes" (grater than 25%) and provides for greater disturbances if needed and variances.

Gloria mentioned that as a real example, the approved application for the project at 176-200 Bloomfield Ave. describes the site on the storm-water management report as follows: "The terrain of the project site is predominantly steep, with grades typically ranging between 5 to 25% slopes". While the percentage of disturbance from their final storm-water report says: "Checklist has been revised to show that only 94% of the site is cleared. 6% will be left undisturbed. This area can be found along the northeastern property line". Gloria added that the New Jersey State Steep Slope Ordinance doesn't define precautionary slopes or prohibited slopes but actually prohibits all disturbance on slopes that are equal or greater than 20% without excluding any zones. Michael mentioned that every town has different topography and conditions and that the model is not mandatory. He added that the excluded zones are the already developed and high density areas. Chris said that the planning board didn't want to hurt the homeowner. Jessica mentioned that by exempting 500 and 1,000 sq. ft. there was no need to exempt zones and that she was particularly worried by the exception of Public and Semi-Public zones, rezoning and lots "in need of redevelopment". Jim, Martin and Tony couldn't attend but supported a stricter version of the draft. Gloria said that most ordinances apply town-wide and usually have fewer exceptions, in order to protect all residents from improper development. Disturbing slopes increases stormwater runoff and the steeper the slope, the greater the impact. Stormwater runoff is a serious problem in our area. The model 's goal is to reduce negative impacts. Most towns in our area have a steep slope ordinance. Michael asked if the model is mandatory. Gloria said that the model says: "Municipalities may include additional restrictions for 20 percent slopes or include restrictions for lesser slopes, at their discretion, as long as the minimum requirements above are met.". Several members recommend to adopt a clear, effective and meaningful ordinance. Kevin reminded members that the comments need to be compiled by the Chairperson and approved by the majority before submitting them.

7. Adjournment – Next Meeting December 16th, 2015.