



Verona Environmental Commission

600 Bloomfield Avenue
Verona, New Jersey 07044

www.veronaec.org

Minutes of the Verona Environmental Commission Regular Meeting on October 18th, 7:00 P.M., at the Conference Room, Verona Community Center, 880 Bloomfield Avenue, Verona N.J.

Attendees: Gloria Machnowski (Chairwoman), Anthony Saltalamacchia (Vice Chairman), Members Jessica Pearson, Sarah Yauch O'Farrell, Sean DiBartolo, Martin Golan, Walter Steinmann (Alternate I), Frank Ceccacci (Alternate II). Guest: Julia Bresnan (NJWAP Watershed Ambassador).

1. Chairperson calls the meeting to order and reads the notice of Open Public Meetings Act. There is a quorum to hold an official meeting.
 2. Minutes from the September 20 meeting were approved by members after agreeing to replace "Mount Laurel in Philadelphia" by "Mount Laurel in New Jersey" under point #7 "Verona Wetlands".
 3. The VEC hosted a cleanup at Grove Park on October 14. Volunteers did trail maintenance, cleaned up the woods and planted an Eastern Redbud tree approved by the Shade Tree Commission and purchased by the VEC. Verona Kids Rock helped during the cleanup and donated \$25 to the VEC.
 4. The town is considering to close several trust accounts, including the VEC's, following state recommendations. Sean asked if the trust account generates interests. Gloria will ask Mr. Laracy, Verona's CFO. If the account is in fact closed, one option would be to transfer the money to the VEC's regular account, and use the funds before the end of the year. The other option would be to transfer the money to the recreation trust account and keep a separate balance so the VEC can use those funds in the future and deposit future donations there. Gloria recommended the second option, Martin moved the motion, seconded by Sean, and it was approved by all.
 5. The VEC received about 150 entries for the Walk & Bike to School Day Poster Contest. Tony set up the display at HBW. Frank and Gloria hung up the posters at the other schools. Laning Ave. School had the most entries, about 70 posters. The VEC notified school principals and invited winners and their families to attend the award ceremony at Town Hall on October 23rd at 7 pm. Gloria will make a 3 min. video and a display to show the posters at the event. Winners will receive an award certificate and \$50 dollars. Mr. Laracy will prepare the checks, and he will be Acting Manager at that time as Mr. Cavallo will be out of the office.
- Jessica mentioned that the Verona Town Council joint meeting with the Board of Education at the High School Learning Commons is on October 30 at 7 pm, everybody is welcomed to attend.
6. Verona's Fair in the Square is December 2 from 12 noon to 5 pm at the Verona Civic Center. Setup begins at 10 am. Single Space is \$35, fee waived for Verona-based non-profit organizations, if free activity or giveaway is provided. Members approved to participate in the fair. The VEC will make pine

cones-bird feeders with children and encourage residents to sign a pledge to end unnecessary vehicle idling in Verona. Several parents contacted the VEC complaining about idling around town and at schools. Captain DePoe asked Sargent Lecreux to come up with a traffic plan to tackle this issue. The VEC could purchase anti-idling signs if the police needs to install additional signage. According to NJ DEP when a violation is found both the driver and the facility where the idling took place are cited and fined. The driver is fined (not the facility) if anti-idling signs are clearly posted. Sarah likes the idea of reminding people to stop idling. Sean recommended including municipal vehicles in the anti-idling campaign.

Members also decided to display idling facts at the VEC table during Fair in the Square:

- Idling for more than 10 seconds actually uses more fuel than restarting the engine.
- Vehicle related air pollution can cause asthma and other respiratory problems and allergies, especially in children who breathe at a faster rate than adults. Air toxics also contribute to heart disease and attacks, as well as higher cancer rates in high traffic areas (Source: U.S. EPA).
- Asthma is the third leading cause of hospitalization among children under the age of 15 (Source: American Lung Association).
- Up to 25% of NJ's school age children are asthmatic-the leading cause of school absenteeism and increased visits to the emergency room on hot summer days (Source: NJ DEP).
- Verona adopted an anti-idling resolution in 2015 supporting state law and encouraging people to turn off engines immediately at idle frequent locations. <http://www.veronaec.org/Anti-Idling%20Resolution%201.20.15.pdf?attredirects=0>

7. County Executive DiVincenzo asked Verona Council to give him a recommendation on the parking lot project for Verona Park. On October 10th, after Verona residents spoke against the parking lot, Mayor Ryan, Councilmen Roman and McEvoy voted for a resolution against the parking lot. Councilman Giblin voted No. Councilman Michael Nochimson was out of town. The approved resolution asks Essex County to abandon its plans to build the 52-space parking lot over a green field in Verona Park. The County Board of Chosen Freeholders removed the parking lot from its meeting on October 11th. Verona Park Conservancy obtained 2 slices of the oak tree that was removed; they'll keep it as historic pieces and probably make a display. Walter said the slices are 6" thick, maybe 500 lbs each. This was an Olmsted Brothers tree, original to the park. Verona requested a copy of the arborist report. Gloria mentioned that it would be nice to see the replanting plan. Martin recently saw a new temporary fence along the south side of the park; members don't know the purpose of that fence.

8. Members talked about plans to do a presentation on Green Infrastructure to the Town Council. Sean proposed to recommend to the Town Council adopting a more focused zoning and land use ordinance that puts more pressure on major developments in Verona to comply with what is already on the books concerning low-impact development (LID) techniques. Jessica explained that Verona has a stormwater management ordinance that probably complies with the minimum standards set forth by the state and requires exploring LID techniques, also called "nonstructural". Members talked about the need to have better enforcement of the ordinance and documentation that LID techniques have been considered. Applicants for major developments are supposed to identify LID strategies and if they do not use them, provide a reason. Matt Cavallo mentioned a few months ago that he intends to adopt an ordinance to support the VEC's Low Impact Design/Construction Checklist. Sustainable Jersey provides a Model Ordinance. Municipalities can earn 10 points toward Sustainable Jersey certification by creating a Green Development Checklist and enabling ordinance as a part of their Site Plan and Subdivision approval process. Verona could incorporate the VEC checklist into Verona's ordinances as well as recommending reducing impervious surfaces by utilizing Green Infrastructure. According to Sustainable Jersey a Green Development Checklist lists various green design strategies that can be

incorporated into a development and is one of several items to be submitted with a completed application. It is important to note that completion of the Checklist by applicants is mandatory; however, compliance with the Checklist items is not a condition of approval. Walter mentioned that concrete incentives are needed, such as tax breaks.

Municipalities looking to advance green development components in their communities are encouraged to update their Master Plan to incorporate these features. Verona will update its Master Plan soon so VEC members expressed interest to recommend including this. For example in Montclair, their Environmental Commission/Planning Board liaison is working to create a checklist for "green" construction; and they are working on their tree ordinance to address tree loss. In a community like Readington Township in Hunterdon County, the code §148-102 requires that "all applicable material on file in the Township pertinent to evaluation of regional impacts shall also be considered, including the Township Master Plan and Natural Resources Inventory (NRI)." Consequently, the board could ask an applicant to resubmit an Environmental Impact Statement that assesses the compatibility, or lack of compatibility, of the project with the NRI, Master Plan, and other relevant planning documents. Their ordinance also requires that applicants specifically address potential impacts on thirteen environmental components. Unfortunately, Readington Township is currently among the minority in New Jersey. Members agreed to research this matter and discuss again during the next meeting.

Resources:

- Verona Stormwater Management – Chapter 123 <https://ecode360.com/12271164>

-VEC Checklist 2017 (Low Impact Design/Construction Checklist)

<http://www.veronaec.org/Checklist%202017-VEC.pdf?attredirects=0>

-New Jersey Stormwater BMP Manual - Checklist:

http://www.nj.gov/dep/stormwater/bmp_manual/NJ_SWBMP_A.pdf

-Sustainable Jersey 2015 Model Green Development Checklist:

http://www.sustainablejersey.com/fileadmin/documents/Action_Linked_Documents/Model_Checklist_Final_Upload_032712_RL.docx

-Readington Township, code §148-102 Submission of preliminary major subdivision plans and preliminary major site plans (See wetlands, etc point B and C. Environmental impact statement).

<https://ecode360.com/8744197?highlight=148-102#8744197>

9. Natural Resource Inventory: on Sep. 20 Gloria sent the VEC letter recommending that the Township of Verona hire the services of The Land Conservancy of New Jersey to create the new Natural Resource Inventory for Verona. The Land Conservancy is an award winning organization, highly regarded and well respected throughout New Jersey. The VEC also recommended in the past that the mapping effort includes NJ's digital Elevation model (DEM), this will allow us to take a broad stroke at identifying steep slope areas in Verona. There should be more information about steep slopes and topography in the NIR report. After reviewing the NIR from 1999, the VEC recommended to see more in the way of a detailed Land Use/Land Cover evaluation and animals and plant habitats review.

More Updates: Steve Neale informed Gloria that bike racks and community garden grants are being worked on as we speak. The grant just opened up on Monday and more information is needed from the school to put together pricing for materials for the organic community garden.

10. Regarding 111 Mount Prospect Avenue and 25 Commerce Court, as suggested by members, Gloria contacted ANJEC, and based on their recommendations the VEC sent the following letter to NJDEP Regarding the current letter of intent:

New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, Division of Land Use Regulations
P.O. Box 420, Trenton, New Jersey 08625-0420
Attn: Essex County Section Chief

Dear Essex County Section Chief,

The Verona Environmental Commission received the enclosed letters regarding properties located at 111 Mount Prospect Avenue and 25 Commerce Court in Verona, New Jersey. The property at 111 Mount Prospect Avenue is located within 200 feet of 0.2 percent Annual Chance Flood Hazard Zone and the property at 25 Commerce Court includes a Flood Hazard Zone AE as well as a 0.2 percent Annual Chance Flood Hazard Zone.

Mr. Roger Kruvant from Forsons Partners, L.L.C. notified that he is applying for approval from the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) on a Letter of Interpretation (establishes the official boundary line of any regulated freshwater wetlands, open waters, or transition areas on the properties, and identifies their resource value).

We understand that the applicant defines what they believe to be the wetlands area and they send this to the NJDEP, and then the NJDEP may conduct a field check to evaluate if it is accurate. If a field check has not been conducted, the Verona Environmental Commission strongly requests that the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection conduct a field check. If the NJDEP already conducted a field check we would like to receive a copy.

We understand that after the wetland boundaries are established, the NJDEP issues a letter defining the boundaries and determine if they are Ordinary, Intermediate, or Exceptional; and that designation controls the required buffer or transition zone around the wetlands.

We would like to verify with you what are the required buffer offsets for Ordinary, Intermediate, and Exceptional wetlands. Past evidence indicates that there might be trout in local streams and/or the Peckman River. We would also like to request authorization for members of the Verona Environmental Commission to participate in a site walk.

-----End of letter-----

All towns in New Jersey must provide affordable housing. There are 159 Project-Based Section 8 subsidized apartments in Verona at the Hillwood senior building that have sufficed for a long time, but may not be enough going forward. Not all affordable housing is Section 8. Matt Cavallo posted the VEC letter to the Verona website under the LOI Applications:
<https://www.veronanj.org/affordablehousing>

Mr. Cavallo also contacted Petry Engineering to advise them they neglected to obtain a 200 foot list from the residents of Cedar Grove to the 25 Commerce Court property. They stated they were going to get a list from Cedar Grove and notify as required. Gloria notified Mara Silgailis, the Cedar Grove Environmental Commission Chairwoman, and gave her the link so they could review the materials.

11. The town is considering to install a donation clothing bin at the Community Center, there are a lot of companies out there and we need to do some research. Sarah volunteered to research this topic.

12. Adjournment – Next Meeting November 15, 2017.