



## Verona Environmental Commission

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

Minutes of the Verona Environmental Commission Regular Meeting on December 20, 2017, starting at 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, Walter Steinmann (Alternate I), Frank Ceccacci (Alternate II) and Mayor Kevin Ryan (Council Liaison).

1. The Chairperson called the meeting to order and read the notice of Open Public Meetings Act. There was a quorum to hold an official meeting.
2. The Chairperson opened the floor to public participation. There were no comments from the public.
3. Minutes from the November 15, 2017 meeting were approved by members.
4. The Chairperson presented the 2017 VEC Annual Report (attached). A motion was made by Frank Ceccacci; seconded by Walter Steinmann that the report be approved and distributed to Verona's governing body and the local media. The motion was approved by all present members.

### 5. Past Events:

- Verona Fair in the Square, December 2nd.

Sarah and Walter mentioned that the fair was great, all members agreed. The VEC table was very busy with visitors all day long. Over 80 adults signed the VEC Pledge to End Unnecessary Vehicle Idling. Children made approximately one hundred bird-feeders with pine cones and took home used toys to reuse.

- Community Choice Aggregation program.

Several VEC members attended the December 6th presentation at the Verona Community Center. Mayor Ryan attended the meeting and mentioned that Steve Neale is planning to present the program to the Town Council during a public meeting. These will be a two steps process. If the resolution to explore the program is adopted, then an ordinance will be needed to formally join the program. The public will be properly informed and invited to ask questions. Chairperson presented the model resolution that was distributed at that presentation, and a recommendation that the VEC could send to Verona's governing body. Members discussed the benefits of the program. A motion was made by Anthony Saltalamacchia; seconded by Sarah O'Farrell that the following letter be approved to be sent to Verona's governing body. The motion was approved by all present members.

### Aggregation program – VEC Recommendation:

The Verona Environmental Commission (VEC) recommends the governing body of the Township of Verona to adopt the attached resolution designating Maplewood to serve as lead municipal agency as part of the Sustainable Essex Alliance (SEA) Energy Aggregation Program. This is the first step in choosing the lead agency and allowing the SEA to be the agency to put out the RFP (request for

proposal). Several VEC members, including myself (*VEC Chairperson*), attended the recent presentation about community choice aggregation for Essex County Townships that took place at the Verona Community Center. The proposal makes a lot of sense. Our community has an opportunity to be part of Renewable Government Energy Aggregation (RGEA). RGEA is an electric supply purchasing agreement between the townships, on behalf of their residents, and a third party supplier. By pooling the purchasing power of multiple Essex towns, local residents can get a better price and be in stronger position to negotiate for improved environmental attributes for that supply. The VEC already formally recommended the Verona governing body to implement measures to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions on July 1st 2017. Our letter described reduction strategies for municipal operations as well as community wide, including Community Purchase of Green Energy (Aggregation). Based on the Sustainable Jersey Program, Aggregation could lower the impact of municipal GHG between 4 and 7 percent. Entities with aggregation still retain their existing electricity provider for transmission and distribution services. Seven states (California, Illinois, Massachusetts, New York, New Jersey, Ohio and Rhode Island) have established community choice aggregation, and served nearly 5% of Americans in over 1300 municipalities as of 2014. We support adopting the resolution as soon as possible, to avoid losing this great opportunity to reduce GHG emissions, while saving some money in the process.

- The VEC organized a tour of Edison EPA's permeable pavement parking lots and rain gardens on December 6<sup>th</sup>, to learn more about using Green Infrastructure for Stormwater Management. The tour was given by Amy Rowe (Environmental County Agent with Essex County Cooperative Extension) and Tom O'Connor (EPA Environmental Engineer). Attendees included VEC Chairperson Gloria Machnowski, VEC members Sean DiBartolo and Walter Steinmann; Verona Town Manager Matt Cavallo, Verona Assistant Engineer Mike DeCarlo, Sustainable Verona Chairman Steve Neale and Verona Councilman Jack McEvoy. The group learned that porous concrete is not good for cold areas like Verona. Permeable pavers have the best infiltration rates, and are also more expensive than permeable pavement. These help direct rainfall away from storm sewer systems and back into the natural ecosystem. The group discussed the many benefits of permeable pavement and rain gardens. Verona plans to install a new parking lot at the end of Park Place, where there is currently a gravel parking lot. The group discussed the possibility of creating what is called a "Green parking lot". The Assistant Engineer is currently designing the new parking lot and the Town Council already asked him to provide plans for a "Green parking lot" (with permeable asphalt, bioswales, curb cuts, etc). The Chairperson contacted Chris Perez from Rutgers, he will be happy to meet Mike DiCarlo at the parking lot site and/or comment on the plans if they have already been drafted. Mike DiCarlo and Steve Neale would like to meet Chris Perez at the site after the holidays. Mayor Ryan mentioned that this parking lot could accommodate the commercial vehicles that are not allowed to park in residential driveways, and move to the new lot vehicles with permit parking. He also mentioned that there are plans to expand the parking lot at the pool. Walter suggested to approach owners of current empty parking lots to reach an agreement to use them, for example the Lady o the Lake parking lot. Mayor Ryan said that this is a possibility that was mentioned at town meetings and could be considered in the future.

#### 6. Updates:

- Verona Township is seeking a \$30,000 Grant for 3 EV charging stations for a total of six cars (two at Town Hall and one at the Verona Community Center). The stations will be level 2.
- Verona Township is also applying for a \$20,000 Healthy Community Grant, for the Verona Organic Community Center and the installation of bike racks on existing parking meters along Bloomfield Avenue and a few other spots, such as the Verona Community Center. The Chairperson presented soil testing results provided by Rutgers, they performed X Ray tests on site free of charge at both, the proposed VHS site and the proposed HBW site. The tests are overall good and both sites can be considered for an organic vegetable garden. The Township authorities will arrange a meeting with the Superintendent of Schools to discuss the proposal. Frank volunteered to help run the community garden. Mayor Ryan mentioned that HBW will be a better site due to the easy access to water there,

which could be used by paying a fee. The Chairperson mentioned that Rutgers recommended installing a water cistern to harvest rainwater to be used in the vegetable garden.

- Recycling: township and schools.

Verona Schools registered in the Sustainable Jersey for Schools Program. Waste Audit is a priority action. The Chairperson met with Joe Trause, head of schools buildings and grounds, to discuss the certification process and possible actions. The Chairperson contacted Veronique Lambert Program Coordinator of Sustainable Jersey for Schools. Ms. Lambert explained that In the Sustainable Jersey for Schools program, they do not certify districts, only individual schools. The district has an application for the purpose of contributing points to its schools. The points for any action approved in the district application will automatically show up in the applications of all six schools. Actions that are labeled "school only," like the Waste Audit action, have to be done separately by each school in its own application. Actions that are not labeled school or district may be done by either the district or by individual schools. The choice on how to complete such actions would depend on whether there was district-wide implementation of the action or not. If the action was implemented district-wide, then it makes sense to submit documentation just once in the district application. However, if the action was implemented only in some schools, then each school would need to upload its own documentation for that action in its own application.

- Tony Saltalamacchia performed two Waste Audits at HBW's cafeteria in the past. He will search for the results to have a base line for future audits.

- Lenny Waterman is the new CRP, Recycling Coordinator for Verona. The VEC could collaborate with him to perform waste audits at the schools, add carpet and construction debris recycling to the town programs or other projects. According to the 2011 Essex County Recycling & Solid Waste Tonnage Data (unaudited) Verona's MSW Minus Vegetative Waste Recycling Rate was 22.29% while W. Caldwell was 43.42%. The VEC would like to have access to more recent data and Tonnage Reports if possible.

- The Chairperson suggested looking at the refuse and recycling ordinance adopted by Princeton on February 13, 2017; which includes Recycling of Construction and Demolition Waste.

- Verona resident Paul Mathewson has been working with architects and contractors about recycling carpets and ceiling tiles. He would love to find a way to work with the town the possibility of offering residents recycling options for carpets and construction debris. The Chairperson sent this info to Lenny Waterman.

#### 7. Upcoming 2018 Events:

- Volunteer's Night: VEC members decided to purchase reusable water bottles and reusable grocery bags to be distributed at the event to residents willing to reduce plastic pollution. The Commission has a balance of \$200 to spend and could probably purchase 40 reusable bags and 30 reusable water bottles.
- The VEC Tree Giveaway / Grove Park Cleanup will probably take place on April 21<sup>st</sup>. This could also be a celebration of Earth Day, which takes place on April 22<sup>nd</sup>.
- The VEC West Essex Trail Cleanup could be scheduled for May 5<sup>th</sup>.
- The Green Fair is scheduled for May 19<sup>th</sup>
- The VEC Peckman River Cleanup behind F. N. Brown School could be scheduled for June 2<sup>nd</sup>.

8. New Business: The Verona Town Council passed the resolution in support of the Paris Agreement on December 18<sup>th</sup>. Frank said that this is great news, VEC members agreed. Mayor Ryan commented that the Township appreciates the good work that the VEC and Sustainable Verona do, and the resolution shows that the township is serious about protecting the environment. The Mayor mentioned that the Municipal Clerk will forward certified copies of the resolution to President Trump, Senator Bob Menendez, Senator Cory Booker, Congressman Rodney Frelinghuysen, Governor Chris Christie, State Senator Pennacchio, Assemblywoman Betty Lou DeCroce, Assemblyman Jay Weber and the Director of the NJ League of Municipalities.

Adjournment – Next Meeting January 17<sup>th</sup>, 2018.