

**MINUTES OF THE VERONA
PLANNING BOARD MEETING**

Thursday, December 7, 2023

PRESENT:

Chairperson Jessica Pearson
Mayor Christopher Tamburro
Mr. Tom Jacobsen
Mr. Tim Camuti
Mr. Jeremy Katzeff

Mr. Chris Bernardo
Mr. Jason Hyndman
Mr. Greg Mascera, Planning Board Attorney
Ms. Kathleen Miesch, Board Secretary

CALL TO ORDER

Meeting called to order at 7:35 PM by Chairperson Pearson.

Absent from the meeting: Mr. Ten Kate

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Open Public Meetings Act Statement is read by Kathleen Miesch, Board Secretary

PUBLIC HEARING

Chairperson Pearson asks if anyone from the public would like to address the Board on topics not on this meeting's agenda. Seeing no questions or comments from the public, Chairperson Pearson closes this portion of the meeting.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Chairperson Pearson asks if all Board Members have read and received the minutes for the September 28, 2023 Planning Board meeting and if there are any comments or corrections. Hearing no corrections Chairperson Pearson asks for a motion to approve the minutes for the regular meeting held September 28, 2023. Mr. Katzeff makes the motion, Chairperson Pearson seconds.

Votes in the Affirmative

Mr. Bernardo
Mr. Katzeff
Mr. Camuti
Mr. Jacobsen
Chairperson Pearson

Absent Members

Mr. Lilley
Mr. DeOld
Councilman Roman
Vice Chair Freschi

Abstain

Mayor Tamburro
Mr. Hyndman

There were no votes against. The motion passes. Minutes are approved.

CONSISTENCY DETERMINATION

RESOLUTIONS

Resolution 2023-17: Appointing Planning Board Secretary

Chairperson Pearson moves to approve **Resolution 2023-17** appointing Kathleen Miesch Planning Board Secretary for a term commencing on December 7, 2023 and expiring on June 30, 2024. **Chairperson Pearson** moves the motion and **Mr. Camuti** seconds.

Votes in the Affirmative

Mr. Bernardo
Mr. Katzeff
Mr. Camuti
Mr. Jacobsen
Mayor Tamburro
Chairperson Pearson

Absent Members

Mr. Lilley
Mr. DeOld
Councilman Roman
Vice Chair Freschi

Abstain

Mr. Hyndman

Resolution passes and is approved and memorialized.

Resolution 2023-18: Appointing Planning Board Planner

Chairperson Pearson asks for motion to approve **Resolution 2023-18**, H2M Architects + Engineers is selected as the Planning Board’s professional planner for the year beginning on December 7, 2023 and ending on December 6, 2024.

Chairperson Pearson asks for someone to move the Resolution. **Mr. Camuti** moves and **Mr. Jacobsen** seconds.

Votes in the Affirmative

Mr. Bernardo
Mr. Katzeff
Mr. Camuti
Mr. Jacobsen
Mayor Tamburro
Chairperson Pearson

Absent Members

Mr. Lilley
Mr. DeOld
Councilman Roman
Vice Chair Freschi

Abstain

Mr. Hyndman

Resolution passes and is approved and memorialized.

NEW BUSINESS

Presentation from Sustainable Verona’s Green Team: Heat Islands in Verona
Presenters: Kerry Bass and Jami Bjornstad

Kerry Bass is a 30 year resident of Verona and the Chairperson for Sustainable Verona, a member of the Green Team and works in finance for a health care company. **Jami Bjornstad** is a member of Sustainable Verona and is an Engineer. The presentation is regarding Sustainable Verona’s findings regarding heat islands in Verona. There is a non-profit organization called Sustainable New Jersey, and their mission is to assist municipalities with becoming more sustainable, and in order to do that, a requirement is to have Green Team. Verona has a Green Team that started in 2021 and has achieved a bronze certification. Sustainable New Jersey provides a framework which is a points system of sustainable actions that the municipality can complete to accrue a number of points to obtain the certification. The Green Team will be applying for silver certification in 2024. The actions required are renewable i.e. the prescription drug drop-off was part of the bronze certification and can be renewed towards the silver certification. There will be other actions that will be renewed and some new actions. PSE&G Institute for Sustainability Studies, housed at Montclair State, offers a program where a

municipality can apply and receive assistance in completing actions from Montclair State graduate students. Verona received the assistance of three graduate students. The students were given a list for actions that Verona was interested in completing, and the students chose the heat islands. The students are all graduate students in sustainability studies. The students chose to research three topics that were related to heat islands: albedo, green infrastructure and turf. The Board was given a handout of what is being submitted to Sustainable New Jersey, as part of the requirement is to present the findings to the Planning Board.

The table of contents is broken down by the requirements of points – you can receive 5, 10, 15 or 20 points for the action. 350 points has to be reached for the silver certification and you must complete a certain number of initiatives to reach the points.

In the Table of Contents there is Tier 1 that is showing the locations of the heat islands, the map and the Planning Board presentation. Further step is a mediation plan/strategies to address the hot spots. **Ms. Bass** states that when you hear the term urban heat island you think that it is something that you see more in cities. She points to the Sustainable New Jersey website where you can view all the towns that have applied for the action and you can read their reports. Newark has 17 heat islands, Woodbridge has 8, and Verona has 2. A heat island is a part of land where the surface temperature in hotter climates is hotter than the rest of the surrounding areas that capture it.

Verona Heat Islands – **Ms. Bass** is explaining the map which is provided through a link on the Sustainable New Jersey website. It is satellite imagery showing surface temperature with the ability to zoom in anywhere in the country. The heat islands show up as dark red or dark orange. The first map shows an aerial view of Verona where the borders and heat islands are located. The first heat island **Ms. Bass** identifies is in dark red and is the turf fields at Verona High School. The second is the Pilgrim Shopping Plaza; three is at Centennial field; four is the municipal center; five is the asphalt parking lot at Richfield; six is the corner of Pompton and Bloomfield Avenue. Areas three to five aren't showing in dark red but were pointed out. The map on the Sustainable New Jersey website was from 2016. The team asked for a more recent map and they could do a comparison. In 2016, there were two islands - Centennial field and the Shopping Plaza. In the past six years the Centennial field got lighter and it is believed it is because of the maturing of the trees. The turf field wasn't there six years ago. Part of the requirement is to have different views. Sustainable NJ also wants a social vulnerability map - social vulnerability is the community's capacity to prepare for and respond to the stress of hazardous events. Verona doesn't really have a lot of social vulnerability.

Tier 2 is the mitigation plan. **Ms. Bass** states that 2023 is now considered the hottest year globally on record and we're having more extreme temperatures and longer duration in heat waves. Site visits were made to the turf field and it was notated that there's not a lot of trees planted around this field. Using a surface thermometer on July 29th 2023 on a 90 degree day at the 50 yard line, the temperature reading on the turf was 130 degrees surface temperature. A patch of grass had a surface temperature of 98 degrees. How should the heat be addressed? **Ms. Bass** notated patches of grass inside the fence running along Samson and is identified that it would be a good area for tree planting. The Shade Tree Commission did work with the Board of Ed and they applied for funding for trees that they wanted to plant there but they received a response that the funds were exhausted. Another idea that were successful in other places where making installation of removable canopies possibly over the bleachers or dugouts. The marching band had a practice and they set up some tents. There are additional products that are designed to cool turf: water down the fields; turf cannons; T-Cool - a pellet that's a more a natural pellet and is spread like a fertilizer and it cools the turf. There is restriction of times and usage as an example **Ms. Bass** stated that her daughter's a softball player and a pitcher while playing on a 90 degree day in a summer traveling game ended up getting a heat stroke. Marching band members have their band camp in August. Maryland Montgomery and County Public schools developed heat guidelines posted on all their artificial turf fields:

- anytime the outdoor temperature exceeds 80 degrees, coaches exercise caution and conducting activities.
- outdoor temperatures exceed 90 degrees, coaches may hold one regular morning or evening practice, before noon or after five,

- when the heat indexes between 91 to 104 degrees between the hours of noon and five, school athletic activities are restricted.
- artificial turf time limited to 1 hour with water break every 20 minutes

Ms. Bass stated that these are some of the mitigation strategies that we came up with on how to deal with extreme temperatures.

Mr. Camuti asks if it is more about public safety for people in that area or are you also trying to, mitigate, or diffusing into the climate or just as a spot to cool down. **Ms. Bass** responds that Verona has two heat islands and what can be done to protect the people that are there at that time. **Mr. Camuti** also stated he is for planting the more trees, the better, and that funds being exhausted so they should be used wisely and particularly on Samson, that's on the north, so you wouldn't get the right exposure. **Ms. Bass** stated that during a visit to son who did marching band at lunch they were gathered under random trees for relief. So trees would at least be a place to go if feeling over heated.

Mr. Hyndman had a question regarding mitigation strategies i.e. to install canopies, have there been any products like reflective tarps that have been successful in keeping a temperature low when in use and then you roll it up unless you need to use it. **Ms. Bjornstad** responded yes and that using a lighter color turf is more permanent but the turf is naturally reflective so that that would help. **Ms. Bass** stated that another observation was that the baseball field are completely covered but the softball dugouts have a plexiglass back giving no relief. Installation of a canopy could provide some relief. **Mr. Jacobsen** asked if the lower field had sprinklers. **Ms. Bass** did not believe so. **Mr. Bernardo** asked if there were mitigation strategies offered for two, three, four and five. **Ms. Bass** stated that they focused on one and two because they were the dark orange areas and the other four locations we only wanted to note that in the six years they have gotten darker. They wanted to focus on existing heat islands and what can be done to keep them from getting worse and keep any more from forming. **Mr. Bernardo** asked what the relationship is between the major hot spots and the ones that are now developing. **Ms. Bass** stated that they are not emitting as much heat. **Ms. Bjornstad** stated to look at less hot ones, one is a strip mall, but compared to the Pilgrim Shopping Center... the Pilgrim Shopping Center is huge with a lot of asphalt and dark roof – the large size just compounds it and makes it hotter just because it's not broken up. The strip mall at Pompton and Bloomfield it not as big and has more tree cover in the area. The Richfield parking lot is hot because it's in a big asphalt area, but not as large as Pilgrim. **Mr. Bernardo** clarified that with the six years, the longer that those main areas go untreated, the worse the borderline areas will become. **Ms. Bjornstad** if we're seeing hotter days in general then everything will be compounded and will get a little worse. With hotter days in the summer some of those orange areas can become red. The requirement for tier two was just to do mitigation strategies of the two red spots and to profile the yellow, orange and red. If you can tackle the red areas you can use them in the others. **Ms. Bass** stated that they did reach out to the owners of the Pilgrim Plaza but didn't get any response. They do feel like there are some things that could be done. They looked at the albedo, which is the amount of the reflection. Verona HS looks like it has a lighter roof. Pilgrim Plaza's energy bills could be reduced with a lighter roof, more trees, and awnings. Some stores pull shades in the afternoon. Awnings could cover the cement walkway to provide shade for some coolness. There are no trees or any type of green infrastructure and the islands are filled with stone. The landlord did not respond.

Ms. Bass – Conclusion - recommend implementing some of the mitigation strategies outlined in the reports and could gain 5 additional points. Recommend starting with hot spot one since it would more control. Strategies could even be just restricting usage times on the turf during hot days. The committee recommends exploring and implementing alternatives to the two artificial turf fields, incorporating green infrastructure and increasing albedo for any future maintenance and development projects. A large part of Sustainable New Jersey's mission is building awareness that these hot spots existed.

Mayor Tamburro asked if Ms. Bass has spoken to the school district noting that the township really doesn't have a lot of say of the school district property. **Ms. Bass** stated that she hasn't spoken to them but that Sustainable New Jersey has another program called Stable Schools. Would welcome partnership with the schools. Carol Thomas on the Shade Tree Commission is the one who applied for the grants for the trees. She does work with the schools and **Ms. Bass** believes she made them aware that the heat

island exists. **Mayor Tamburro** suggests contacting the Superintendent directly. The superintendent schools is a scientist by training and should be more receptive. The Mayor does speak for the District, but did suggest reach out to the Superintendent. The Mayor noted that the fields are not being used right now and there are about four months before they start be utilized again. The lowest cost items and easiest fixes would be better going for prior to the other the other pieces to help get further as far as certification. Mayor offers to make the connection. The Mayor also suggests that the owners of Pilgrim Plaza may be more responsive if you approach differently by approaching the business owners and managers within of the individual businesses and suggesting that this could actually reduce their energy costs, it could pull more foot traffic in and improve look by placing a few trees. **Ms. Bass** reiterates that a white roof would have some impact. **Mayor Tamburro** suggests reaching out to the individual business. **Chairperson Pearson** stated that during the Master Plan there were discussions about redrafting the zoning code around the Pilgrim Plaza.

There was a lot of support from the Planner when that section was discussed. Since the plaza is privately owned any redevelopment plans would have to come from them but if the zoning code was re-drafted, they would have to conform to some of the regulations and requirements of the zone. **Chairperson Pearson** has spoken directly to Sustainable New Jersey and they are very strict about separating sustainable schools from sustainable municipality. If you are looking for points for your certification and working on something for the schools, unless you're doing it through sustainable schools, it's suggested you're wasting your time ... asks whether Ms. Bass thinks that there is an opportunity to get both sides to work together to be able to obtain points for the certification looking at mostly working with the fields. **Ms. Bjornstad** explains that this is tier two and it is in tier three when you actually implement.

Currently they are working on a profile recommendation. They would not be contacting the BOE right now but would when things needed to be implemented. **Chairperson Pearson** also mentioned that she noticed in the pictures that an area of interest would be Everett Field which is currently a topic of discussion in multiple areas of the township regarding its future. The Chair notes that it looks like it is on its way to becoming a problem spot and questions as to whether it would become an orange location should turf be installed. **Ms. Bass** responded yes in relation to a heat island. **Chairperson Pearson** points out that one of the mitigation tactics for the turf field is reducing playtime on them, which is the exact opposite of the reason why people put turf on fields to increase usage time, but not in the summer because it is dangerous. **Ms. Bass** concurs that it is literally dangerous. **Mr. Bernardo** asks for a review of the certification and the benefits of certification as it relates to the private properties. Are there any incentives from the state or the federal government to help drive some of the mitigation tactics?

Chairperson Pearson clarifies the question ... in order to implement some of the mitigation tactics, does the state of New Jersey offer any incentives for property owners that own these properties – any there any financial incentives to install any of these mitigation factors? **Ms. Bjornstad** responds that she believes there are but would need to look into it further but there are subsidies for converting to the white roof. **Mr. Bernardo** is looking to link it back to the larger master plan discussion with what is trying to be achieved and tie it together with additional incentives. Curious as to whether there was anything in the last budget that allowed for either tax incentives or other incentives for properties specifically like Pilgrim Plaza to make some of these changes. **Chairperson Pearson** responds that the State has made storm water utility system dis-incentivizing by creating what is seen at Pilgrim Plaza, by allowing and enabling municipalities to pass a storm motor utility that would create income from those properties that have little to no green infrastructure, little to no infiltration on their site, and would have to pay a fee per year in order to continue to existence in the same manner. Those utilities could even apply homeowners that have gone over on their impervious coverage percentage according to the zoning code. You can't create two different classes of citizens - commercial properties versus the residential, it would have to be across the boards. It is the opposite of incentive. **Ms. Bass** states that there is grant funding out there; the Shade Tree Commission applied for a grant to expand the community garden. As far as for incentives for private, most of the actions are around improve the municipality sustainability they don't really affect private businesses. **Mr. Camuti** offers that a few incentives to get things implemented on the private properties could be with the albedo with the roof, to incite the tenants with, after some calculations, you would save \$50,000 per year if you ask the landlord to just paint the roof white. Their bills will go down

and it's an environmental savings and it is sustainable – meaning less energy. **Mr. Camuti** also notes that there are very odd exits and entrances to the lights, noting it is a county road, traffic can be improved by not having the kind of turning and find an opportunity to put some green. Also noting the piles of snow. Possibly the traffic flow could be used to create some influence. Chairperson Pearson reiterates that rezoning that property will occur at the council level and there will be a plan that will enforce a change to that parking lot, and make it better. Currently when it rains the water runs right down to Pompton Avenue and into Cedar Grove. The rain water should be infiltrated somewhere ... **Ms. Bjornstad** asked for timeline regarding re-zoning. **Chairperson Pearson** responds it will be in the very near future and **Mayor Tamburro** adds that there is progress and the planners have started working on it. It will be in two stages and looking for drafts by the summer; realistically a year out.


The Board thanks **Ms. Bass** and **Ms. Bjornstad** for their presentation.

Chairperson Pearson asks if the Board has anything for discussion or questions. Seeing none.

Adjourn

Seeing no new business, Chairperson Pearson asks for a motion to adjourn. Mayor Tamburro makes the motion and Mr. Jacobsen seconds. There was a unanimous agreement to adjourn the meeting at 8:26 PM.

Respectfully submitted,



Kathleen Miesch
Verona Township
Secretary – Planning Board

PLEASE NOTE: Meeting minutes are a summation of the hearing. If you are interested in a verbatim transcript from this or any proceeding, please contact the Zoning Office at 973-857-4772

**TOWNSHIP OF VERONA PLANNING BOARD
COUNTY OF ESSEX, STATE OF NEW JERSEY
RESOLUTION No. 2023-17**

**RESOLUTION APPOINTING KATHLEEN MIESCH
AS SECRETARY TO THE PLANNING BOARD**

WHEREAS, the Planning Board of the Township of Verona has identified a need to appoint a Secretary of the Planning Board for 2023-2024 year, and

WHEREAS, N.J.S.A. 40:55D-24 requires the Planning Board to select a Secretary who may be a municipal employee and permits the Board to fix the compensation of the staff it employs; and

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Planning Board of the Township of Verona hereby appoints Kathleen Miesch as Secretary to the Planning Board for a term commencing on December 7, 2023 and expiring on June 30, 2024.

MOVED: Chair Pearson SECONDED: Mr Camuti

ROLL CALL VOTE: December 7, 2023

	Yes	No	Abstain	Absent		Yes	No	Abstain	Absent
Mr. Bernardo (Alt. 2)	✓					Mr. Jacobsen	✓		
Mr. Katzeff (Alt 1)	✓					Councilman Roman			X
Mr. Lilley				X		Mayor Tamburro	✓		
Mr. Hyndman			✓			Vice Chair Freschi			X
Mr. DeOld				X		Chair Pearson	✓		
Mr. Camuti	✓								

THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT THE FOREGOING IS A TRUE AND EXACT COPY OF A RESOLUTION ADOPTED BY THE PLANNING BOARD OF THE TOWNSHIP OF VERONA AT THE REGULAR MEETING HELD ON DECEMBER 7, 2023.

Kathleen Miesch
KATHLEEN MIESCH, Board Secretary
Township of Verona Planning Board

Jessica Pearson
JESSICA PEARSON, Chairperson
Township of Verona Planning Board

**PLANNING BOARD TOWNSHIP OF VERONA
APPOINTMENT OF A PROFESSIONAL PLANNER
RESOLUTION 2023-18**

WHEREAS, pursuant to the Municipal Land Use Law section 40:55D-24 the Planning Board may appoint experts and professionals to provide services to the Planning Board; and;

WHEREAS, the Planning Board has identified the need to hire a professional planner to assist and advise the Planning Board in matters that come before the Planning Board; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Board wishes to hire H2M Architects + Engineers as its professional planner.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Planning Board of the Township of Verona, County of Essex, State of New Jersey as follows:

1. H2M Architects + Engineers is selected as the Planning Boards professional planner for the year beginning on December 7, 2023 and ending on December 6, 2024.
2. The Planning Board will pay H2M Architects + Engineers in accordance with the rate schedule attached hereto and made a part hereof, subject to the receipt of appropriate funding from the governing body of the Township of Verona as set forth in NJSA 40:55D-24.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Township of Verona Planning Board is authorized to enter into a contract with its appointed professional planner and the aforementioned professional planner shall continue to serve in its respective capacity until such time a new appointment is made by Resolution adopted by this Board or December 6, 2024, whichever is sooner.

MOVED: Mr. Camuti **SECONDED:** Mr. Jacobsen

ROLL CALL VOTE: December 7, 2023

Roll Call	Yes	No	Abstain	Absent		Yes	No	Abstain	Absent
Mr. Bernardo (Alt. 2)	✓					Mr. Jacobsen	✓		
Mr. Katzeff (Alt. 1)	✓					Councilman Roman			X
Mr. Lilley				X		Mayor Tamburro	✓		
Mr. Hyndman			✓			Vice Chair Freschi			X
Mr. DeOld				X		Chair Pearson	✓		
Mr. Camuti	✓								

I hereby certify that the within is a true copy of the Resolution adopted by the Planning Board of the Township of Verona at its meeting on the 7th day of December, 2023.


KATHLEEN MIESCH, Board Secretary
Township of Verona Planning Board


JESSICA PEARSON, Chair
Township of Verona Planning Board