

Watchung Environmental Commission  
Minutes  
September 22, 2014

Present: Sondra Epstein, Jean Forlano, Pam Lewis, Karen Pennett, Andy & Jim Stout, Rob Gibbs

Absent: Don Pote

Guest: Thomas Fiorilla

The meeting was called to order by Jean Forlano at 7:30 pm

**EAGLE PROJECT Presentation**

Thomas Fiorilla gave a presentation on his proposed Eagle Project: To have bat houses built and hung around Best and Watchung Lakes. His presentation included the importance of bats, their decline and how the bat houses will help rebuild the bat population in Watchung. After the presentation discussion was held. R.Gibbs would check to see if additional approvals were required to hang the bat houses. As part of the presentation, Mr. Fiorilla requested financial assistance to fund his project. It was agreed that the commission would finance \$50.00 toward the \$150.00 requested upon completion of the project. Karen Pennett will represent the Environmental Commission and provide mentoring during the project.

**Minutes**

- May, 2014 were held to be reviewed at next meeting
- August 2014 minutes approved with corrections

**Tree Matters**

- Sondra recommended the list of RECOMMENDED NATIVE TREES AND SHRUBS by the NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY OF NEW be placed on the town web site. All agreed
- The Emerald Ash Borer, an insect that attacks and kills ash trees has been found in Somerset County. We need to know from the state:
  - if the Ash tree is at risk
  - if Watchung should be proactive and notify the Watchung community of the borer
  - If Ash trees being removed are being disposed of properly to prevent the spread of the borer If the Ash tree is at risk

**Tree Report**

- See June Tree Report attached
- See July/August Tree Report attached

**Planning Board**

- Planning Board has not met since June
  - Pending applications to be reviewed at a future date
  - \*BJ's Wholesale Club, Inc. seeking to install propane gas refill station adjacent to store
  - \*Cingular Wireless add addition antennas and radio heads to existing towers and an additional Equipment Cabinet

## Correspondence

- No correspondence

## Miscellaneous

- **Farmers Market:**  
Pam attended the Watchung Farmers Market, distributed fliers and had examples of pollinator plants. Received well by attendees.
- **“Queen of the Sun”**  
The presentation of award winning documentary, “Queen of the Sun” at Watchung Hills Regional High School (WHRHS) went very well on June 11. Approximately 50 people attended including Mayor Steve Pote, Councilman Tom Franklin and Councilman Rob Gibbs. Councilman Rob Gibbs served as master of ceremonies. Post film discussion was led by Julie Jurusz a member of NJ Beekeepers Association.
- **Mail**  
Jean asked if someone on the commission would pick up the mail from Borough Hall. Andy volunteered
- **Wings of Life**  
The Warren Green Team will present the movie “Wings of Life” at WHRHS on October 16. This is a Disney movie about pollinators and addressed their serious decline.
- **Pollinator Garden**  
Discussion was held on creating a pollinator garden with signage in Watchung. Rob will check available space. One area mentioned for the garden was Spratford Park, on Somerset Street.
- **Website**  
Sondy will give a copy of “NJ Honeybees and other Pollinators need your help” to Michelle DeRocoto be placed on the Borough website.

Next regular meeting: Monday October 27 at Borough Hall. With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted

Karen Pennett

Watchung Environmental Commission

## JUNE TREE REPORT

In Bridgewater there is the first confirmed case of emerald ash borer, an invasive beetle that kills ash trees. Reported in USA today May 23 state section

346 Ridge Road: 6/9/14 virgin lot, steep slope, many trees were cut a few years ago without a permit. The lot was sold to another buyer, 21 trees to be removed, 33 to be replaced, 31 @ 2 ½", 2 @ 4" 51 trees to tree bank, \$10,200: Replacement Plum Purple 8, Silver maple 5, north red oak 20. Two trees were withheld from cutting on Old Somerset street till they are marked (sanitary sewer line).

825 Johnston drive 6/9/2014, virgin lot, mostly flat, 56 trees to be removed; replacement 20 @ 2 ½ "1 @ 4": 18 trees to tree bank \$3,600

In a special meeting with Elite builders, the Boro Engineer and the environmental commission it was voted by the commission that Elite builders would cut the rare Columnar Sugar Maple and plant on the Century 21 lots another 35 inches of trees to compensate for the cutting of the 100 year old tree.

21 Century lane 6/13/2014. (lot 13.02) 23 trees removed, replace 23 trees at 2 ½ " 2 @ 4" tree replacement agreement: 6 trees on this lot, 2 Columnar Sugar Maple @ 3" to 3 ½": 2 Little Linden @ 3" to 3 ½": 2 Service berry @ 2" to 2 ½" plus original replacement trees, 9 conifers @ 2 ½" 5 Dogwoods at 2 ½", 2 red maple at 4"

25 Century lane, 8/4/2014 second subdivided lot (13.01) open lot, 35 trees to be removed: 34 trees to be replaced at 2 ½ "4 trees at 4" replacement trees for the columnar Sugar maple: 3 Eastern Red Bud @ 2" to 2 ½ ": 3 American Dogwood @ 2 to 2 ½', 1 Service berry @ 2 to 2 ½" (7 replacement trees are part of the century 21 columnar Sugar Maple agreement)

New wording is need to tree ordinance as to what is a specimen tree, land mark tree, historic tree

## JULY & AUGUST TREE REPORT

40 High Tor Drive, 6/18/2014 & 7/25/2014 original house removed from lot, Polamo construction, this is a fairly flat lot, 39 trees to be removed : replace 27 trees at 2 ½ " , 3 trees at 4" total trees 30 25% conifers 75% deciduous

Glen Eagles Drive, Elite construction built a new house. Owner is requesting to cut 10 dead or dying trees on lot; first inspected on 6/18/14, trees not marked

6/23/2014: 10 trees to be removed, 4 trees are not dead, replacement required, replace 4 trees @ 2 ½ "

Glen Eagles Drive, 7/14/2014 several small trees were cut when two large dead trees were removed 8 trees cut along with the two dead. Violation letter written

59 Ellisen 6/30/2014, dead and dying ash trees, not properly marked, 6 ash trees to be removed, no permit M & A tree service could this be the emerald ash borer? State Dept. of agriculture was contacted

59 Ellisen 7/8 /2014: Paul Kurtz met with Arlene Mc Coy at the property. Paul Kurtz is an entomologist working for the State. He inspected the trees and said that they were infected with ASH YELLOWS a MYCOPLASMID LIKE ORGANISM (MLO) He said they should be all cut; they could be removed from the property without spreading the disease

Paul Kurtz would like to meet with the environmental commission and the dept. of public works dept. I will be reaching out to him.

59 Ellisen 7/14 2014: 13 trees dead no replacement

187 Stirling Road, 7/3/2014 ,tear down, wants to removed more that 50% of the trees on the lot, side line issues with neighbors, Arlene wants send it to the council .The owner wants to count several small evergreen that are in the house box as replacements that he will transplant.

187 Stirling Road &7/14/2014 the lot is 73 feet wide. The Boro attorney said that engineering would have to handle the situation because the code 24-8 DESIGN CRITERIA cannot prohibit the owner from building. We can only do 50 % of the trees outside the house box. There are only 5, 2 are dead, one maple needs to be removed because of driveway grading, on the large oak heavy equipment is parked on the drip line and is in a grading line. 7/25/2014 After discussion the Boro engineer and Sondra Epstein decided that it was best to look to the future and let the builder take all the trees and make him plant for the future.

Replace 3 deciduous and one conifer

65 Glen Eagle Drive 7/08/2014 there are several dead ash trees on the property, The Boro Engineer and Paul Kurtz the entomologist from the state also looked at this property. These trees are also infected with the ASH YELLOWS, They are also in wet soil now and the landscaper is cutting the bark from the weed waker.

183 Johnston Drive, 7/14/2014 steep slope lot that had been filled in with dirt over the years. 10 trees to be removed, replace 6 at 2 ½ "; 2 at 4"