

WATCHUNG ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION MINUTES

April 25, 2016

Present: Karen Pennett, SONDY Epstein, Rachel Funcheon, Don Pote, Jim and Andy Stout

Absent: George Sopko

Call to Order and Minutes: The meeting was called to order at 7:34. The March 28, 2016 minutes were discussed and approved.

Tree Report:

- SONDY presented the April Tree Report. After a discussion on each request for tree removal, a suggestion was made that future reports also include the reasons for approvals when the number of replacement trees do not equate to the number cut down.
- A proposal was made that the "cookie" (a slice of a tree's trunk) from the 100 year old columnar sugar maple tree, removed from a property recently developed on Century Lane, be engraved and offered to the Watchung Historical Society as a Landmark Tree. Prior to any work being done on the cookie, the Historical Society will be contacted to determine interest and estimated cost of engraving, necessary approvals, etc.
- SONDY reported that she gave a talk about the value of trees to second graders in Brownie Troop Number 65036.

Open Space: Jim gave an updated status of the Ness property. About one acre of property appears to be contaminated with hydrocarbons and remediation may consist of multiple tree and soil removal. In addition, one of the houses on the property contains asbestos while another is in such poor condition that it will have to be taken down. Jim mentioned that the Warren Township committee will meet to discuss a builder's proposal for a housing development on the portion of the Ness property belonging to Warren Township which is adjacent to (Ness's) Watchung property on the north side.

Planning Board: Karen reported that the Planning Board and representatives from Weldon Quarry agreed to the Environmental Commission's request to change the draft of the Quarry ordinance, from "no less than 50% of the trees shall be evergreen" to "75% of the plantings to be conifers and 25% deciduous trees". The Environmental Commission also recommended a Landscape Architect be hired to create and advise the quarry on appropriate plantings. Mark Healey, Professional Planner and writer of the Ordinance, mentioned that this requirement was in the ordinance prior to the buffer design, but he will also include it in this section of the Ordinance. Once the landscape architects plan is completed, the Commission plans to review it prior to implementation.

Bottle Caps: Rachel took another load of caps from the library box to Whole Foods in Madison, NJ. The project continues to grow and go well.

Pipeline: Rachel reported that Watchung, as part of the MPG (Municipal Pipeline Group) approved a resolution at the last Council meeting to contribute about \$4700 to a legal defense fund and for an independent environmental review of the Pilgrim Pipeline. The coalition against the pipeline (CAPP) has a goal of getting 15 towns to approve funding by May 1st. So far 12-13 towns have approved funds for this.

Meetings, Correspondence, Permits: This year's Green Fair on April 30 will be held at Bayberry School from 10 am to 1 pm. The Environmental Commission will have a table with handouts and information on bottle cap recycling and a map of the pipeline impact through Watchung. Rachel is setting this up and will be manning the booth; others are asked to assist.

Other: Old Business: Karen researched an open question from March's E.C. meeting concerning housing on the former O'Connors property. The property was initially approved for senior housing by the Planning Board but subsequently changed to condos by the Board of Adjustment.

New Business: It was reported that the west side of the parking lot of the Valero gas station on the circle, between the gas station building and the Weichert building, appeared to have an oil slick. Because of its proximity to the stream behind the buildings, E.C. members are urged to take a look and report findings at our next meeting.

- Rachel reported that Somerset County was one of several counties switching from chlorine to chloramine (a combination of chlorine and ammonia) purification of our water supply. Advantages and/or disadvantages of this change were not presented.

Review of assignments for next meeting: The next meeting will be May 23, 2016. Assignments for all under the "Meetings" and "Other" headings.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 9:35pm.

Respectively submitted,
Don Pote, acting secretary, April, 2016

Tree Report April 2016

1 Hill Hollow Road 4/11/2016 Homeowner to remove 10 large trees close to house. Roof damage from one. Remove 10 trees, 3 dead, 7 live: Replace; 4 trees at 2 ½ "

138 Oakwood, 4/11/2016 new construction on virgin lot, inspection for the house only, the driveway was done before, crossing wet lands. Remove 8 trees all in house box.

92 Spencer, 4/11/2016, homeowner to remove 6 trees: 4 diseased trees and 2 live close to the house.

206 Anderson Road, new construction, Elite builders, revised its driveway plan and is trying to save the large oak that the commission requested.

There is a tree cookie in the basement of the Texier house from the Columnar Maple that was cut down on Century Lane. What to do with it now?

666 Mountain Blvd "Ness Property" April 21 2016, council walk around