

WATCHUNG ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION MINUTES

MAY 23, 2016

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

Call to Order and Approval of Minutes: The meeting was called to order at 7:30. The April 25, 2016 minutes were discussed and approved. Regarding the minutes, Don made a suggestion as secretary, with Jim and Andy in agreement as the other secretaries, that individuals presenting specific topics write up their information before the minutes are prepared. This way, it would reduce the amount of time that the monthly secretary must spend revising the minutes to accommodate the necessary changes. The members agreed to try this suggestion.

Tree Report:

---209 High Tor Drive, 5/09/2016---The owner wants to cut down 8 trees, as he is afraid of them hitting the house. 7 were more than 14 feet from the house, 1 had a large old wound, 1 was diseased, 1 was extending over utility lines, and one was close to the house. Remove 8 trees and replace at 4 at 2½ inches.

---20 Sherwood, 5/23/2016---New home owner wants to cut 29 trees around pool and for a child play area. 2 are dead or diseased, and 2 are close to the house. Replace 25 or pay into the tree bank. Owner had planted crepe myrtle and small cypress trees and wanted to have them count, but they are too small or a bush. Replacement to be determined.

---40 Nottingham, 5/23/2016---Drive by: Builder Costam Construction(Flemington) had permit to remove house. Builder removed house and clear cut the lot. Borough engineer is going to investigate with aerial maps.

---86 Redmont, 5/23/2016---Stop work order had been issued. New home owner wanted to cut all the trees on property. Owner had cut 15 trees already. He said that 3 were dead of the 15. Owner wants to remove 15 more: 8 dead, 7 live. Replace 22 trees with 10 @ 4 and ½ inches and 12 @ 2 and ½ inches. Home owner is also in violation of land disturbance and fill.

---**Columnar Maple Tree Cookie**---The Historical Committee met and discussed the tree cookie that is in the basement of the Texier House. Barbara Diem, from the Historic Committee, said that the committee did not want the cookie in the Texier House because of overcrowding. They would be interested in displaying the cookie in a tool shed that they are hoping to get funds from the town to construct. The members do not like the idea of engraving the tree cookie but would like to put up a plaque next to it.

Perhaps, someone could count the rings to determine the age of the tree cookie. Don explained the process of sealing the cookie. The back of the cookie could be engraved instead of the front. SONDY will email suggestions for the line to be engraved on the cookie should the decision to engrave be made. Rutgers has a list of specimen trees.

---**Additional tree discussion**---SONDY suggested that the town could have a greeter for all home buyers in town to explain the tree ordinance. This could help to prevent the loss of trees by a homeowner claiming lack of knowledge by cutting trees without a permit.

---**Girl Scouts**---The Girl Scouts went to the Borough Council and each child gave a short talk. Mr. Blackadar will donate the tree to be planted by the Girl Scouts in Spratford Park.

Planning Board:

---The Planning Board revised the Quarry Ordinance to read: "No more than seventy-five percent(75%) of the trees shall be evergreen." The Environmental Commission originally requested conifers, not evergreens. After reviewing the recommendation by M. Healy, Karen agreed to use evergreens. Evergreens retain their leaves throughout the year. Conifers are a type of evergreen. This would allow a greater variety of trees to be used. The Commission agreed with this change.

---The Environmental Commission also recommended that a Landscape Architect be used to determine the buffer. The Landscape Architect provision was already in the ordinance. The ordinance reads: "The landscape plan shall be prepared by a landscape architect certified by the New Jersey State Board of Landscape Architects.

Open Space: No report. George did reaffirm the fact that the Warren section of the Ness property will be a housing development—a cul-de-sac of 10 lots of an acre and a half each. Dan Cronheim was worried about easements and did not want to rebuild trees. The issue was resolved.

Bottle Caps:

---The Green Fair was a big success. Rachel collected 4 big bags of bottle caps, and people were very enthusiastic about the program. She advised everyone that the caps could be recycled anytime at the library. Many people came from Warren, so Rachel emailed the Warren EC chairperson, Laura Mandell, about starting a program at the Warren Library. Rachel hopes to speak to Laura soon. Rachel took all the caps to Whole Foods.

Pipeline:

---Forty people at the Green Fair signed a petition opposing the Pilgrim Pipeline, and Rachel and others spoke with many residents about the pipeline. Many are still unaware of the project. Rachel stated that "We are getting close to our goal of 15 towns contributing to the municipal defense fund against the pipeline. Fanwood is the 12th town. Berkeley Heights has passed a resolution to contribute and will do so soon. Same with Livingston. We hope the 15th town will be Pequannock. Also, the Coalition is going to privately raise approximately \$20,000 to fund an independent environmental review of the project.

Idling: A 4th grade Girl Scout told Rachel about her troop's "No Idling" project. They will get their parents to sign a pledge to turn their cars off while waiting to pick them up. For every so many signatures they get, they will get a "No Idling" sign from the DEP to put at the schools.

Meetings, Correspondence, Permits: No Report

Other(Old, New Business):

---Valero Gas Station—Oil was observed on the side of the building near the realty. It was observed that rocks are there now, plus a sign stated that the area was being remediated. Soudy will discuss this with Arlene. Commission members are encouraged to make observations of the area where oil has been seen previously.

Review of assignments for the next meeting: Check out the oil spill for the next meeting, **June 27, 2016.**

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 9:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Jim and Andy Stout—Recording Secretaries—Watchung Environmental Commission