

WATCHUNG ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION MINUTES

September 29, 2016

Present: Karen Pennett, Sondra Epstein, Rachel Funcheon, Don Pote, George Sopko

Absent: Jim and Andy Stout

Call to Order and Minutes: The meeting was called to order at 7:34. The June 27, 2016 minutes were discussed and approved.

Tree Report:

- Sondra reported that a large number of the bees that were removed from the tree behind the library died and that a small swarm left to find a new home.
- Oak wilt is now a threat to New Jersey oak trees. It is a fungus with no known treatment that clogs the vessels which carry water and nutrients to the branches and leaves. Residents are encouraged to buy firewood and oak saplings locally to prevent spreading the fungus. Avoid pruning during the growing season since open wounds can attract beetles that might be carrying the fungus.
- The August Tree report was read and discussed. A copy is attached to these minutes.

Open Space: No report available.

Planning Board: No update. Karen reported that the Planning Board did not meet August or September.

Bottle Caps: Rachel reported that the bottle cap recycling program is going strong and that she was invited by a member of the Warren Green Team to speak about Watchung's successful program implementation at our library. Whereas Warren had been previously using Watchung's facilities, they have now started a bottle cap collection of their own at the Warren library.

- **Pipeline:** Rachael also reported that the Pilgrim Pipeline, LLC, still has not filed their permits in NJ. The Coalition Against Pilgrim Pipeline (CAPP) is concentrating now on collecting environmental data from all the towns on the route. The data will be sent to Princeton Hydro, an environmental engineering firm that has been hired by CAPP to help fight the pipeline. Data will be organized to take to the DEP once the permits are being reviewed. The MPG (Municipal Pipeline Group) is now fully funded, meaning that 15 towns have signed on and contributed money towards a legal defense fund for all the towns in fighting the pipeline.

Other: Old Business: Karen made a request to the Somerset Recycling Center for recycling container lids to be used at Mobus Field. A box of recycling lids was received at no charge. The lids will help prevent the throwing of trash into the recycling bins.

New Business:- At the last meeting Sondra had recommended the name of a new prospective EC member, Joan Bertuccelli. Karen will contact Joan and invite her to the next meeting.

- Don reported that he was contacted by a member of Westfield's Environmental Commission who requested the the name of the Boyscout that was instrumental in putting the bat houses around Watchung's lakes. They wish to do the same in Westfield and wanted permission to reprint a talk of his on this subject. Permission was subsequently secured and proudly given.

- George mention that complaints have been voiced concerning the geese droppings on the sidewalks around Watchung Lake. A commercial product is available for the sidewalk that would encourage the geese to use the grass instead of the sidewalks. It was agreed that the environmental impact of its chemical content should be investigated first and if satisfactory, a trial period to evaluate its effectiveness would then be in order. George will pursue and report at our next meeting.

Next meeting: The next meeting will be October 24, 2016.

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

Respectively submitted,

Don Pote, Acting secretary, September, 2016

August Tree Report 2016

561 Valley Road, 6/30/2016: re inspection of replaced trees, homeowner needs re grading work for retaining wall. We asked to save 1 large maple and 1 large pin oak.

561 Valley Road 7/11/2016; re inspection with Deer path Custom Builders (owners representative), re grading will take the maple but the pin oak they will try to save. Total tree count on the lot 130. Remove 33 trees: 8 dead or diseased: replace: 20 @ 2 1/2", 5 @ 4", total tree replacement

86 Redmont 7/11/2016 the neighbors called about trees being cut down. A stop work order was issued. The owner said they did not know they needed a permit. The owners made a plan of what they wanted to cut. The boro engineer and the environment commission went and inspected the property and removed some ribbons that they wanted to cut. A permit was issued. A call was received over the weekend over cutting of trees. The police went up and saw that the owners had a permit. They did not stop them because they had a permit. The boro engineer went and looked at the property on Monday and felt that there were more ribbons on the trees than when the permit was issued. A stop work order was again issued. The boro engineer ask for a survey of the property showing the cut trees and the standing trees. When the environmental commission and the boro engineer arrived every tree on the lot had a ribbon on it. An hour and a half later we finished our inspection. The owner has come in several times to the engineering office about what trees to plant and the size. The boro engineer said show us your plan.

The owners are at the maximum amount of trees that legally be taken down. Total tree count on the lot 91; 50 trees removed or to be removed are >50%: 12 trees counted dead or diseased: replace 21 trees at 2 1/2", 17 trees at 4": total tree replacement 38. The commission needs to discuss what can be done with home owners that are violating the town ordinance.

243 Johnston Drive 7/21/2016 Newer home, flag lot, backing up to cliff above the police station wants to put a pool in: 19 live trees and 2 dead.: Replace 17 @ 2 1/2", 2 @ 4" total tree replacement 19 trees

518 Valley Road 7/21/2016, Home owner: 14 trees to be removed, 1 live, 12 diseased, 1 dead: replace 1@ 2 1/2"

141 Park Place 7/21/2016, Home owner: remove 7 trees: 2 dead or diseased, replace 3 @ 2 1/2", 2 @ 4" total replacement 5

123 Knollwood 8/11/2015, Home owner back filled the yard with rocky fill damaging large oak trees. A stop work order was issued and permit is now issued to cut the 8 damaged trees. Remove 8 trees and replace with 8 4 1/2 " trees

113 Valley Drive 8/11/2016 The Home owner wants a patio and pool Remove 43 : Replace 35 @ 2 1/2 < 9 @ 4" transplanting 2" maples along the driveway.

215 Mountain Blvd 11/3/2015 & 7/24/2016, House to be taken down Replace 17 trees, 16 @ 2 1/2 " 1@ 4"

The Columnar Maple tree cookie was taken to the Great Swamp Outdoor Environmental center in Chatham by Don Pote and Sondra Epstein on 6/8/2016. The cookie was inscribed Columnar Maple, a rare variety that grew in Watchung, cut 2014. Don and Sondra picked it up on 7/22/2016 and brought it back to the Texier house's basement. It was oiled more and await its new home. We want to thank Bob Burns from the public works department who was always co- operative in giving us man power to move, and cure the tree cookie ,Barbara Dean from the historic committee informed me that the town was not going to build a shed for them, but the town will allow the historic committee to use the town shed and open it on the days the Texier house is open.. Do we think this is the best place for the cookie?

August 17.2016, the large oak was removed from behind the library by the cherry picker and two dead trees were removed by the arts center and Valley Furniture. The bee hive was opened by Adam Buttico and the bees were gently vacuumed, it was a large hive needing three boxes at least 50,000. The bees were thought to be Italian honey bees and had a mite infestation. They were taken away from our town but after testing we hope that they will survive to return to our town.

8/24/2016 Adam Buttico reported that the bees are struggling, most likely from multiple stress situations. A significant of them have died. He will continue to nurse them and keep us posted