

WATCHUNG ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION(Final)

May 22, 2017

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

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 7:30 PM. The approval of the April 24, 2017 minutes was delayed until the June meeting.

Tree Report:

--156 Anderson Road, 5/11/2017, new home owner, remove 10 trees with 7 dead and 3 alive, 2 within 15 feet of house—Replace 1.

--111 Knollwood, 5/11/2017, new house. Sony and Arlene met about the replacement plan. Plant 12 trees at 4 inches. Due to the sewer easements on the property, money for 12 trees at \$200 each will go to the tree bank. The Boro Engineer makes the owners plant 4 inch trees if any money is being put into the tree bank.

Sony is still getting prices at nurseries and went to Truesdale Nursery for price quotes. We want people to plant trees rather than choose to put money into the tree bank. We will think about \$350.00 for the price increase for tree replacement funds going into the tree bank.

Planning Board:

Karen explained and showed diagrams of the proposed shopping mall which would be a replacement for the Sears department store. There will be 2 larger buildings on the eastern and southern side with 2-3 stores/restaurants in each building. There will be 4 buildings/pods for individual stores/restaurants: two on the western side and two on the northern side. Most of the parking will be in the center of the buildings and some on the western and northern side behind the pods. Trees and shrubs will be planted in islands throughout the parking area as well as in other areas of the new complex. Trees will be planted around the garbage bins. More trees will be planted in the new complex than currently at Sears. Karen also informed the personnel of Seritage, the company responsible for the Sears project, of Watchung's tree ordinance. Few trees, if any, are to be removed; however, the trees planted on the islands should be 25% conifers and 75% deciduous when the tree plan is prepared.

Open Space: No report

Somerset Street: No report

Bottle Caps: Going well

Pipeline: There has not been any further information to report.

Other:

Possible geese deterrent because of their excrement--Karen has not been able to get any more information regarding the grapefruit spray. She tried to reach the mentor for the Boy Scout who did the project and had no success. It has not been determined if the grapefruit spray project itself was successful. Joan will research the grapefruit spray.

Tree issue along Watchung Lake—George stated that he went to Tom Atkins to study this further, and the plans are now on hold. George will confirm with Borough Hall that all trees should not come down. The Commission agrees with the dead trees being removed, but the living trees help to stabilize the bank and prevent erosion.

Ness Property—George is going to a Recreation Commission meeting to find out what is going on with the property. Fields around the town do not seem to be used very much, so the question was raised as to the need of additional fields on this property.

Banner—Karen made a sample “WEC” banner—2 feet by 4 feet—The proposed colors would be with a green background and white letters with black trim around the letters.

Deer issue—A workshop is tentatively planned for Sept. to discuss the issue. Residents can voice their opinions on the subject, and hopefully there will be some experts there to give their input. No one has been contacted yet. Deb Joren suggested a town meeting or having it be part of a Council meeting. The results of the aerial survey indicated that there were 165 deer in town in 65 groups. The numbers could vary depending upon the type of forest. We discussed other statistics as well as the positives and negatives of the deer population which were the usual points to be considered on both sides of this controversial issue of culling verses preservation of these animals. No consensus was reached, but many valid points on both sides were acknowledged.

A USDA conservationist came to Watchung and drove around to assess the Boro’s landscape. The USDA has a program where they develop plans for homeowners to encourage regrowth on their land. The conservationist would like to come back and make a presentation to any interested residents. The conservationist did not think that the lack of understory was due to the deer but rather to the lack of light from the canopy created by tall, old trees, areas with too-dense sapling growth, and especially from invasive species.

Non-toxic herbicide to replace Roundup—Don and Joan are experimenting with a 20% vinegar solution to kill weeds. They each bought two gallons and will identify the weeds that they spray and will report how the solution worked.

Meetings, Correspondence, Permit: no report

Review of Assignments for Next Meeting: The next meeting is scheduled for June 26, 2017

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 9:44 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Jim and Andy Stout
Acting Recording Secretaries