

11/2/17  
Agenda A

**WATCHUNG ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION**

**MINUTES**

**September 25, 2017**

**Present:** Karen Pennett, Don Pote, Jim and Andy Stout, George Sopko, Rachel Fruncheon, Joan Tak  
**Absent:** Sondra Epstein

**Call to Order, Minutes:**

The meeting was called to order at 7:32PM. The August minutes were discussed. Karen made suggestions for changes which will be incorporated and presented for approval at the October Meeting.

**Reports:**

**Tree Report:** No report was available however the following tree matters were discussed: Rachael, in discussions with a neighbor concerning 50 Lakeview, indicated that the landscaper left their 48 ft. flatbed trailer in the street for two nights and during the day left it idling for long periods of the work days. (presumably to run their compressors since there is no electricity on the site.) Police were summoned twice in order to get them to move it. Porta-potty and building materials were stored under a Dogwood tree. The required protective orange fencing around two trees was missing. In addition, it was noted that the truck was parked against a large oak tree and on its roots. The neighbor also complained that the neighborhood is much noisier now that so many trees were gone. George will talk to the Borough attorney about the dangers and legality of landscape and construction trailers parked on busy Watchung streets.

Rachael also noted that there were a number of cars that park overnight on Cedar Road which makes it difficult and dangerous for two-way automobile traffic. She noted that the police indicate that they do enforce the "no overnight street parking" laws. It appears the situation has been corrected.

**Planning Board:** Karen reported that the retail portion designs replacing the sold Sears property had been approved. The cinema portion was still under review, principally due to police concerns. A meeting to discuss these concerns has been scheduled between the mayor, theater and police personnel.

A discussion with Weldon on the Bonnie Burn buffer zone has been postponed until the September meeting.

**Open space:** Nothing to report.

**Somerset Street:** Jim indicated that plans for the tree plantings on the islands have been completed. The gasoline spills on the north side of Spatford Park, presumably from the adjacent gas station, are under control.

**Bottle Caps:** No major changes.

**Pipe Line:** No major changes.

**Deer Management:** A letter regarding Environmental Commission's input on the "state of Watchung's forests" and deer hunt was submitted to the Wildlife Committee. The Environmental Commission was split on the various forest/deer issues and recommended a professional be brought in for an assessment. A special

Council meeting forum opened to the public has been scheduled for September 28, 2017 at Borough Hall. The goal of this forum is to gather facts on environmental impact and to assess the best way to proceed with a deer management program.

**Other:**

**2018 Calendar:** 2018 Calendar was approved and to be submitted to Michelle.

**Minutes:** Karen submitted the May 2018 Minutes to the Borough. She requested a copy of the April minutes from the responsible secretary for the minutes also be sent.

**New Business:** George indicated that he estimates that there could be as much as 25% of the trees in Watchung are of the Ash tree variety and, as a result, are either affected or susceptible to Emerald Beetle damage. This situation is serious enough to warrant the following action: First, call upon an expert from the Somerset Environmental Center at the Great Swamp for more information and/or invite someone to a future EC meeting. Next, George will ask the Council to support a Borough RFP (Request for Proposal) to inventory the actual number of Ash trees in the Watchung public area.

Karen presented a proposed design of a banner to identify the Watchung EC table at various shows attended during the year. Some members of the Commission thought the banner needed more design; i.e, prints of wildlife, trees, etc.

George brought up the subject of geese dropping complaints once again from walkers around Watchung Lake. This has been a problem for some time and one without a proven, permanent and cost effective solution. Some suggestions include providing low fencing or natural barriers between the lake and sidewalks such as grasses, boxwood shrubs, cattails, etc. This was questioned as to whether this would be a deterrent or would the geese attempt to fly over?

With respect to the Cherry trees cut down between Watchung Lake and Mountain Blvd, the following questions were raised: Were all the cut trees dead or dying? Were more than necessary cut down? Who made the decisions on each tree? Why was the Environmental Commission not involved in the decision? Will the EC be involved in any replacement decisions?

**Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned at 9:30PM. The next scheduled meeting is October 23, 2017.

Respectfully submitted  
Don Pote