

WATCHUNG ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION—ZOOM MEETING MINUTES (FINAL)

JUNE 20, 2022

1. Call to Order—Roll Call:

- a. The meeting was called to order at 7:30.
- b. Present—Rachel Funcheon, Jim and Andy Stout, Doug Speeney, Coraleine Kitt, Council Member Wendy Robinson
- c. Absent—Karen Pennett, Andy Baldassarre

2. Approval of Minutes—May 23, 2022 Teleconference—The minutes were approved.

3. Reports:

- a. Tree Report—June 2022
 - There were 8 inspections with 84 trees to be removed and 2 trees to be replaced. Inspections were completed by Karen Pennett.
 - Hazardous Ash Trees—It was observed that there are dead Ash trees close to power lines and roadways, especially along Mountain Blvd. Doug will send list of specific areas and Council Member Robinson will follow up.
- b. Planning Board—No report with the next meeting scheduled for July 19, 2022
- c. Recycling:
 - New Legacy Books—New bins are in. Hold up now is permitting process. There will be 2 locations—Watchung Square Mall and along driveway between the Firehouse and the Firemen's Exempt Building.
 - Styrofoam—Very successful second collection with twice as much collected—2 truck loads were taken to Foam Pack. Collection went smoothly and residents very supportive. Rachel, Council Member Robinson, Charlie Neiss, and Arthur (DPW) were in attendance. Lots of advertising beforehand, and the next collection date was proposed for Sept. 17, 2022 in Watchung or at the Warren-Watchung Green Fair if that occurs. New reusable bags were given out. Suggestion for next collection was to have an additional volunteer at base of driveway to direct cars to collection area.
 - Labels on Plastic Containers—Plastic sleeves on containers do not have to be removed as part of the Somerset County Recycling Collection.
- d. Green Team/Farmers Market—Issues with vendors due to lack of workers. Popularity of market has blossomed, and attendance was good. New reusable bags were given out. Vendors would appreciate having local workers to assist.

4. Unfinished Business:

- a. Best Lake Planting Update—Flooding earlier in month caused protection around plantings to be disrupted and rotated with more fortification needed. Doug secured protection with 12" staples with all being secure now, and all trees doing well. Sapling and seedlings will benefit flood plain and after area plantings are established, additional plant materials such as Milkweed and Swamp Milkweed could be added.
 - It was recommended that the Salem Oak planted near Watchung Lake have a larger enclosure.
- b. Board of Adjustment Application— The Board met on 6/9/22 and, in a 6-1 vote, granted preliminary and final site plan approval for the development at 1375 Plainfield Ave. Development will have 24 dwelling units—19 market rate and 5 affordable. Project will include a bio-retention basin, 6 EV charging stations, 2 community gardens plus a sensory garden with raised beds for planting, a shade pavilion, attics pre-wired for solar, all garages pre-wired for future EV charging, and a wide variety of plantings. Rachel may check out Arborvitae issue again. Building Coverage will be 20.2% and Impervious Coverage will be 63.5% (code is 25%--variance was granted).
- c. Recycling Bins—4 old style recycling bins with holes in the tops have been delivered to the Borough and will be in place and used for future town events.

5. New Business:

- a. ANJEC Bulletin Article—Rachel reached out to Dini Checko of ANJEC who reached out to editor of bulletin, and an article and photos on the Best Lake planting project will be part of the next issue.
- b. Green Incentives—Doug suggested trying to encourage residents to move towards the purchase of electric vehicles by having the Borough waive the cost of electrical permit fees for those residents who want to install home charging stations. EV Charging Ordinance coming up, and Council Member Robinson will take this up with Laws and Ordinances.
- c. Discharge Pipe into Best Lake—Doug will make video of chocolate colored liquid and forward to the engineering staff. Sediment is observed in lake. Resident stated that this is a long existing issue.
- d. Other
 - Street Sweeper—Does certain streets including storm drains.
 - Spotted Lantern Fly (SLF)—Duke Farms has video on building traps which are attached to trees to capture SLF. Edith could post video. School children or Boy and Girl Scouts could participate in project to construct these traps to reduce the number of SLF and save the Borough assets. Residents looking for suggestions. Information can be posted on Borough website, sent out in email blasts, and posted on Facebook.

6. Special Announcements, Correspondence: PSE&G Right-of-Way Maintenance permit extension application being filed.

7. Public Comment: None

8. Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 8:54 PM with the next meeting scheduled for August 15, 2022.

Respectfully Submitted,
Andy Stout (Secretary) and Jim Stout (Assistant to the Secretary)

July/August 2022 Tree Report

Tree inspections 8

Trees to be removed 125 excluding stop order

Trees to be replaced 56 excluding stop order

Inspections completed by K. Pennett Watchung Environmental Commission & Karen Twisler

10 Watchung Crest Drive: 26 trees, replace 20. resident has replacement plan permit for 10 trees, 17 removed prior to permit

- 17 trees removed without permit: some on neighbor's property. Neighbor called police. Police stopped further cutting. Permit submitted for remaining trees. Trees removed from neighbor's property to be resolved between neighbors
- 2 Oaks to allow more sun for additional planting
- 1 Maple to allow more sun for additional planting
- 1 Oak may be hazardous
- 3 White pine side of house marked on permit as dead, trees alive may need more sun
- 3 Douglas Fir in front marked on permit as dead, trees alive may need more space

248 High Tor: 8 trees replace 5

- 1 Oak dead
- 2 Ashes
- 3 Blue spruce, very sparse
- 1 Cherry
- 1 Maple
- Permit noted 3 to be replaced

165 Hill Hollow 9 trees no replacements

- 9 Ash permit stated 7 found 2 additional Ashes

659 Johnston: 20+ Ashes no replacements

700 & 712 Johnston Drive: stop work order unable to determine type of tree

Trees in back between properties topped. Residence at 700 said they stopped all tree removal/topping due to stop order. Residence of 712 asked us to come back when her husband home. She was ill. Could not walk behind 700 due to steep slope. Walked to each side of 700. Side between 700 and 712 at least 6 trees topped. Difficult to determine opposite side. Many Ashes in front of 700 and on the front side between 700 and 712.

10 Hill Hollow: 31 Trees, replace 31

All trees removed prior to inspection. Application indicated 5 dead, 26 live., all in back of property. Area under construction: adding/adjusting retaining walls, changes to pool, tennis court, etc. Steep slopes concern.

50 Cory Lane: 13 Ashes no replacements

157/217 Valley Road: 17 Ashes no replacements