

# **WATCHUNG ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION—ZOOM MEETING MINUTES**

**AUGUST 15, 2022**

## **1. Call to Order—Roll Call:**

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

## **2. Approval of Minutes—June 20, 2022 Teleconference—The minutes were approved.**

## **3. Reports:**

- a. Tree Report—July/August 2022
  - Inspections--There were 8 inspections with 125 trees to be removed excluding stop order and 56 trees to be replaced excluding stop order. Inspections were completed by Karen Pennett of WEC and Karen Twisler. The Commission would like more feedback about what trees are being replanted. Karen and Rachel could compile a list of the trees needing to be replanted and give to the Borough Engineer.
- b. Planning Board—No report—Meeting on 8/16/2022.
- c. Recycling:
  - New Legacy Books--The bin was delivered on 8/8/2022 with the company emptying it twice after the bin was filled. The company will come sooner, if needed, and will keep track of tonnage. It was observed that the street sign (Donate Books Here) was missing. Members should drive by the bin location periodically to make sure no books or boxes have been left on the ground near the bin. The bin slated for Watchung Square Mall is more complicated and is on hold for now.
  - Styrofoam—Desired date for collection, Sat., Sept. 17, needs to be confirmed with BC as soon as possible to allow for advertising time. The EC also proposes 1/21/2023 as the next date for a collection, post-holidays.
  - Tennis Balls—A letter was received from Edward Ho, high school student, proposing a tennis ball recycling program for Watchung to recycle used tennis balls, which can pose a danger to the environment in landfills. He would provide containers to be placed at the Mobus Field tennis courts and would recycle the collection at recycleballs.org. The EC supports this proposal.
  - Green Team/Farmers Market—The Farmers Market is doing well and will remain once school starts.

## **4. Unfinished Business:**

- a. Best Lake Planting Update—The plants are doing fine, but the watering and weeding have been challenging. Doug, and others, have been watering several times a week along with DPW. With the improved area and benches nearby, it is a pleasant spot to rest and renew. There will be continued enhancement of the flora in the future with suggestions of pollinator-friendly plantings closer to the stream.
- b. ANJEC Report Article—The WEC article and photo on the Best Lake planting will be in the next edition under the "Acting Locally" section.
- c. Update on Hazardous Trees Near Power Lines—PSE&G were contacted with no progress on removal yet.

## **5. New Business:**

- a. Fall Newsletter—Articles due by 9/1/2022—Suggestions included Styrofoam recycling, New Legacy books, and tennis ball recycling. A volunteer to write an article, and additional suggestions, would be appreciated.
- b. ANJEC Webinar: Creating a Certified Wildlife Habitat—Rachel attended and reported on this webinar, held 8/2/2022. Partnership between ANJEC and NJ Audubon with the "Gardening for Wildlife" program which recognizes properties that meet 5 criteria for wildlife (food, water, shelter, places to raise young, and using wildlife-friendly landscaping practices). Certification is \$20.00 with the plaque \$30.00 once the property meets

the requirements. There is also certification offered for public areas with points being earned for the town. 5 towns in NJ are certified with other towns working toward certification. This might help with Sustainable Jersey points. A pollinator garden, or enhancement of the Best Lake planting, were suggested.

c. Spotted Lanternfly:

--Trees Removed by Lake—Large volume of nymphs on Tree of Heaven trees with those trees being removed along with others near the Stirling Rd. parking lot fence.

--NJDA Grant—NJ Dept. of Agriculture is offering reimbursement up to \$15,000 to municipalities for costs associated with chemical treatment activities for SLF control. Concern was expressed as to what non-targeted insects would get impacted or killed by spraying.

d. Contact from Resident:

--Rachel was contacted by a young man who grew up in Watchung and whose parents still live here. He is a biology teacher at Ridgewood High School, and on the Green Team, and he wants to meet with the WEC to compare issues between the 2 towns. He and his father will be invited to the Sept. meeting. It was suggested that a time limit be set for the discussion so as not to reduce time needed for the regular EC meeting.

--A resident requested that the WEC consider a pollinator garden or planting of fruit trees in Spratford Park. It was agreed by members that this area is not suitable for a pollinator garden or fruit trees but appreciated the good suggestions.

--Karen's Alaskan Adventure—Karen recently traveled to Alaska and gave a brief report on her observations from an environmental perspective. It was observed that climate change is having a large impact on this pristine area in the way of glaciers receding, ice falling, and the decline in wildlife numbers among other things.

--Other:

--Doug suggested consideration of planting shade trees between the new parking lot at Best Lake and the lake. Doug and Rachel will examine area for sun location to ascertain feasibility of shade relief for the blacktop.

--Coraleine reported that problems with flooding and swampy conditions along the north bank of Watchung Lake were resolved with repair of water main on Stirling Rd.

**6. Special Announcements, Correspondence:** NJDEP has issued a Drought Watch with water supplies stressed and encouraged voluntary water conservation. If the drought continues, if necessary, mandatory restrictions could be implemented.

**7. Public Comment:** None

**8. Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned at 9:22 PM with the next meeting scheduled for Sept. 19, 2022.

Respectfully Submitted,

Andy Stout (Recording Secretary) and Jim Stout (Assistant to the Secretary)

# September 2022 Tree Report

## Tree inspections 12

Trees to be removed 193

Trees to be replaced 1

Trees replaced from previous permit: 1 inspection, 3 trees replaced

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

25 Edgemont: 23 Trees: no replacements, All dead, ashes and Oak no replacements

76 Skyline: 57 Trees, new house no replacements

- 1 Oak dead

- 2 Ashes

- 3 Blue spruce, very sparse

- 1 Cherry

- 1 Maple

Permit noted 3 to be replaced

20 Fox Chase: 9 trees, dead/dying. On steep slope, request not to grind stumps no replacements

55 Hill Hollow: 11 trees, permit for 7 trees, 10 marked, added 1: replace 1

- 8 dead/dying ash

- 1 pine close to house

- 1 small 4" tree dead

Added 1 silver maple, leaning towards house

22 Sequoia: 6 trees, all dead. no replacements

310 Valley Drive: 18 trees, all dead no replacements

59 Robin Glen: 8 trees, all dead no, replacements

170 Washington Drive: 9 trees all dead, 6 Ashes no replacements

55 Scott Drive 17 trees, all dead no replacements

Completed by Karen Pennett

330 Stirling Road: 4 trees, dead/dying, no replacements

3 trees dead, 1 tree dangerous leaning over house

9 Heather Lane: 14 trees, no replacements

44 Joan Drive: 17 trees, ashes and black birch or cherry

Some trees close to road leaning over wires and cause sight problem when hang low.

117 Valley Road: 3 Trees replanted. Inspected previous application to ensure trees replanted