

WATCHUNG ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION—ZOOM MEETING MINUTES

DECEMBER 5, 2022

1. Call to Order—Roll Call:

- a. The meeting was called to order at 7:33 PM.
- b. Present—Rachel Funcheon, Karen Pennett, Jim and Andy Stout, Doug Speeney, Council Member Wendy Robinson
- c. Absent—Andy Baldassarre, Coraleine Kitt

2. Approval of Minutes—Oct. 24, 2022 Teleconference—The minutes were approved.

3. Reports:

- a. Tree Report—Nov. 2022
 - Inspections—There were 2 tree inspections with 29 trees to be removed and no trees to be replaced. Inspections were completed by Karen Pennett, WEC, and involved all dead trees. Karen will check out dead/dying trees, or Jim Damato and/or Karen Twisler (Sr. Landscape Architect) will do the same along with applications for removal of 6 or more live trees.
 - b. Planning Board—Shop-Rite application was passed and finalized. The expert architect for the applicant stated that the Shop-Rite will follow the EC's recommendations for storm water management by implementing bio-retention basins, flush mounted curbs, and other installations related to water runoff from the parking lot.
 - c. Recycling:
 - Styrofoam—Rachel spoke again to Al Gallo, head of the Long Hill DPW, about Long Hill's Styrofoam Compactor. Other towns are bringing their recycled Styrofoam for Long Hill, and Watchung is able to do the same if that is approved. Long Hill has a satellite location at their Library with a bin for residents to leave their Styrofoam instead of driving to the DPW location, and the EC discussed the possibility of a bin in Watchung.
 - Books—The New Legacy Book recycling program is going well.
 - Bottle Caps—Residents are still very interested in recycling plastic bottle caps, so Rachel is researching possibilities and will follow-up with the Bayshore Recycling Center where some bottle caps are accepted.
 - d. Green Team/Farmers Market—The Green Team, which sponsors the Farmers Market, is discussing the distribution of a survey reflecting the attendance trends and other relevant factors of the 2022 Farmers Market.

4. Unfinished Business:

- a. Tree Planting—4 Oak trees were planted behind the 911 Memorial, and 2 Salem Oaks could still be planted this year.
- b. Green Building Checklist—SJ's checklist was last updated in 2015. Implementation of the checklist in Watchung can be discussed more in 2023.
- c. Green Sunfish—**Echoes-Sentinel** published an article on this issue in Best Lake where the Green Sunfish are feeding on the Bass and impacting their population. This is also a regional and common problem which needs resolution. The State requires that when a Green Sunfish is caught that it not be put back, whereas Watchung has a catch and release ordinance which does not support catching and removing the Green Sunfish.

5. New Business:

- a. ANJEC Webinar—Rachel attended an ANJEC webinar on 11/29/22 called "Sustainable Landscaping Practices", with a presenter from Rutgers Co-op. This webinar focused on suggestions for residents such as addressing soil problems, recycling or leaving leaves on property, reducing cleared areas by mulching and planting, and recommendations for planting certain winter trees to supplement available food for wildlife. The second part of the webinar featured a member of the Maplewood Town Council, who spoke about Maplewood's ban on gas-powered leaf blowers.

b. Year-end Wrap-up

--Expiring Terms—4 members of the EC have terms which expire as of Dec. 2022 and must submit a volunteer application if interested in reapplying. Rachel explained the process. Jim Stout will not be applying for another term and explained his reasons. The members took the opportunity to commend Jim on his years of service to the Commission, and his multiple contributions, along with how they appreciated working with him and how knowledgeable he was on a range of topics and issues. He hopes to still be able to make contributions to the Commission in the way of research when there is a need. Jim thanked the members for their kind words and thoughts and expressed how much he enjoyed the years on the Commission and working with the members. Rachel expressed her appreciation to Council Member Robinson for being our liaison and thanked her for helping with our projects along with presenting the proposals to the Borough Council for consideration. Council Member Robinson was most appreciative of the nice comments and expressed her thanks for having the opportunity to serve with the EC.

--2023 Budget—Rachel submitted a basic budget for the EC based on membership dues, seedling purchases along with fencing costs (Operation Pride Day), tree bank funds for planting, miscellaneous supplies, Eastern Bluebird houses, and possible Styrofoam recycling bin.

--EC Overview for Mayor-elect Jubin—Mayor-elect Jubin is requesting an overview, history, and 2023 plans for the EC. The members discussed our many achievements and accomplishments some of which include the New Legacy Book Bin, plastic bag recycling which earned the town a free park bench for Mobus Field, bottle cap recycling, Styrofoam recycling, distribution of reusable bags to residents, environmental reviews of and recommendations for Planning Board and Board of Adjustment proposed projects, community riparian planting at Best Lake on Operation Pride Day, seedling and milkweed seed giveaway, tree inspections, and Spotted Lantern Fly and Emerald Ash borer dissemination of information.

Of much significance was the article published in the **ANJEC Report** under "Acting Locally" which featured photos along with a comprehensive description of the Best Lake planting day which was totally a community effort.

c. Other—Some suggestions for 2023 projects include sponsoring a junior membership program where students could create environmental projects to be listed as part of their accomplishments when applying to college. The Styrofoam recycling program could be updated with a bin at DPW. A pollinator garden or community garden could be started near the stream planting area at Best Lake which would promote community involvement and socialization. Fencing could be removed from the recent plantings, weeding done, and taller fencing reinstalled.

6. Special Announcements, Correspondence: None

7. Public Comment: None

8. Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 9:23 with the next meeting tentatively scheduled for Jan. 23, 2023.

Respectfully Submitted,

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

December 2022 & January 2023 Tree Report

Tree inspections 3

Trees to be removed 48

Trees to be replaced 2

Inspections completed by: December Joe Mauro, Landscape Architect Remington & Vernick
Engineers Inc
January by Karen Pennett Watchung Environmental Commission all
dead tree inspections

December 2022

25 Price Drive: Removing 10 Live and 67 Dead Trees

131 Anderson Road: 18 live trees removed. Resident had permit to remove 19 dead trees. 18
live trees removed and not in area of dead trees to be removed.

January 2023

1010 Johnston Drive: request to put money in tree bank rather than plant new – ok'd

483 Ridge Road: 11 Trees dead/dying, could only find 10 Ash, (Beech & Oak per permit):
replace 2

- *Map provide did not mark trees correctly, and only marked trees to be removed.

- *Home owner home however home working could not come out and review with
me. Questioned her about map, she was unsure of trees to be removed.
Tree company determined.

- *Trees marked with red paint.

- *Found 1 tree in front (map indicated 2) Ash ok.

- *Found 1 tree on left side of house (map indicated 2) looked questionable and may
be within 15' of house.

- *Found 8 in back (map indicated 7): 4 in near back 4 farther back in wooded area.

- 4 near back: 1 dead, 2 leaning and questionable, one of which close to house, 1
Beech: 3 ok to remove, Beech looked ok replace.

- 4 farther back more wooded area: 2 dead, 1 questionable leaning over
neighbors' property 1 questionable. OK to remove.

- *Permit called for 11 trees could only find 10. Replace 1 could not locate.