

Watchung Environmental Commission – Zoom Meeting*
Monday, March 27, 2023 – 7:30 PM
Meeting Minutes

1. Call to Order – The meeting was called to order at 7:30 PM.
Present: Rachel Funcheon, Karen Pennett, Andy Stout, Doug Speeney, Denise Soppas, Coraleine Kitt
2. Minutes for February 27, 2023 Teleconference approved
3. Reports
 - a. Tree Report:
 - Inspections - Karen and Denise inspected 5 properties. 47 trees to be removed; 5 trees to be replaced. (Both totals exclude 115 East Dr.) M. Fittipaldi in Engineering will now track all tree permits. Karen also compiled a list of tree replacements required, 2022-2023 ytd. Discussion of how the replacements from last year should be handled.
 - Tree issues: Subcommittee - Karen, Denise and Rachel met to discuss possible solutions to problematic tree issues. Main issues discussed:
 - keeping track of tree replacements
 - payments into the Tree Bank
 - issues with diseased/hazardous/dead trees and if their condition should be verified and if they should be replaced in some cases. Sonia brought the EC's concerns to Engineer and Jim Damato, who says going forward Engineering will keep track of everything.
 - b. Planning Board: No report; PB did not meet in March
 - c. Recycling:
 - Styrofoam – The Styrofoam recycling bin has been ordered but has not been delivered yet.
 - Batteries – The recycling center in Westfield currently takes and recycles household alkaline batteries. They work-with a company in Lakewood and deliver the batteries to the site. The cost is expensive, at \$45 per bucket. Prohibitively expensive for Watchung.
 - Electronic waste – The recycling center in Westfield also recycles electronic waste. The company in Lakewood could bring a dumpster to Watchung free of charge and empty it free of charge. Rachel will contact the Lakewood company and ask for further details.
 - d. Green Team - Farmer's Market has been their focus, and possible Green Fair.
4. Unfinished Business
 - a. Plans for Operation Pride – Arranged what EC members will be there and who will do what. Activities for EC and volunteers will be installing bird box, planting live stakes, planting swamp milkweed (if available), weeding and mulching last year's plantings, and fixing/installing fencing. Supplies for project were ordered. Follow-up is needed to be sure all items are received.

- b. Rain garden at Rescue Squad – Doug has shared pictures of Watchung’s rain garden with Rutgers. Rutgers requested to see pictures of the rain garden after the perennials grow back in, which will not occur until May or June.

5. New Business

- a. BOA Application: BJ’s Wholesale Club – Application is for part of BJ’s parking lot to be converted into new gas station with 12 fueling spots. Commission largely agreed that since site is already developed, there are no new environmental concerns. Doug asked for more info about stormwater management on the site.
- b. Wildflowers – The Commission discussed planting wildflower seeds on the median on Somerset Street, as was suggested to EC twice by residents. This would save money on mowing, beautify the area, and benefit pollinators. Rachel will check on the feasibility of this since Somerset St. is a county road.
- c. Junior Members – The Commission discussed adding junior members to participate in the Commission’s meetings and events. All were in favor.
- d. Issues with geese were discussed.

6. Special Announcements, Correspondence

- a. A resident reported seeing suds and other pollutants in the stream at Washington Rock and Mountain Blvd. Andy went to inspect but saw nothing. The Commission discussed requesting further investigation by the Engineer.
- b. The Commission received a certified letter from Bowman Consulting relating to Bonnie Burn Redevelopment project.
- c. EC initiatives were on front page of Echoes-Sentinel twice in 3 weeks in March.

7. No Public Comment

8. Adjournment 9:28 PM

The next meeting is scheduled for April 24, 2023

April 2023 Tree Report

Tree inspections: 10

Trees to be removed: 103

Trees to be replaced: 9

Inspections completed by D. Soppas & K. Pennett

736 Johnston Drive 8 Trees, 2 White Pines, 1 Oak, 5 Ash, recommending 4 replacements

2 White Pines & 2 Ashes within building envelope, white pines over house

1 Oak dead, basically 100' stump

5 Ashes

Due to steep slopes, recommending 4 trees to be removed

1081 Johnston Drive 7 trees replace 1

5 trees within building/pool envelope: 1 Ash, 3 Blooming Maple(?) 1 Oak dead
leaves may be healthy

2 outside building envelope one hazardous although in bloom, trunk area rotten,
other 3 stem tree 2 of steams dead 1 healthy in bloom

502 Watchung Ave 9 1 unknown 8 Ashes replace 4 shrubs.

1 unknown along driveway dead

8 Ashes all on steep slope

Large Tree down (not part of permit), damaged deck and possibly roof/structure of house

other 8 Ashes could hit house. Due to steep slope wanted 4 replacements

however due to hazardous conditions unsure did not sign off. Engineer

reviewed he state 4 4' shrubs

27 Orchard 19 on permit, 20 marked 19 dead 1 live: homeowner is replanting

12 Ash

1 Tulip

1 Maple

1 unknown

98 Orchard: 8 Ash, no replacements

19 trees marked, some small permit not required, all ash

Home owner asked us to look at property for other trees. We said we were not arborists, but said would take a look. Many additional ash trees on property, many of which showed signs of Ash Bor. Owner concerned about side of property which belongs to town or someone/business on Watchung Ave. Side property had many dead/dying trees. Told him to call town about side property.

110 Knights Bridge: 13 Ashes, property owner planning on replacing some

333 Valley Road: 9 trees all dead/dying

7 Ash

1 Cherry

1 Dogwood

36 Ellisen Road: 15 dead Ash trees (owner not planning to replant)

11 Tall Timbers Road: 9 dead Ash trees (owner not planning to replant)

55 Glen Eagles Drive: 6 dead Ash trees (owner not planning to replant)