

Watchung Environmental Commission
Monday, May 22, 2023 – 7:30 PM
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 April 24, 2023 Teleconference approved
3. Reports
 - a. Tree Report
 - Inspections – 7 tree inspections: 6 approved, 1 pending engineer review and consulting. Removing 93 trees and replacing 9.
 - Subcommittee Meeting – May 17
 - Rachel, Karen, and Denise met with Jim Damato. Discussed tree replacement issues, diseased and hazardous trees and how interpreted in ordinance. Jim recommended that EC give Borough proposed definitions for “building envelope” and “hazardous.” Discussed reviewing and simplifying the Borough’s Preferred Tree List and possibly handing list out with permits.
 - Discussed newly discovered Beech Leaf Disease and potentially writing an article about it in the next newsletter that includes information and treatments.
 - b. Planning Board

Discussed making permanent the current temporary ordinance that allows restaurants to have outdoor seating.
 - c. Recycling
 - Styrofoam – DPW says they are emptying bin every day or every other day. Bin is well used.
 - Staples program – taking household batteries. They also recycle many small tech items like adapters, DVD players, routers, modems, fax machines, etc. Residents can check Staples website for details.
 - d. Green Team
 - Working on Farmer’s Market which will be every Tuesday starting June 6 at Best Lake parking lot.
 - Reusable bag issue –Discussed having EC bags at Farmer’s Market but not handing them out unless requested.
4. Unfinished Business
 - a. Best Lake update
 - Plants and saplings doing well. Bird box is inhabited by tree swallows. Discussed getting more boxes. All three tree species are thriving, as are live stakes and milkweed.

- Discussed coordination with DPW on watering/maintaining the newer and older saplings.
 - Talked about getting a sign to identify the area.
 - b. Grants - ANJEC, Stormwater, Trees for Schools
 - Watchung was not awarded ANJEC grant.
 - Watchung was awarded stormwater grant for 25K.
 - Watchung was also awarded Clean Communities grant for 17 K.
 - Discussed Trees for Schools Grant from REGI and NJDEP in coordination with Sustainable Jersey for planting of trees on and around school properties. Would Borough want to pursue?
 - c. Geese

Discussed whether the town is doing addling program. Also, need for more signs not to feed geese and moving sign by Best Lake closer to lake.
- 5. New Business
 - a. NJDEP Model Tree Ordinance

This is associated with Stormwater Permit requirements. Towns accredited with NJ Urban and Community Forestry Program can continue to use their town's program. Other towns may/will have to adopt DEP's tree ordinance. DEP still in comment phase with municipalities. Borough has looked at this.
 - b. Summer Bat Count

The Summer Bat Count is conducted by The Conserve Wildlife Foundation of NJ, a volunteer-based project that relies on knowing where bats are roosting in NJ. Anyone who participates in this program will conduct 4 bat counts over the summer. EC will provide residents information about the program and encourages participation.
 - c. Salem Oak maintenance

Borough's 3 Salem Oaks need maintenance/watering. Ask DPW to help.
 - d. Organic weed control
 - Discussed purchasing a steamer machine that controls weeds – very effective and does a great job according to Branchburg DPW director.
 - The cost estimate is around 25K. Discussed considering whether Sustainable Jersey may be able to help provide funds through a grant.
 - e. Other

Discussed planting wildflowers on Somerset Street
- 6. Special Announcements - Discussed idea of holding June meeting outside next to Best Lake.
- 7. Public Comment – none
- 8. Adjournment 10:11 PM.

The next meeting is scheduled for June 26, 2023

June 2023 Tree Report

Tree inspections: 8

Tree Removal permits approved: 8

Approved Trees to be removed: 83

Trees required to be replaced: 4

Inspections completed by J. Damato

55 Will Lane

- Inspection completed 6/14
- 21 removed
- replace 2 with 2 1/2 " min

105 Tuttle rd

- Inspection completed 6/14
- 6 removed
- 1 live tree replace with 2 1/2" min

6 Fox Chase Dr.

- Inspection completed 6/14
- 6 removed - dead

189 Valley Dr

- Inspection completed 6/14
- 15 removed- dead

644 Valley Rd

- Inspection completed 6/14
- 6 removed - dead

1081 Johnston Dr

- Inspection completed 6/15
- 9 removed
- 1 live tree (replace with 2 1/2" min)

175 Scott Dr

- Inspection completed 6/15
- 10 removed – all dead

50 Winter Lane

- Inspection completed 6/21
- 10 removed – all dead