

Watchung Environmental Commission
Monday, September 18, 2023 – 7:30 PM
Minutes

1. Call to Order – The meeting was called to order at 7:30 PM.
Present: Rachel Funcheon, Andy Stout, Denise Soppas, Karen Pennett, Doug Speeney, Renata Reis, Coraleine Kitt, Sonia Abi-Habib.
2. Remembering Jim Stout – Rachel, Doug, Karen, Andy and the rest of the Commission shared memories of Jim and his contributions to the EC and to Watchung. Members mentioned his amazing intellect, passion for science, and congenial personality. He will be greatly missed.
3. Introduction of New Member – Renata Reis is a 10-year resident of Watchung. Her work involves helping patients afford and access medication at state and health plan level. She had worked in the pharmaceutical industry for many years before starting a company with her partner that focused on helping organizations determine how to best design clinical trials and assessments.
4. Minutes for August 21, 2023 Teleconference were approved.
5. Reports
 - a. Trees
 - Inspections – There were fewer inspections than the previous month. There were many dead trees, mostly ash trees. Discussion of 40 Jared, which EC inspected numerous times.
 - Tree sub-committee meeting – Sub-committee members crafted a letter to Borough residents who were supposed to replace trees but have not done so yet. The Commission discussed issues regarding enforcing the Tree Ordinance.
 - Tree Bank – The Commission discussed planting more trees in the fall. There is just over 44K in the Tree Bank.
 - Tree Ordinance update – ANJEC announced that as per MS4 permit, all municipalities must adopt a tree protection ordinance by the end of the year. Not sure yet if/how this will affect Watchung.
 - b. Planning Board – No report.
 - c. Recycling:
 - Bottle caps – Rachel has been contacted regularly by people with bottlecaps to recycle. Rachel called Teracycle and a number of other companies but still has not found any place that will take the caps.
 - d. Green Team – The Farmer’s Market is doing very well, averaging a little over 300 customers per week. Oct. 31 is the last day of the Farmer’s Market. There will be one special market day – the Tuesday before Thanksgiving. The Green Team is working on sustainable NJ, which will be its main project this Fall.
6. Unfinished Business

- a. Best Lake update: Saplings are doing well. The Commission discussed the various options for riparian zone signs and the range of information communicated and costs. There is \$3400 left in EC budget. The Commission plans to spend \$600 on a project with the Boy Scouts.
- b. Boy Scout project – The Commission discussed the Scout’s proposed locations for the bird boxes.
- c. The Commission discussed a river-friendly certification
- d. Weed steamer –No update at this time.
- e. SLF status – There had been very few sightings in the Borough this year. It seems the SLF did not pose as much a problem as publicized.

7. New Business

- a. Fall planting event – Commission discussed holding an event involving planting trees and native plants that will take place on September 30th. There will be tree saplings ready to be planted as well as plants that Doug will purchase at the upcoming Audubon native plant sale.

8. Adjournment: 9:55 PM

The next meeting is scheduled for October 23, 2023

October 2023 Tree Report

Tree Removal permits: 3

Trees to be removed 33

Trees to be replaced 1

130 Oakwood: 9 Trees all dead various sizes and type

45 Eaton: 7 trees already down. Arrived approximately 10 am, tree company cleaning up

27 Stanie Glen Rd: 17 Trees, 16 dead 1 live, replace 1

The permit was for 17 dead trees. Upon inspection, most were ashes and/or dead. One was a healthy Oak that just needed some pruning – possibly cabling since it was leaning. (Cabling and pruning would cost less than removing the large healthy oak) I stated that if the tree was removed, it would need to be replaced. Suggested that they consider saving the tree by discussing alternatives with a certified arborist or tree specialist. One of the trees that was not healthy was in the utility right of way. I suggested contacting PSEG to see if PSEG would remove the tree free of charge.