

WATCHUNG ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION MINUTES(FINAL)

MARCH 25, 2019

Present: Karen Pennett, Sody Epstein, Rachel Funcheon, Jim and Andy Stout, Council Member Goodloe, Jim Schlenker(resident)

Absent: Joan Tak

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 7:33 PM., and the February 28, 2019 minutes were approved. The October 22, 2018 minutes will be reviewed at the April 22, 2019 meeting.

Tree Report: March 2019

--797 Valley Road, 3/22/2019: There were several property maintenance complaints on the property. Remove 13 dead trees.

--Updates to the tree removal application were discussed. Sody presented the members with proposed revisions to the tree removal application/permit procedure. There will be two different types of applications in which one will be for the homeowner/contractor with no land disturbance and the other for the contractor and/or homeowner with land disturbance. Some of the wording was improved to create a more user friendly application for those residents needing to remove five trees or less from their property. Corrections were also made to the two applications. Sody will work on the suggested revisions to the applications, and the members will discuss the changes again at the April 22, 2019 meeting.

--It was noted that the Borough Council voted to waive the \$25.00 tree removal permit fee. The Council voted to increase the tree bank contribution to \$350.00 per tree from \$200.00 for those individuals whom, for whatever reasons, are unable to plant replacement trees or choose to make the contribution to the tree bank. The cash bond will remain at \$200.00 for builders, contractors, etc. The funds from the tree bank are used to plant trees on public property in the community with the goal being to maintain and enhance the beauty and charm for which Watchung is known and loved. Additionally, trees are very valuable for a myriad of reasons.

Planning Board:

--Karen presented a diagram of proposed changes to the Bayberry School outdoor area which is now before the Planning Board. A resident in Watchung has donated funds to create additional play and recreational spaces for the children of the school along with an accessible sidewalk to the locations. These areas include an extended playground equipment section, a hard or black top space, and a fitness section. The goal is to provide more diversified offerings to the children in which they can spread out, have fun, be given more choices for activities and, most importantly, participate in a safe, active, and outdoor environment that is physically, mentally, emotionally, and educationally valuable as well.

--Concern was expressed about the impact of the project increasing the amount of impervious surfaces around the school. The members discussed possible alternative materials for the sidewalk section. This will be discussed at the next Planning Board meeting. We all agreed that the project in its entirety will be an asset for the Bayberry School community, and we appreciate what this resident has offered to do to benefit the school children.

Old Business:

--Tree Bank Contribution—As stated above under the Tree Report, the Borough Council voted to increase the tree bank contribution to \$350.00.

--Bottle Cap Recycling—Rachel will update the recycling rules to the recycling area in the library. She is still awaiting a response from Whole Foods concerning the possibility of taking the bags of recycled bottle caps to Bridgewater instead of Madison.

--Styrofoam Recycling—There has not been any decision made as to the logistics of this proposed additional recycling project for the town. The Commission is waiting to hear if an area can be established at the new public works location in the east end of the borough. Council Member Goodloe will talk to Bill Nehls.

--Plastic Bag Recycling—The Commission discussed where to implement the 6 month Trex plastic bag recycling project in which the collection of 500 pounds of stretchy plastic within the time frame will result in a recycled bench for the Borough. Karen made contact with the schools for the possible placement of the boxes within the buildings. It was decided at this point that the schools would present their own challenges as to accessibility of members in the collection of the bags. Council Member Goodloe suggested Borough Hall. The churches were mentioned. It was decided that Rachel will request 5 boxes from the company with the 6 month collection project starting in Sept. 2019. We agreed that proposed placements will include, with permission; Borough Hall, the two churches(Wilson Memorial and Stony Hill), Cupa Café(Council Member Goodloe will ask) and Dunkin' Donuts.

--Flier to be included with tax bill—"Replace Trees with Care"—done

--Spring Newsletter—not discussed

--Green Fair May 11 at Warren Middle School—Rachel will submit the application for the Commission table. The National Arbor Day Foundation Tree Recovery Campaign is offering free seedlings at different locations through the New Jersey Forest Service. The Commission will purchase 98 tubelings for \$35.00 to be given out at the Green Fair with leftovers being offered at the community picnic the following week. The tubelings come with planting directions, and the offerings include Eastern White Pine, Red Bud, Norway Spruce, and Northern Red Oak. We all agreed to request Red Bud seedlings for distribution, although the Forest Service says they will send the type of tree they think is best for our region. Rachel will talk to Joan Tak on Weds. regarding their coordination of setup for the Commission's bottle cap recycling table and Joan's Honey Bee/honey display table at the Green Fair.

--Effective Environmental Commissions—Karen attended this workshop on March 2 and found it to be informative. She learned that the **Environmental Resource Inventory**, as part of the **Open Space and Recreation Plan**, should be updated every two years. Watchung's Inventory was updated in 2016. The Environmental Commission should write an annual report of activities. Jim stated that the updated inventory reflected very few changes from the previous inventory. Individuals can call ANJEC for a list of trees to avoid and for help with other environmental issues. The Commission should publicize its activities. Council Member Goodloe has a contact, Alex, at the **Echoes-Sentinel** if we want to place any articles on activities in the newspaper.

--Trex Recycling Boxes—discussed above under Plastic Bag Recycling

--Traffic and Beautification, the Environmental Commission, and the Historic Committee Group meeting—Jim passed out an outline of topics discussed with subtopics included. The main topics were Ordinances of the

Town, Business Update, Signs, Community Friendly, and Community Members. The next meeting is April 25, 2019. Some of the Watchung signs in town are considered to be outdated and in poor shape, and it is intended to have new signs created as a result of this group meeting.

--Open Space—Council Member Goodloe distributed drawings of proposals for the development of the Ness property. We will discuss the drawings at the next meeting once we have magnification, as Council Member Goodloe stated that they were difficult to see. We all agreed with that. Karen will try and obtain some larger scale drawings.

New Business:

--Sustainable NJ—Rachel checked into Watchung's participation in which points are awarded for environmental actions taken within the town. Watchung was certified, but the certification expires after three years. We can start the program up again and earn new points toward recertification. It is good for the town. One can go to the website, sustainablejersey.com for more information. The question was raised as to whether there is now a Green Team in town?

--Board of Adjustment Annual Report—The members of this group want to make changes to the tree ordinance. Arlene wrote a letter in support of the present ordinance, and Karen will ask Arlene to send a copy of her letter to the Board of Adjustment. The Commission is in agreement that the ordinance is fine the way it is written now and should not be changed.

Meetings, Correspondence, Permits: None

Review of Assignments for the Next Meeting: The next meeting will be held on Monday, April 22, 2019.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 9:50 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Jim and Andy Stout(Recording Secretaries)