

# WATCHUNG ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION MINUTES(FINAL)

MAY 20, 2019: 7:30 PM

**Present:** Karen Pennett, Rachel Funcheon, Jim and Andy Stout, Council Member Goodloe (via conference call), Catherine Furlan (resident), Alexa Speeney (student) and her father, Doug Speeney (resident)

**Absent:** Joan Tak, Sony Epstein

**Call to Order:** The meeting was called to order at 7:30 PM, and the March 25, 2019 minutes will be reviewed at the June 24, 2019 meeting. The October 2018 tree report will be sent to Michelle DeRocco, Borough Clerk.

## **Tree Reports:**

### April 2019 Tree Report

45 Winter Lane, 3/28/2019—This was the second visit to the vacant lot. The house was removed, and a buyer purchased the lot. The new owner wanted to clean up the property. The old owner needed to replant 23 trees from the last permit on the property. The obligation of the 23 trees passes on to the new owner. Remove 10 trees, 0 replacement.

40 Oak Ridge, 3/28/2019—House renovation. Trees buried by dirt. 2 dead, 4 live: replace 4 @ 4".

175 Hill Hollow, 4/8/2019—Remove 25 trees dead or diseased. This property is on the corner of Valley and Hill Hollow and has mostly ash trees. Remove dangerous and dead trees near the sidewalk. Home owner had marked 11 trees for removal, and 14 more trees were marked by us for removal. There are several other ash trees on the property.

205 Parlin Lane, 4/8/2019—New house on virgin lot. Revisit to the property, remove 58 trees, replace with 39 trees @ 2 ½".

4/8/2019—The Borough Engineer and I went around marking dead trees or dangerous trees along the streets of Johnston Drive, Brookdale, Skyline, and Carrar Drive that the town needs to remove. Letters will be sent to homeowners when the trees were on private property.

1 Hill Hollow Road, 4/12/2019—The owner removed trees, a stop order was issued. 8 trees were cut, 2 dead, 6 live. Replace 6 @ 4".

### May 2019 Tree Report

164 Valley Drive, 5/1/2019—revisited because of complaints from neighbors that trees were being cut, all trees cut have a permit. Wetlands area.

1293 Johnston Drive, 5/1/2019—Inspected to finalize replacement trees needed. This builder had buried many trees. We have been to this property several times, the final replacement count is 41 trees: 26 @ 2 ½", 15 @ 4".

185 Bonnie Burn road, 5/1/2019--4 dead or diseased trees.

40 Sherwood, 5/1/2019—New owner wants to level lot in back, Remove 23 trees, replace 3 @ 4", 20 @ 2 ½".

7 Meadowlark—New owner, cleaning up the lot. There are many large dead ash trees and straggly pines on the property. There were 2 good trees we didn't want to cut. Remove 30, replace 2 at 2 ½".

11 Hughes Lane, 5/1/2019—A stop work order was issued after neighbors were called, remove 6: 4 dead, 2 live, replace 2 @ 2 ½".

615 Mountain Blvd., 4/17/2019—stop work order issued.

1965 Johnston Drive, 5/8/2019, 6 dead trees.

39 Washington Drive, 5/17/2019—Remove 6: 4 dead, 2 live, replace 2 @ 4".

550 Philips Lane, 5/17/2019—6 dead, beech, pine, ash.

--Discussion followed by the Commission--It was suggested that protective fencing be placed around any trees on properties where construction is being done to prevent trunk damage or the trees being "buried" by construction equipment. This seems to be an ongoing problem in town with trees located on properties where construction is occurring.

**Planning Board:** Karen was not in attendance but stated that the Bayberry playground is now being constructed. This was discussed at the meeting.

**Special Guest, Maureen Greenbaum:** She wanted to discuss Madison's recent "plastics-free week" but was not able to attend due to illness. The group discussed planning a similar initiative for Watchung in the fall and maybe having a joint meeting with the Green Team to discuss.

#### **Old Business:**

-- Bottle Cap Recycling—Karen will take the bags of recycled bottle caps to Whole Foods. A bag of caps was collected at the Green Fair, and other bags were collected at the library.

--Trex Recycling Boxes—The 6 month project will start in the fall for the town. Karen and Rachel will meet with the Valley View School Environmental Club about starting the Trex Recycling at Valley View School, date to be arranged.

--Green Fair—Rachel, Jim, and Andy ran the table for the Environmental Commission. They distributed 50 free Jersey Pine seedlings along with planting instructions. 50 bags of milkweed seeds, prepared by Andy, were given out free to help the threatened monarch population in their migration and reproduction. A bottle cap recycling bin was available which resulted in the collection of a full bag of caps. Handouts on various topics were offered. Along with that, there were three posters on exhibit related to trees and pollinators. Rachel did a tremendous amount of work which resulted in a very successful display which promoted environmental stewardship at its finest. Commission members Sony and Joan, along with Council Member Goodloe, were at the table to help and support the project. Joan had a beautiful table display nearby promoting pollinators (honey bees) that included a demonstration hive which visitors could observe. Honey was available for purchase. Due to unforeseen circumstances, Karen was not able to be with us that day. Visitors to both tables were most enthusiastic and shared many stories of their own experiences with wildlife, gardening, pollinators, etc. and nature in general. Those of us in attendance had a very fun and positive day which helped to reassure us of how many individuals do care about the health of our environment and want to make a difference for future generations. The fair, in general, was terrific and a delightful and educational experience for all who attended.

Relative to the Green Fair for 2020, a suggestion was made that the chairperson(s), or whomever is responsible for the organization and set up on the morning of the fair, be present at least an hour before the event is scheduled to start to greet the early bird volunteers/presenters/ vendors, etc. For those arriving at 9:00 this year to get their exhibits ready, there seemed to be confusion as to locations of tables resulting in lost preparation time, extra work to reestablish display spots, and pressure on volunteers to move more quickly to be ready for the 10:00 AM opening. Also, some exhibits were located behind other exhibits resulting in poorer visitations at those areas. All exhibitors should have equal access to the public and should be located in a prominent place.

--Sustainable NJ—Research on this indicates that it is a large undertaking and joining together with the Green Team on this effort to earn points for the town might be more beneficial. The schools in town are already participating with Bayberry having reached the first level of points with Valley View working towards it.

--Tree Application—postponed to June meeting where the issues of septic systems and wells regarding the planting of trees will be discussed.

--Sewer bill—Council Member Goodloe will forward the flyer to Bill Hance to be enclosed in the sewer bill.

--Styrofoam Recycling—The recycling at the Green Fair worked well. Two truckloads were collected! The idea of starting styrofoam recycling was discussed again. Rachel called DPW in Long Hill Township and learned that they have collected clean white styrofoam there for three or four years. They collect it in a large shed, and when enough is collected, the styrofoam is placed in clear bags and taken to Foam Pack in Springfield. Long Hill recycles 8-10 tons a year! Bob Burns was contacted and advised of this. He said he thinks it is very feasible that Watchung could start a similar program. Bill Nehls will look into it.

### **New Business:**

--The meeting with the Valley View Environmental Club will be scheduled before the conclusion of the school year.

--Town Picnic—It was observed that the recycling buckets with lids were not being used at the picnic. What has happened to them? Council member Goodloe will talk to Public Works about this and the lack of doggy bag dispensers around the Watchung Lake walkway.

--Valley View School-- Alexa Speeney, a student at Valley View and member of their Environmental Club, discussed some of the school's environmental projects:

Terra Recycling program which involves collection of items such as lunch wrappers, toothpaste tubes, toothbrushes, cereal bags, etc. sorted into bins. When enough is collected, the materials are sent to the company. This project can also be done at home.

Valley View received a sustainable Jersey grant for three Tower Gardens which involve hydroponic growing. The school has also taken plastic bag strips and created mats with them.

For Alexa's silver badge in Girl Scouts, she wants to have an education focus which could involve restaurants. Council Member Goodloe will ask Peggy Ellis if there is an age limit for the Green Team, for Alexa made an inquiry as a seventh grader.

### **Meetings, Correspondence, Permits:**

--Seminar on Plastics in Morris County—Karen and Rachel attended this ANJEC seminar in Madison on May 16<sup>th</sup>. The main takeaway was that towns should encourage their officials to pass resolutions banning single-use plastic bags and straws. 26 towns have resolutions now via ordinance to accomplish this. 4.4 billion plastic bags are used in NJ annually. Stores need to train workers about conservation of plastic bags, and bringing bags to stores on an individual basis should be encouraged and promoted. Madison had a plastics free week and gave

bags to restaurants for use. A suggestion was made to try a plastic free week in town in Sept. or Oct., and Karen will contact ANJEC for advice as to implementation. Residents could sign pledges, and the Green Team could be involved.

**Review of Assignments for the Next Meeting:** The next meeting will be held on Monday, June 24, 2019.

**Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned at 9:28 PM.

Respectfully submitted,  
Jim and Andy Stout(Recording Secretaries)