

WATCHUNG ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION MINUTES(FINAL)

AUGUST 26, 2019

Present: Karen Pennett, Sondy Epstein, Rachel Funcheon, Jim and Andy Stout, JoanTak, Council Member Goodloe

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 7:42 PM, and the June 24, 2019 minutes were approved. Joan suggested looking for a volunteer, such as a high school student, to write the minutes, but this is not feasible.

Tree Reports: July-August 2019

--55 Glen Eagles Drive, 6/26/2019: making an addition to the back of the house. Remove 8 trees, 6 live, 2 dead or diseased.

--106 Brookdale Road, 7/9/2019: Remove 7 trees: 2 dead, 5 live: replace 3 at 2 1/2".

--215 Mountain Blvd, 7/9/2019, New Construction: the owner is building a garage with an apartment that will be designated affordable by the town. Remove an additional 6 live trees: 1 dead, replace an additional 6 @ 4".

--68 Ellisen, 7/30/2019: remove 8 diseased or dead trees.

--40 Nottingham, 7/24/2019: remove 15-16 dead trees, 11 Ash, please replace with large growing deciduous trees.

--145 Nottingham, 7/24/2019: Remove 9-10 dead trees: 9 conifers, 1 snapped Maple, consider removing Pine tree at fireplace front.

--82 Ellisen, 7/24/2019, Remove 6 trees: 5 dead, 1 live: replace 1 @ 4".

--59 Stanie Brae Drive, 7/24/2019: new owner, house remodeling plus a detached garage, the trees were not marked. Revisited 7/30/2019: trees missing from the tree plan. 8/13/2019, The owner wants to remove several **Norway Maple** trees in the front side. Norway Maple trees are an invasive tree species. We are allowing more trees to be removed from the lot than the code allows because of the invasive species. Remove 48 trees, waiting for replacement plan.

--Stop work order was issued for 87 Old Somerset Road. After going to town and requesting permits, the owner started demolishing the house. A **Summons** was issued to the property owner.

--585 Valley Road, Remove 9 trees: 2 dead, one large leaning Tulip, 6 live. One live large Oak denied in back. Owner is contesting. The Commission will have to meet at the property to look when we receive the telephone number.

--The revised tree permit was approved by the Environmental Commission over the internet and became available over the internet and the Office of Engineering.

Planning Board: There were no issues discussed. Affordable Housing will be discussed at the next meeting of the Board.

Old Business:

--Bottle Cap Recycling---There is still contamination in the bin with regards to the lids, but the program continues to go well. A suggestion was made for some type of small room to be included in the new library plans to accommodate Watchung's increasing recycling programs. The actual act of recycling brings in participants to the library programs.

--Styrofoam Recycling---Bob Burns seems most supportive of the proposed styrofoam recycling program to be activated once the new DPW facility opens (possibly in October). Rachel checked with Long Hill Township which does a similar program using a 10' x 18' shed into which residents place styrofoam which is then loaded into plastic bags by DPW workers and taken to Foam Pack. Long Hill collects 8-10 tons a year. Most likely, a dumpster will not be used in Watchung. The Watchung DPW workers will make the delivery to Foam Pack from our town collection site.

--Trex Plastic Bag Recycling---This will be done in town for 6 months starting in the fall and if 500 pounds are collected, the town will get a park bench. There will be 4 bins at various sites still in need of permission being granted. A similar program will be occurring in the middle school from Nov. 15-April 15. The plastic bags are weighed by a member and can then be taken to Acme, Kohls, Stop and Shop, Target, or Whole Foods. Rachel will call Trex to find out the details of what happens once the plastic bags are brought to one of the stores. We do know that the store sends the bags to Trex in 1,000 pound bails. Should the town program collect fewer bags than the 500 pound goal for a bench, the town's collectibles will be donated to Valley View School to enhance their program.

--Poop Bags---The bags have not been ordered. Bob Burns was going to ask Bill Hance to order them from Amazon, and he will do that. Council Member Goodloe will follow up on the order.

--Green Team---This team does not have many members and, other than the Green Fair, has not been active. Joan will contact Peggy Ellis about getting the team activated. It was suggested that the Green Team and the Environmental Commission unite.

--Recycling Bins for Town Events---There has been no answer as to where the bins are stored. A recycling bin should accompany each garbage can at any event. The Billy Joel Tribute Band Concert has been rescheduled and will be coming up soon. Rachel will contact Bob Burns to check out the shed as to the possible location of the recycling bins which are needed for this concert. Joan suggested that we could ask for volunteer donations of former town recycling buckets if anyone wants to part with their bucket.

--Tree Removal Permit---completed

--Fall Newsletter---"Reduce the Use of Single-Use Plastics" is the title. It was suggested that we get an article prepared ahead of time for spring. Joan volunteered to write an article on trees that are pollinators to encourage residents to choose these specimens in their landscape selection.

--Watchung Signs---Council Member Goodloe and Jim presented the members with the sign choices being considered, and Joan suggested an alternative which was a vertical type pole with letters which she observed in another town. The members were divided but when the vote was taken, the two proposed signs(one post or two posts depending upon location in town) were approved but not unanimously. Joan will email her suggestion to Gail Tafaro. The commission prefers and recommends that the letters be engraved to accent the lettering rather than just having a sign with flat lettering. It does not appear from looking at other signs in different locales that the engraved lettering has borne any more weathering than the sign on which the letters are located.

New Business:

--Mosquito Spraying—The Commission is very concerned about the less than 24 hour notice provided to the residents with regards to the mosquito spraying on Friday night, August 4, 2019. A truck mounted sprayer was used with the insecticide spray(Scourge) consisting of 3 oz. per acre. Residents were notified by Borough website email at 8:26 PM Thursday evening, August 3, 2019 that the spraying would occur the next day due to a confirmed Zika Virus in Watchung resulting in a case of Encephalitis. A beekeeper(member of the Environmental Commission) received her notice at 3:30 PM on August 3 which did not allow her sufficient time to protect her hives or move them to a different location. People with respiratory issues and other medical concerns, families with children and pets, those not seeing the email, gardeners with vegetable or fruit crops, residents who have pollinator gardens, etc. needed to have more warning of the imminent spraying and possible risks involved to protect their health and property. While we understand the necessity to do this spraying, we question the lateness of the alert. Suggestions if this must happen again include alerts using the town sign, the robo call network, website, Facebook, and a phone chain. Rachel will write a letter expressing our concerns which will be sent to Council Member Goodloe and then presented further up the chain of command. The major issue is the late timing of notification with regards to safety factors.

Meetings, Correspondence, Permits: None

Review of Assignments for the Next Meeting: The meeting was adjourned at 9:50 PM. The next meeting will be September 23, 2019.

Respectfully Submitted,
Jim and Andy Stout(Recording Secretaries)