

3/19/20  
Agenda

WATCHUNG ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION MINUTES  
January 27, 2020

**Present:** Karen Pennett, Sony Epstein, Rachel Funcheon, Joan Tak, Coraleine Kitt, Doug Speeney, and visitor Alexa Speeney. **Absent:** Council President Robinson

**Call to order:** The meeting was called to order at 7:30 pm.

**Approval of Minutes:** December, 2019 minutes were approved.

**Introduction of New Members:** New members Doug Speeney and Coraleine Kitt were introduced.

**Reorganization:** Rachel was named chairperson. Coraleine was named secretary. Sony was reinstated as tree inspector.

**Tree Report:** January, 2020

-- 64 Lakeview Ave, 1/2/2020. House to be torn down and a new house built. Remove 23 trees: replace 16, 12 @ 2 1/2", 4 @ 4". The neighbor on the south side asked for the removal of the arborvitae over-growing on his property.

-- 14 High Tor Drive, 1/23/2020. Remove 8 trees: 7 dead or diseased, 1 live, replace 1 @ 2 1/2".

-- The town went to court on 87 Old Somerset St with violations that Arlene caught. The town won and a \$25,000 fine was imposed by the court.

Rachel brought up 3 big oaks taken down by water company on Johnston Dr. Utility companies have the authority to take down trees necessary to maintain the utility.

Joan questioned: If a tree company is taking a tree down, how do we know if they have a permit? Call the Engineering Dept and they can look it up.

Sony recommended changing the tree ordinance, making a special provision for very large, historic trees. Commission will ask Wendy at the next meeting to make a motion with the Council. There would be 3 categories for replacement:

Tree less than 18" in diameter, replace with a tree at least 2.5" in diameter.

Tree 18" to 36" in diameter, replace with a tree at least 4" in diameter.

Tree greater than 36" in diameter, replace with TWO trees that are each at least 4" in diameter.

Doug proposed creating incentives for residents to have the Borough plant native trees on their properties, since the Borough is running out of public land.

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**Planning Board:** There is a special meeting on Jan. 29, 2020, about the Bonnie Burn development. Karen will give input for the EC, including replanting using native trees, using porous pavement for better drainage, protecting wildlife, requesting that ground maintenance use only organic products for land care, not Roundup or synthetic pesticides, recycling area for future residents and if the recycling trucks will pick up within the complex, and if parking structures could be used instead of parking lots to leave more open space.

Karen also gave a brief review of proposed new Learning Center on Union Ave., which is under review with the Planning Board, to familiarize the new members.

**Green Team:** Joan reported that the Green Fair will be held on Sat., May 16, 2020, at WHRHS. The GT hopes to establish consistency by always holding it on the third Sat. of May at this same location. Potential vendors are being contacted by Rachel and Joan, including Nespresso and Sweaty Betty. Joan suggested that different stations be set up at the Fair to teach residents about recycling, and also that the Green Fair be listed on the Watchung/Warren/ Green Brook Town Planner Calendar. It was also proposed that the GT be tasked with restoring Watchung's Sustainable Jersey designation.

#### **Recycling Reports:**

-- Styrofoam Recycling. Rachel is following up with Mr. Damato about the status of the new DPW facility, and the possibility of the Borough buying a shed if a used one is not available.

--Trex Plastic Bag Recycling. Rachel reported that 493 lbs of the 500 lb goal have been collected. There was agreement that we should continue the program after the initial 6-month period is over. Also, it was agreed that we need to recruit more people to help with the collection of the bags. If we receive multiple benches, the suggestion was made that we can give one to each collection site, like the churches and Cupa Cafe.

-- Bottle caps. Program is still going well.

#### **Unfinished Business:**

-- Joan will write an article on pollinators for the Spring Newsletter. The deadline is March 1, and all members are encouraged to suggest other subjects for the EC's page in the newsletter.

-- Rachel reported that the 175 reusable bags we ordered will ship on Feb. 13. There was discussion on how to distribute them. We will give some away at the Green Fair and will continue to discuss the best way to give them out to residents.

-- The 2020 EC meeting schedule was finalized with one change.

-- The meeting about the Rain Garden was postponed again. Karen will advise when she hears that a new date has been set.

**New Business:**

-- Karen suggested we set goals for 2020, and Rachel proposed that everyone come to the next meeting with 3 suggestions of initiatives for the EC to pursue this year.

-- Doug presented Recycling Rates (amount of trash that is recycled) and other recycling data for all towns in the state. Watchung's RR is 33%, lower than the state average of 40%. It was discussed that we need to be sure all our recycling is counted, like bottle caps, plastic bags, etc. How is Watchung's recycling weighed? Rachel will check with Somerset County Recycling to ask how the recycling is reported. There was agreement that we should try to improve our recycling rate, to help the environment and also because Watchung gets an annual rebate from the state based on recycling tonnage reported.

**Meetings, Correspondence, Permits:** Karen acknowledged receipt of copies of letters to the Mayor and Council written by Jim and Andy Stout, and the letters were read aloud at the meeting.

**Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned at 10:30 pm. The next meeting of the EC will be on Monday, February 24, 2020, at 7:30 pm.

Minutes submitted by Coraleine Kitt and Rachel Funcheon