

WATCHUNG ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION TELECONFERENCE MINUTES (FINAL)

MONDAY, AUGUST 24, 2020

Present: Rachel Funcheon, Sony Epstein, Karen Pennett, Doug Speeney, Jim and Andy Stout, and Council President Wendy Robinson

Absent: Joan Tak

1. Call to Order: The teleconference meeting was called to order at 7:33 PM.

2. Approval of Minutes: The minutes of the teleconference meeting of June 22, 2020 were approved.

3. Reports:

a. Tree Report: General report submitted by the Commission tree inspector, Sony Epstein with the detailed report to be attached to the final minutes.

--General Report—From June - August, 203 dead or diseased trees were removed along with 111 live trees.

--151 Sunlit—Tree plan submitted. Remove 33 trees: 18 to be replaced with 2 ½" trees and 15 with 4" trees. The Commission completed a site review and determined that the 42" Oak and the 38" Maple would have to be removed. Each of these 2 large trees will be replaced by 3 trees: a 4" tree PLUS 2, 2 ½" trees.

--Edgemont Road—The issue was resolved through Borough Engineering.

--15 Glen Eagles—Violation, inspection, and remedy done by the PT Engineer and another company. They determined that 14 trees were removed, 7 needing replacement. 5 trees of 4" will be planted along with 2 trees at 2 ½". Seven trees were determined to be dead or dying, no replacements needed.

--Trees are being impacted by diseases (Burnt Leaf Syndrome on Oaks) and insects (Spotted Lantern Fly).

--Rachel will be receiving information on the Spotted Lantern Fly from the NJ Department of Agriculture and will share it with us. She will also send the information to the Borough Clerk and asked Council President Robinson to mention it at the Borough Council meeting.

--Assistant Engineer Arlene McCoy will be leaving her job on September 10 to assume a new position. She has served our community for 20 years and has been a valuable asset to the town for her diligence and dedication to tree preservation. Concerns were expressed by Commission members as to how her position will be filled.

b. Planning Board: The Planning Board is reviewing the Master Plan, the framework of the Borough. This is updated every 10 years and includes what was completed since the last Master Plan, what was not completed, and additions/changes such as affordable housing. The plan must be completed by the end of 2021. Additions to the Master Plan include: stronger enforcement of ordinances, limit impervious coverage in all zoning areas, reinforce area around the Lake. Karen is recommending adding the following to the plan: review declining areas for affordable housing, i.e. Blue Star Shopping Center as well as existing apartment complexes, i.e. the Point. The Plan includes mention of the Tree Ordinance and fines for clear cutting. Karen is going to verify what change suggested, ordinance currently fines for one or more trees being removed. When questioned, the committee inferred no changes to the Tree Ordinance. If this is correct, Karen will recommend removing the Tree Ordinance from the Plan. We support compliance with the current Tree Ordinance, so any change should be stronger. Karen wants to change the plan for lake edge restoration to include a "positive environmental impact" when the lake edge is restored. It was suggested that native plants recommended by the Commission be a part of the restoration. Complementing the natural beauty of the lake for the enticement of birds, pollinators, and other wildlife should be a factor as well as enhancing visual appeal for all of us. Perhaps, Sustainable Jersey points could be earned through bank restoration efforts.

c. Recycling:

--Bottle cap recycling is still on hold as is the collection of plastic bags which the Acme is not taking right now. The Stirling Shop-Rite has 4 bins for plastic bag collection located at the doors outside of the store. Rachel posted the Shop-Rite information on Facebook.

--Styrofoam recycling—Rachel is awaiting a response from the Administrator with regards to buying a shed for a proposed Styrofoam recycling program in town. The DPW would take the Styrofoam to Foam Pack in Springfield for recycling. Doug reported on a machine that Middletown purchased that compacts and recycles Styrofoam, thereby keeping it out of landfills. The end product can then be sold and reused. The machine, called Foam Cycle, costs \$48,000 and could be shared with one or more towns or used on a regional basis. Perhaps, a grant could be obtained for the purchase or the county would provide support.

d. Green Team:

--Work has started on rain gardens along Valley Road by Best Lake and by the Rescue Squad building. The retention basin at Bayberry School and the upper slope at Bayberry are considerations for the future. Rutgers is doing all the work due to the low response from other towns and will replace any plants that do not survive.

--Coraleine Kitt, co-chair of the Green Team, was consulted to look at actions for Sustainable Jersey—the Borough can get points for rain gardens. Actions were identified for each person to earn points.

--Gypsy moths are being detected in town, and the DOA will do a gypsy moth mass survey. The DOA has an integrated pest management plan which uses *Bacillus Thuringiensis*. It was mentioned that BT is toxic to all butterfly and moth caterpillars, as well as gypsy moth caterpillars, and would be detrimental to pollinators. Omri was suggested as an organic resource.

4. Unfinished Business:

a. Rain gardens—discussed above

b. Long Hill Tree Grant Program—Rachel is trying to determine who controls the Tree Bank funds and is interested in a program similar to what Long Hill is doing. The Shade Tree Commission controls what is planted there. It was mentioned that tree fund money must be used to purchase trees to be planted on public lands or on a right-of-way on the opposite side of the road from utilities. Council President Robinson will check with the DPW committee, Borough Administrator Jim Damato, and Mayor Balla. It was also suggested that the Boy Scouts could help plant trees, or that it could be an Eagle Scout project. It might be possible to link the ash tree destruction to the tree fund money for the planting of trees in town.

c. Hazardous tree at Valley View School—removed

d. Newsletter—There will be two articles from the Commission—one on "Healthy Lawns Equal Healthy Waterways" and one on the preservation of dandelions and clover in lawns as food for pollinators.

5. New Business:

a. Certified Mail to EC—PSE and G was informing all parties of work going on in town by their company. They are applying for a permit extension to use selective herbicide application on vegetation in riparian zones. They have a right to trim/remove brush and trees as necessary. Also, Texas Eastern Transmission sent notification of proposed maintenance work on their natural gas pipeline in Watchung.

b. Site Plan Reviews—The Planning Board does a review if a variance is needed, and Karen is our representative to the Board and reports back to the Commission as well as seeking our input for the various requests. Rachel discussed a Low Impact Construction Checklist that Warren uses when their EC receives site plans and makes recommendations to the Planning Board. It is a list that could be provided to anyone proposing a construction project which would be filled out and handed in with the initial application. Its purpose would be to increase awareness of greener options when a building project is being planned. Karen

will mention it to the Planning Board, and Rachel will ask Laura Mandell, EC Chair in Warren, for permission to use their list. Doug will send members the Sustainable Jersey type of Green Development checklist

c. Draft Letter from Doug Speeney—Doug Speeney drafted a letter for the Commission to consider regarding proactive steps to improve the environmental impacts associated with COAH projects. In short, the letter suggested the town should consider placing these projects in redevelopment areas that do not require clear cutting, that the housing should incorporate green building strategies, and that the Borough should consider managing the COAH projects on its own, which would limit the size of the developments. The Commission supported his letter and proposals along with Council President Robinson. Doug will tweak his letter after receiving additional suggestions from Commission members. Any suggestions should be submitted to Doug by Monday, August 31, 2020. When finalized, the letter will be forwarded to the Mayor and Council and Planning Board.

A second letter will be prepared to put forth suggestions for green our local building codes. Ideas for consideration will be discussed at the next meeting.

d. Trex Bench earned through collection of plastic bags—A different location might have to be sought for placement of the bench. It was originally planned for placement near the 911 Memorial.

6. Special Announcements and Correspondence:

a. Minutes—The Chairperson has requested that anyone making edits to the draft or final minutes send copies of their suggested changes to all members and Council President Robinson. This enhances transparency and reduces confusion and editing time.

b. Agendas—The Chairperson would like any items for the agenda to be submitted to her no later than the Thursday before the meeting date. This way, she can prepare the agenda to be sent out on Friday or early Saturday and enable the members to look over the agenda items well ahead of the meeting for a more meaningful discussion. An "other" category will be added to New Business for issues that come up at the last minute.

7. Other: Bamboo Concern—DPW has not responded yet on the needed removal of bamboo growing in a drain in town.

8. Review of Assignments for the Next Meeting: The meeting was adjourned at 10:32 PM with the next meeting scheduled for September 21, 2020.

Respectfully submitted,

Andy Stout (Recording Secretary) and Jim Stout (Assistant to the Secretary)

Tree Report June –August 2020

Dead or diseased trees removed 203

live trees removed 111

Dead Live

9		3/17 151 Johnston Dr. ext (Joan Tak)
3	12	4/15, 4/16 44 Joan drive, violation stop order Replace 6: 5 @ 2 ½ “ 1 @4” 9 trees removed without permit : 4 trees within 15 feet of house
21		5/13 561 Valley Road all dead ash 17 trees > 4”
1	1	5/26 73 Lakeview Terr: replace 1 @ 1/1/2 “
4		5/26 515 Mountain Blvd/ 147 Wetumpka
1		5/26 70 High tor Drive: dead pine
	3	5/15 65 Glen Eagles Drive
	1	5/26 73 Lakeview Terrace replace 1 @ 2 ½”
4		5/26 515 Mountain Blvd/147 Wetumpka
	1	5/26 70 High Tor Drive
+	21	5/21 561 Valley road - 17 greater than 4”
9	6	4/20 44 Joan drive: tree violation issued in middle of cutting. An inspection was done and the owner applied for a Permit with 6 additional trees to be taken: Replace 6 @ 5 @ 2 ½ 1 @ 6” new home owner
6		6/1 40 Century Lane
9		6/1 60 Carrar Drive: all dead ash
3		6/1 39 Fawn Lane
5		6/3 11 Canterbury Lane : all dead or within 15 feet of house

Tree Report June –August 2020

dead	live	
1		6/4 102 Washington Drive: \$350 paid to tree bank
1		6/4 94 Washington Drive: dead tree next to house
2		6/9 25 Washington Rock Road: Replace 2 @ 2 ½ “
	3	6/9 190 Washington Rock Road: all ash
	1	6/9 539 Mountain Blvd: replace 1 @ 4” very large hollow limb
1		6/13 50 Cantury Lane
3		6/12 14 Fawn Lane: dead pine trees
3		6/13 22 East Drive:
	8	6/12 & 6/12 72 Edgemont Rd remove 8 live :replace with 7 @ 2 ½” & 1@ 4” or pay \$2,800 to tree bank. (Joan Tak)
2		6/18 35 Dogwood Lane, within 20 feet of house: no Replacement
5		6/18 1111 Johnston Drive
		6/18 Violation issued: tree removal 59 Guinard Drive
12		6/19 Stirling Road, Lakeside Villas: no replacement (Joan Tak)
1		6/22 25 Maple St. dead ash no replacement
6		6/24 102 Stanie Glen Rd: some trees not even 4”
3		6/24 11 Edgemont Rd. dead or dying
5		6/24 59 Eaton Road: 4 ash,1 maple
2		6/26 71 Will Lane:
8		6/29 500 Valley road:
1	3	6/30 121 Wetumpka: Replace 3: 3 @ 2/1/2 “

Tree Report June –August 2020

6/30 10 & 20 Glen Eagles contest that the topping of the tulip trees did not kill them. Topping of trees is a violation of our ordinances

Dead Live

2		7/1 1260 Johnston Drive:
3		7/1 206 Anderson Road: dead ash, black oak red oak
1	3	7/1 469 Valley Road: Replace 3: 3@ 2 ½ “ planted
	1	7/2 1 Ridge Road
2		7/13 321 Johnston Dr.
3		7/13 82 Ellisen
8		7/14 599 Ridge: all dead
1		7/14 25 Corey lane: tree down already
5		7/14 562 Ridge Road: 3 ash, 2 pine dead
3		7/16 92 Sunbright: 2 ash, 1 maple dead
		7/20 Violation issued 50 Carrar Drive
2		7/21 45 Templar
4		7/21 208 Valley Road
3		7/21 32 Crestwood Dr. all ash
7	7	7/29 15 Glen Eagles Dr. VIOLATION INSPECTION AND REMIDY Remove 14 trees; replace with 2 @ 2 ½ “ 5 @ 4” it was Determined by agency that there were 5 ashes and 2 dead Trees

Tree Report June –August 2020

Dead	Live	
5		7/21 35 Parlin Lane,
	2	7/22 436 Ridge Road, 1 close to house, Replace 1@ 4"
7		7/29 20 Stirling road all dead or within 15 feet of structure
	1	7/31 75 mountain Blvd: no replacement within 20 ft of house
1		7/30 24 Lakeview within 5 feet of house
	1	8/30 58 Ridge Road: dead ash
	33	8/11 151 Sunlite Drive; a permit was issued to cut 9 trees: the builder called engineering back because he wanted to cut a 42 inch oak and a 38 inch maple that were supposed to have been protected. The commission was called in and decided that the trees could not be saved and that the commission would accept a replacement for them. Each tree would have a 4" tree and 2, 2 ½" tree replacement. A new tree plan was submitted
A		Remove 33 tree: replace 18 trees 2 ,2 ½ " 15 @ 4"
n		a \$6,600 bond will be held for 2 Years
	1	8/11 50 Corey Lane, replace: 1 @ 4"
1		8/13 64 Lakeview, storm damage
1		8/13 380 Johnston, dead damaged by storm
5		8/17 52 Redmont Road: diseased or dead
1		8/18 37 Century Lane .dead cheery
3	2	8/14 562 Ridge, Remove 5 trees 3 uprooted leaning tulips and 2 must be removed for Crain to get in: replace 2 @ 2 ½"
4		8/20 130 Nottingham Dr