

WATCHUNG ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION TELECONFERENCE MINUTES (FINAL)

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 21, 2020

Present: Rachel Funcheon, Sondy Epstein, Karen Pennett, Doug Speeney, Jim and Andy Stout, Joan Tak, Council President Wendy Robinson and resident, Renata Reis

1. Call to Order: The teleconference meeting was called to order at 7:31 PM.

2. Special Guest: Renata Reis—Spotted Lantern Fly

Resident Renata Reis contacted the Engineering Dept. and the EC about the Spotted Lantern Fly impacting our town. She hopes to raise awareness and address this serious problem which can impact 70 different species of trees. An arborist toured her property and helped her to identify the Tree of Heaven, which the SLF's prefer, and will remove the trees. Discussion included removing Trees of Heaven and treating the ground, the financial impact of not doing anything as reflected in decreased property values in town and how the town will look, expenses to remove the trees, and the implications involving environmental issues.

Many ideas were suggested by members for combatting this insect, including having DPW go around town to remove Trees of Heaven from borough property, so Council President Robinson will talk to the DPW committee. Rachel will reach out to Laura Mandell in Warren to see what they are doing, with Joan reaching out to Berkeley Heights and Doug checking with the Dept. of Agriculture. Rutgers Cooperative Extension has programs and is another possibility, as is Penn State. If the DPW does cut any Trees of Heaven, photos could be taken as to why the removals are taking place and accompanied by an article to the **Echoes-Sentinel** on the Spotted Lantern Fly. Renata will ask her arborist about what chemical he is using in her yard and has volunteered her services. Other ideas included getting children involved in their own neighborhoods, and a Watchung Neighborhood Network website posting as well as one on the Borough Facebook page. Karen will contact Jay Stiles who leads the Boy Scouts, and she will reach out to Carolyn Solon, the local Girl Scout leader. Doug will contact the teacher in charge of the Valley View Environmental Club.

A special meeting on the Spotted Lantern Fly will be held by the Commission on Monday, October 5, 2020 at 7:30 (this meeting was moved to Tuesday, Oct. 6) to discuss education and action on this topic.

3. Approval of Minutes: The minutes of the teleconference meeting of August 24, 2020 were approved.

4. Reports:

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

--General Report—59 dead trees were removed as well as 5 live trees. Concern was expressed as to who will be handling the tree inspections after the recent departure of Arlene McCoy, former Assistant Engineer.

--Site Inspections and Violations—Regarding 15 Glen Eagles, the court date was moved to Oct. 14, 2020.

b. Planning Board—The Master Plan was discussed with changes made, and the review must be completed by April-May, 2021. The Green Building Checklist was added to the Master Plan. The checklist does not have to be implemented by the builder. Ten points can be earned for Sustainable Jersey for projects requiring Planning Board approval. The low impact checklist provided to Rachel by Laura Mandell will not be included in the Master Plan but can be added to the builder's packet upon approval of the Borough Council with Warren Township Green Team getting credit for creating it. Laura Mandell has granted permission for the use of the low impact checklist. Also, Doug's letter regarding the greening of COAH projects was sent to the PB and the Mayor and Council.

c. Recycling—Watchung and Warren are not doing any bottle cap recycling projects now due to COVID, and Madison Whole Foods has suspended the bottle cap recycling program. Whole Foods in Vaux Hall and Princeton are apparently still collecting #5 plastics, including the caps.

d. Green Team—Sustainable Jersey meeting will be held on Thursday, Sept. 24, 2020, at 4:00 PM.

5. Unfinished Business:

a. Rain Gardens—There was nothing new on the proposed rain garden at Bayberry School due to a missed deadline to identify the sight and a miscommunication. Council President Robinson will reach out to Walter Lane at the county level.

b. Greening Building Code: Green Development Checklists—discussed under the Planning Board section.

c. Tree Bank Rules—According to the Ordinance, the trees must be planted on public property, and the Traffic and Beautification Committee decides upon locations. Clarity is needed as to who controls the funds. The ordinance will need to be changed, and Rachel will write up for comments. Council President Robinson will bring up the issue with the Council.

d. Trex Bench—The 911 Memorial area is being reconsidered for placement of the bench, and the playground area was another suggested location. Council President Robinson will take another look at the Memorial location.

6. New Business:

a. 9/11 Tree Giveaway—The Mayor ordered 96 trees at \$2.50 a piece through the Pinelands Nursery upon Rachel's suggestion, and 2/3 of the seedlings were given away at the 911 Memorial event. An instruction sheet was provided with the emphasis on keeping the seedling well watered, protected, and providing a large space for planting. Rachel had the remainder of the seedlings brought to her house, and she advertised the seedlings on Facebook. All remaining seedlings were taken by the residents. The seedlings did not come with fencing and a stake as originally suggested.

b. Webinar about New Stormwater Management Rules—Watershed Institute—The rules for water management are being changed at the state level with more emphasis on a green approach and environmental protections in place. The Borough will have to modify the storm water control ordinance to reflect the new rules by March, 2021. The engineer will redo the ordinance which then has to go through laws and ordinances. Doug will give a copy of the model ordinance to Council President Robinson.

c. Other—ANJEC wants each town to pass laws to ban the use of plastic, paper bags, and styrofoam but, meanwhile, the state vote is Thursday, September 24, 2020. If passed, the law will go into effect 18 months later. The commission will await the decision by the state before proceeding on any proposal at the local level.

--Rachel made a short statement about the recent report by the World Wildlife Fund which said that in the last 50 years, wildlife populations worldwide have decreased 68% due to human activity. She mentioned the devastating fires, strong hurricanes, and other severe impacts of climate change. She wanted to provide some inspiration by saying there is still a lot we can all do by "thinking global and acting local", even in our town yards. She cited the gardens on her own property that she had the time to grow this year due to being at home because of the pandemic, and said that by providing food, water and shelter, birds, insects, and ground animals can flourish with our help. She quoted RBG who said, "Fight for the things that you care about, but do it in a way that will lead others to join you." She said hopefully we in the EC can inspire others in Watchung to do what they can to help wildlife and all of nature flourish here.

7. Special Announcements and Correspondence: none

8. Review of Assignments for the Next Meeting: The meeting was adjourned at 9:44 PM with the next meeting scheduled for October 26, 2020.

Respectfully submitted,

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

Tree Report Sept 2020

59 dead trees removed : 5 live trees removed

76 Price Drive, 8/24, 6 dead

73 Wildwood, 9/01 Remove 8 trees: 7 ash trees diseased and 1 diseased oak. Owner wants to cut four more oaks in the yard. The commission is being brought in. The commission assembled to inspect the property. The commission is allowing the owners to cut the oak trees .Replace 4 oak trees @4”.

30 Shawnee Drive, 9/01: 9 dead pines

95 Ridge Rd 9/01; 9 dead trees: 6 ash, 2 oaks, one sassafras.

Violation: 8 /26/2020; 27 Stanie Glen Road

Dead Live

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | | 37 Century Lane 8/18 |
| 1 | | 90 Carrar Drive 8/21 |
| 4 | | 130 Nottingham 8/20 |
| 1 | 1 | 77 Valley View 8/21: Replace 1 @ 2 ½ “ |
| 1 | 3 | 74 Lakeview; 9/3 1 tree struck by lightning. 2 trees near house Replace 1 @4 “ |
| 1 | | 38 Watchung Crest Dr.:9 /2 , dead ash |
| 4 | | 5 Friar Lane: 9/3, all dead |
| 2 | | 536 Valley Road, 9/03., dead ash |
| 1 | | 5 Johnston, 9/2 |
| 4 | | 100 Sunlite, 9/2, dead or diseased |
| | 1 | 156 Anderson Road, 7/30: Replace 1 @ 4” |
| 2 | | 145 Knightbridge. 9/9 |
| 1 | | 70 High Tor Dr. 9/8 |