

# WATCHUNG ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION TELECONFERENCE MINUTES (FINAL)

## SPOTTED LANTERN FLY SPECIAL MEETING—TUESDAY, OCTOBER 6, 2020

**Present:** Rachel Funcheon, Sondy Epstein, Karen Pennett, Doug Speeney, Jim and Andy Stout, Joan Tak, Council President Wendy Robinson and residents, Ray Barratt and Coraleine Kitt

**1. Call to Order:** The special teleconference meeting to discuss the Spotted Lantern Fly was called to order at 7:32 PM.

**2. Special Guests:** Ray Barratt and Coraleine Kitt, members of the Wildlife Management Advisory Committee

### **3. Subject: Spotted Lantern Fly**

The objective of this special meeting on the Spotted Lantern Fly was to discuss education and action on this invasive insect. The Tree of Heaven is its primary host and is a stepping stone as the insect moves to other plant life. The Environmental Commission's goal is to be proactive in mitigating the potential damages which could ensue as the Spotted Lantern Fly moves further east and becomes a major problem to our landscape (trees, plants, flowers, garden crops, etc.). It has proven to be a destructive element in any community that has experienced an invasion.

Members of the Commission researched various options for eliminating the trees and insect as well as educating the community. Karen checked with the Boy Scout and Girl Scout leaders. Doug reached out to the Dept. of Agriculture regarding the clearing of the Tree of Heaven along the Route 78 corridor as well as taking photos of these trees growing in our community. Sondy contacted the principals of Bayberry School and Valley View Schools. Joan provided information on a free online Penn State course which provides the participant with a certificate at conclusion and reached out to the Berkeley Heights Environmental Commission which relies on Union County and Rutgers for communication on the Spotted Lantern Fly. Jim researched herbicides and their toxicities, such as Triclopyr, that could be used to eliminate the Trees of Heaven. Rachel reached out to the Warren and Bernards Twp Environmental Commissions and the Long Hill Shade Tree Commission, all of whom expressed interest in our updates. Rachel has kept us apprised of her correspondence and phone calls to various sources to ascertain the best approaches to dealing with this very invasive species of tree and insect. Other ideas included having the town hire a licensed tree company for tree removal and herbicide spraying, marking a sample Tree of Heaven with a ribbon for identification by residents, using the social media sources for spreading the word, closely monitored tree taping, instituting a residential hot line or email, having the Borough waive the tree permit for removal of this tree, and public outreach by providing residents with a 6 point list of suggestions provided by the Raritan Headwaters Association to deal with the Trees of Heaven on their own properties.

Concerns included incorporating the taping method to trap the insects, the use of herbicides and especially Roundup, and the appropriate elimination of the Tree of Heaven to prevent grow back (cutting and herbicide control should occur at the same time). Research continues in these areas as well as in all other aspects of this challenge to our community.

Proposed actions for the present time include marking with spray the Trees of Heaven near Watchung Lake, having Jay Stiles check out the marked trees for a Boy Scout removal (cutting) project, checking with DPW about the possibility of an employee being licensed in applying herbicides, and getting a price from a licensed tree company for both removal and treatment.

Rachel will write up the Raritan Watershed 6-point list of suggestions for homeowners to combat the SLF and send to the Borough for online posting. Council President Robinson will email Charlie Gunther and Carolyn Solon and request that she reach out to Rutgers.

**Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned at 9:07 PM. Next regularly scheduled meeting (Oct. 26, 2020).

Respectfully submitted, Andy Stout (Recording Secretary) and Jim Stout (Assistant to the Secretary)