

WATCHUNG ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION TELECONFERENCE MINUTES (FINAL)

MONDAY, OCTOBER 26, 2020

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

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

2. Approval of Minutes: The minutes of the teleconference meeting of Sept. 21, 2020, and the minutes of the Spotted Lantern Fly special meeting of Oct. 6, 2020, were approved.

3. 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.

--For the month of October, 184 dead trees were removed along with 31 live trees by permit—total of 215 trees. Many of the dead trees were Ash. It was suggested that the number of trees to be replaced be included at the top of the tree report.

--The inspectors for the Borough included Engineer Bruce Koch, Administrator Jim Damato, and Charles Gunther of DPW. Shari Spero, a CME Licensed Tree Expert, is doing the inspections of 6 or more trees with the Environmental Commission. Ms. Spero and Mr. Gunther will be doing the inspections in the future with SONDY representing the Commission.

--SONDY met with the Traffic and Beautification Committee to discuss separating the Cherry Trees growing in the median strip along Somerset St. It was decided to leave the plantings as they are, trim the Cherry Trees, and do additional plantings further down the road.

--A suggestion was made to make changes to the Ordinance to require more replanting, since the Borough is losing so many trees. One suggestion was for replanting ratios such as 1:1 for live trees, 1:3 for diseased trees, and 1:10 for dead trees. To assist residents in replanting, other suggestions were that seedlings could be provided at the Green Fair or another event for people who have removed trees but were not required to replace them, or by a voucher system set up with a nursery that would allow a discount. The Arbor Day Foundation is a good resource. If seedlings are to be offered to residents, the proper protection (fencing) should be part of the giveaway.

b. Planning Board: A proposal to build at the corner of Union Ave. and New Providence Road has been presented to the Planning Board for a Learning Experience Day Care Center to accommodate children ages 6 months to 6 years. The company is working with Somerset County and the NJDEP, for the two acre site is mostly wetlands. Concerns were expressed about the air quality due to the proximity to the quarry, but the air quality test done on the site did pass. Noise pollution, traffic, explosives and blasting, and property maintenance are other issues in question. Blasting is regulated by the state but can vary in intensity. Karen will prepare a letter regarding property maintenance considerations to be reviewed by the Commission before presenting to the Board.

--The Bonnie Burn Road development is on hold, and the EC's letter of recommendations for future COAH projects was received by the Board.

c. Recycling—Green Drop: The recycling company, with drop offs in Metuchen and Springfield, takes many products, such as clothing and electronics. One can designate the Salvation Army, Division for the Blind, or the Veterans to receive the items. Joan has used the Family Resource Center as another option.

d. Green Team: The meeting has been rescheduled to Nov. 19, 2020.

4. Unfinished Business:

a. Spotted Lantern Fly Mitigation: Doug marked for removal the Trees of Heaven near the Watchung Lake parking area. It was observed that the deep root system would prevent these trees from being safely removed by the local Boy Scouts. A chain saw would be advisable along with herbicides. The Dept. of Agriculture is not cutting Tree of Heaven this time of year because the herbicides are not effective in the fall and winter. They did not commit to cutting the Tree of Heaven along Rt. 78 per our request. We can make another request in the early spring. The Commission will have information for the spring newsletter along with web sites for the residents to access. Penn State and the University of Maryland have information and videos available, and Facebook and the Watchung Neighborhood Network are other options. The recognition and removal of egg mass splotches on trees and from other objects, and watching for "hitchhikers" on cars, can help to reduce the invasion of these insects. Concern was expressed about the removal of the Trees of Heaven and additional erosion of the terrain. North Plainfield has a cluster of the SLF on Sumac trees near Costco. Joan will reach out to the town of N. Plainfield to see if they are taking any action to combat the SLF. Praying mantises will eat the SLF along with 2 fungi.

b. Tree Bank—Ordinance Revision: A few changes are being proposed, one of which is that a minimum of 5 trees should be planted each year with the Commission and the Traffic and Beautification Committee suggesting planting areas. The expenditure would require approval by the Borough Council. Rachel will make revisions and send to Council President Robinson who will take to Laws and Ordinances for approval.

c. Rain Gardens: The rain garden along Valley Road was removed by the county. It was in the county right of way. The Rescue Squad garden is good, and there will be a rain garden planted at Bayberry School.

d. Trex Bench: The bench could be installed on a piece of granite near the 911 Memorial where the Tree of Remembrance was removed and will be replaced.

5. New Business:

a. Removed from agenda

b. Changes to Tree Removal Permit Application: The changes focused on the permit application with no land disturbance with sections moved around to reduce confusion. Sondy, Karen, and Rachel worked on this, and the main change was in response to a law passed in 2017 requiring all tree companies in NJ to be licensed by the state and to employ a licensed tree operator or licensed tree expert. This will put Watchung in compliance with the NJ law, which was adopted to enforce best practices and safety standards. The NJ Board of Tree Experts (NJBTE), which is an independent agency within the NJDEP, has a directory of the companies that are registered. This change in the permit will require applicants to select a licensed tree service prior to submission of their application. Residents also have the option of removing their own trees. The application was simplified. Rachel will work on application formatting and consult with Maria Fittipaldi on the proper page breaks. To be added to the application will be, "This permit is good for one year."

c. Other:

--The town is not putting out recycling buckets next to the garbage cans during town functions, and this should be automatic and be done without reminders. The DPW could have a checklist of tasks to be completed prior to town events, and the recycling buckets could be included on this list. Karen will check with the DPW and Linda Monetti about this.

--Work is being done on the community garden at Camp Endeavor, and these plots should be limited to residents only unless there are extra spaces once all requests have been granted. As part of the plan, there should be a handicapped accessible area with raised plots for those with mobility issues and special needs.

6. Special Announcements, Correspondence: none

7. Review of Assignments for the Next Meeting: The meeting was adjourned at 10:07 PM. The next regularly scheduled meeting to be held on Nov. 23, 2020 **has been changed to Dec.7, 2020.**

Respectfully submitted,

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

Tree Report October 2020

184 dead trees removed 31 live trees by permit

Shari Spero: CME Licensed Tree Expert is doing 6 or more tree with the environmental commission 732 995 5264 Sspero@cmeusa1.com

By Bruce Koch

Live	Dead	
	2	475 Ridge Road 9/21 ash
	1	22 Cedar Road 9/21 Japanese Maple
	1	300 Stirling Rd 9/21 Tulip large dead branch in the Crown
	1	51 Valley View 9/21 drying cherry
	1	46 Robin Glen Road 9/21, ash
	5	64 Crestwood Drive 9/21 ash infested with EAB
	3	25 Sunbright Road 9/21 ash infested EBA
	1	418 Ridge Road,9/21 lighting strike , dying
	4	171 Old Somerset Road 9/23,storm damage,base decay

By Jim Demato Borough Administrator

	1	45 Old Somerset Road 9/29 dangerous condition
1	1	45 Shawnee 9/28, replace 1 at 2 ½ "
	4	156 Anderson Road, 9/28,
	3	2 Beechwood Drive 9/28,
	1	Crystal Ridge Drive: 10/23 (Ste Preziects inspected) ??
	5	131 East Drive 10/30 dead ash
	4	1169 Johnston Drive, 10/20

Tree Report October 2020

184 dead trees removed 31 live trees by permit

- 3 143 Ellisen Road 10/10/20, 20" oak and maple
- 3 388 Valley Road, 10/16
- 1 Crystal Ridge Drive: 10/23 (Ste Preziects inspected) ??
- 5 131 East Drive 10/30 dead ash
- 4 1169 Johnston Drive, 10/20
- 3 143 Ellisen Road 10/10/20, 20" oak and maple
- 3 388 Valley Road, 10/16

By Charles Gunther

- 1 161 Hillcrest Road, 9/29
- 5 99 East Drive, 9/29
- 2 10 Hyde Circle 9/30
- 2 25 High Oaks 9/29
- 4 25 Skyline 10/8 dead and cleaning fallen
- 4 35 Deer Run 10/06 tulip, red oak, sassafras
- 1 80 High Oaks 10/06 pine
- 5 99 East Drive 09/29
- 4 25 Edgemont Road, 10/04 all ash
- 2 3 27 Stanie Glen RD, 10/05 Replace 2 @ 2 ½"
- 1 18 Forest Drive 10/05, close to house no replacement
- 1 1 81 Carrar Drive 10/02 diseased, unbalanced close to house
- 2 2 60 Hughes, 09/30 replace 2 @ 2 ½ "

Tree Report October 2020

184 dead trees removed 31 live trees by permit

- 2 205 Stirling Road 09/30.
- 1 47 Lakeview Terrace 09/30 hazardous
- 1 10 Cory Lane, 09/29 dangerous condition
- 1 Crystal Ridge Drive: 10/23 (Ste Preziects inspected) ??
- 5 131 East Drive 10/30 dead ash
- 4 1169 Johnston Drive, 10/20
- 3 143 Ellisen Road 10/20, 20" oak and maple
- 3 388 Valley Raod,10/16

Commission in attendance

- * 14 86 Redmont Rd, 10/5, **all native trees are gone from this property due to construction REPLACE 8: 4 @ 2 ½ " , 4 @ 4"**
- 13 20 91 Wildwood,10/05,pool going in,replace:10 @2 1/2",3@4"
- 36 460 Mountain Blvd, 10/05 32 ash, 4 pine
- 4 * 73 Wildwood Terrace 10/05 replace with 4 @ 4" oak trees
- 7 81 Spencer, 10/05, 7 diseased, or leaning or close to house
- 4 * 150 Vail Lane: 10/01 diseased, or leaning and under brush
- 7 945 Valley Road, 10/05 diseased
- 21 50 Century Ln, 10/05 dead or diseased mostly ash