

WATCHUNG ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION TELECONFERENCE MINUTES (FINAL)

MONDAY, JANUARY 25, 2021

Present: Rachel Funcheon, Karen Pennett, Jim and Andy Stout, Joan Tak, Doug Speeney, Andy Baldassarre, Council President Wendy Robinson. Also, Bill Hance (CFO of Watchung) and resident, Pam Lewis

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

2. Approval of Minutes: The minutes of the meeting of December 7, 2020 were approved.

3. Introduction of New Member: Andy Baldassarre was welcomed as a new member to the Commission.

4. Reorganization:

- a. Selection of Chair: Rachel Funcheon was elected Chairperson for 2021.
- b. Selection of Secretary: Andy Stout was elected Secretary.
- c. Approval of 2021 Meeting Schedule: The Commission meetings will be held at 7:30 PM on the 4th Monday of each month, with the following exceptions: July – no meeting; August – meeting moved to 5th Monday in August; November – meeting moved to 1st Monday in December.
- d. Council President Robinson reported that going forward all Borough committee meetings will be held via Go-to-Meeting and will be recorded and posted on the Borough website. EC minutes will still be written and posted. Minutes should be more concise.

5. Reports:

- a. Tree Report for January: 4 properties reviewed (detailed report attached)
 - 35 trees to be removed with no replacements
 - 12 trees inspected to be sure replacement plan completed
- b. Planning Board
 - The Learning Experience: Mr. Butler, attorney for Weldon Quarry, opponent of the Learning Experience application, questioned an Engineer brought by Weldon as a witness. A number of issues about the project were discussed. Karen will send the link of the 1/19/21 Planning Board meeting and requested that members review it.
 - Enforcement of ordinances to preserve the borough is incorporated in the PB Master Plan.
 - Bonnie Burn Road COAH housing is still in the court process.
- c. Recycling
 - Bottle Caps Update – The program is still suspended due to COVID. The town program will resume if/when the companies recycling the caps restart their programs. Rachel will follow up.
- d. Green Team
 - Green Team: Susan Zeitels of the Warren GT proposed a Drop-Off Only Green Fair for either May or Sept. and asked if Watchung would like to join. Recycling of electronics and Styrofoam, and shredding, would be included.
 - Bill Hance stated that we should move forward with the Green Fair. He discussed obtaining Sustainable Jersey Certification points. Bill will check on WHRHS as a possible site for a Sept. 25, 2021 Green Fair from 10:00 AM – 1 PM.

6. Unfinished Business

- a. Bamboo Ordinance
 - The EC will send a letter to the Mayor and Council suggesting an ordinance to regulate the growing of bamboo in the Borough due to complaints received by residents and bamboo's damaging impact on the environment.

--The EC recommends that it be permissible to plant bamboo in above-ground planters or in the ground with impenetrable sheathing installed to prevent encroachment, and that all parts of the plant should be 10 feet from property lines.

--The EC will provide information to residents about bamboo's invasiveness and alternatives for screening, perhaps in the Spring Newsletter.

b. Trex Bench

--The earthen dam at Best Lake is being considered for the placement of the bench. A slab will be poured if approved.

-- Spratford Park and Mobus Field were other suggestions for placement.

c. Saplings Order

--The EC will wait until fall when the 911 Memorial or the Green Fair would be possibilities for distribution of saplings to residents.

7. New Business:

a. Spring Newsletter Articles - to be discussed at the February meeting.

b. Tree Planting with T and B

--Rachel attended T & B meeting and suggested using money from the Tree Bank to plant trees. Chair Phyllis Juette suggested planting Dogwoods on the east side of Best Lake.

c. Adopt-A-Drain

--Storm Management Program to encourage residents to clean the top of storm drains, which helps to protect watershed from assorted debris. This will be researched further.

d. LED Giveaway

--Somerset County Green Leadership Hub offers Energy Star 60 watt dimmable light bulbs for free.

--Bulbs could be donated to The Pointe or the food bank, or given away at the Green Fair.

e. Sub-committees

--Rachel suggested that small groups in the EC work on separate projects and take ownership.

f. Other

--Doug brought up Green Energy Aggregation which is buying electricity at a better rate for groups.

8. Special Announcements, Correspondence:

--Thank you card from Sony Epstein was read, for the basket presented to her by the EC for her years of service.

--Reminder about ANJEC webinar on Weds., Jan. 27, 2021 at 7:30 PM.

--Notification of permit application from Boswell Engineering to NJDEP for Weldon Quarry project.

9. Review of Assignments for the Next Meeting: The meeting was adjourned at 10:15 PM. with the next meeting scheduled for February 22, 2021.

Respectfully Submitted,

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

January Tree Report

35 trees to be removed, no replacement

12 trees inspected to be sure replacement plan completed

*56 Valley Drive

13 trees all dead or diseased. Original permit for 7, Sherrie found 6 additional trees that should be removed

Additional trees:	2	24" Ash
	2	6" Ash
	2	5" Maple

Homeowner updated his permit to 13 trees

Sherrie also recommend 4 small trees, fruit trees, in front damaged due to dear. Not on revised permit.

*35 Kristy Lane: 2 dead trees removed without permit

Someone called in reporting trees being taken down. Found 2 dead trees that were taken down. Maria will contact home owner explaining in future all trees to be remove need permit. Maria will also write to person who called in, thanking and letting them know situation investigated.

*80 Century: Inspection to insure trees replacement plan completed. Home owner wanted to collect bond. Approximately 12. All planted, condition looks good

*119 Stanie Glen: 20 trees all dead or diseased. Not all trees marked, had to call homeowner

12	Ash	between 6" – 10"
4	Oak	between 10"-16"
3	Maple	14" and smaller
1	Black Oak	36"

Sherrie also recommended several other trees to be removed

2	Beech	One previously topped which caused death
	Several Ash	

Speaking with home owner, he was going to save many of the Ash. Sherrie said trees too far gone and would not be able to save trees.