

WATCHUNG ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION—ZOOM MEETING MINUTES

MONDAY, JANUARY 24, 2022

1. Call to Order—Roll Call:

- a. The meeting was called to order at 7:32 PM.
- b. Present—Rachel Funcheon, Karen Pennett, Jim and Andy Stout, Doug Speeney, Andy Baldassarre, Coraleine Kitt, Council Member Wendy Robinson, and Mayor Keith Balla.

2. Reorganization:

- a. Swearing in of New Member—Coraleine Kitt was sworn in to the EC by Mayor Keith Balla.
- b. Introduction of New Member—Chairperson Funcheon introduced Coraleine Kitt, and Coraleine gave a brief synopsis of her education, occupation, experiences, and her interests and goals related to the environment and sustainability. She was welcomed by all.
- c. Election of Officers:
 - Chair—Rachel Funcheon was nominated and will serve as Chairperson of the EC for the year 2022.
 - Secretary—Andy Stout was nominated and will serve as Secretary of the EC for the year 2022.
- d. Approval of 2022 Meeting Schedule—The schedule was approved and will be sent to the Clerk.
- e. Budget--\$5,000 has been appropriated for the EC and is awaiting Council approval. Overtime for the DPW employee at the Styrofoam collection will not come out of the EC budget.

3. Approval of Minutes—December 6, 2021 Teleconference: The minutes were approved.

4. Reports:

- a. Tree Report—December 2021 and January 2022:
 - General Report—Total of 163 trees to be removed. 151 trees to be removed with 82 trees being Ashes, 40 trees to be replaced, and 7 properties inspected by the EC. Regarding the Planning Board application at 744 Mountain Blvd., 12 trees to be removed with 42 replacements along with planting shrubs (All tentative pending changes).
 - 744 Mountain Blvd. site renovation—Engineering firm working with neighbors to provide screening between properties and with Planning Board to save 3 of the large trees including the two Norway Spruce trees neighboring the funeral home. The large 48" maple cannot be saved due to parking requirements.
 - With concerns about healthy trees being removed, the EC felt that the EC Inspector can reach out to the property owner for clarification on removals and does have the authority to decline signature on the permit. If 6 or more trees are involved, an arborist can be requested to examine the trees.
 - b. Planning Board:
 - Bonnie Burn—The final site plan was approved.
 - c. Recycling:
 - New Legacy Books—Program approved by Council with site approval in parking lot at top of driveway between Firemen's Exempt and Firehouse. Construction of pad and recycling program will happen in spring. All books to be recycled must have bar code.
 - Styrofoam—Original date was postponed due to Covid concerns with rescheduling proposed for Saturday, Feb. 12, 2022. Advertising will be on the Borough website, Facebook, and in the **Echoes-Sentinel**. ID and a face mask will be required. A sign will be posted on social media to raise awareness of acceptable Styrofoam materials and the availability of the program for Watchung residents only.
 - Bottle Caps—Rachel continues to pursue possibilities for this previously successful recycling program and has leads going forward.
 - d. Green Team—The focus will be on solar friendly ideas, E-V, and the Farmers' Market with the next level of Sustainable Jersey to be attained, if possible. There is no date for the Green Fair just yet.

5. Unfinished Business:

a. Reusable Bags—300 reusable bags made of recycled material have been ordered and will be distributed by the EC at various locations and events in town and will be useful with the state Bag Ban going into effect on May 4, 2022. Sustainable Jersey points can be obtained through this project.

b. Seedling Order—250 seedlings have been ordered from the NJ Forest Service Nursery for pickup at Round Valley on April 13, 2022. There will be 5 choices—Silky Dogwood, Black Gum, Arrowhead Viburnum, Pin Oak, and Northern Red Oak. Options were discussed for how to give the trees away, including a table at Mobus Field around Earth Day. The importance of protective fencing was also discussed. Rachel will contact the Forestry Service for availability of more seedlings later in the spring for possible giveaways at events like Operation Pride, the Community Picnic, Concert in the Park, and Little League.

c. Riparian Planting East of Best Lake—Doug will put together a tree planting plan for the Mayor and Council and will have it prepared for the EC to preview prior to the Feb. 28, 2022 EC meeting. The plantings will consist of native trees and shrubs with the objective being to improve the stream habitat and water quality, stabilization of the bank and erosion prevention among many benefits. The trees, such as Silver Maple and Swamp Oak among others, will be of a 2 & 1/2" caliber, and Silky Dogwood seedlings could be included in the plantings. The Tree Bank funds will be used, and the DPW will help.

d. Curbside Free-cycling—This proposed program would be held on the Saturday and Sunday before the week in which Bulk Pickup in June begins. It would be a way for residents to recycle good and unwanted items by curbside placement that weekend with removal before Bulk Pickup starts on Monday. The plan could save residents the price of a permit for a smaller amount of items, and additional Sustainable Jersey points could be earned. Potential negatives to consider would be that the program would attract "scavengers" to the Borough. However, scavengers are already coming in during the bulk pickup weekend. A suggested program description will be put forward to the Mayor and Council for their consideration.

6. New Business:

a. Spring Newsletter—Articles for newsletter are due on Feb. 24, 2022. Rachel will write a summary of EC activities in progress, and those planned for the year, with some including the state bag ban, seedlings, New Legacy Books, Styrofoam sign (what to collect), and results of 1st collection of Styrofoam.

b. Suggestions for New Initiatives—postponed discussion until February meeting.

c. Other—None

7. Special Announcements, Correspondence: Rachel read a press release from PIRG (Public Interest Research Group): Governor Murphy signed the Recycled Content Bill into law which will require plastic and glass containers, plastic bottles, plastic trash bags and more to be manufactured with up to 50% recycled content. It is part of NJ's Plastic Pollution Reduction Act, which bans single-use plastic and paper bags.

8. Public Comment: None

9. Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 9:36 PM with the next meeting scheduled for February 28, 2022.

Respectfully Submitted,

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