

WATCHUNG ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION—ZOOM MEETING MINUTES

MONDAY, APRIL 25, 2022

1. Call to Order—Roll Call:

- a. The meeting was called to order at 7:30 PM.
- b. Present—Rachel Funcheon, Karen Pennett, Jim and Andy Stout, Doug Speeney, Coraleine Kitt, Council Member Wendy Robinson
- c. Absent—Andy Baldassarre

2. Approval of Minutes—March 28, 2022 Teleconference: The minutes were approved.

3. Special Guest: N. Dini Checko, Plastics Pollution Project Director at ANJEC

--Dini had reached out to the EC to say she lives locally and wanted to attend one of our meetings. She introduced herself briefly and then Rachel asked if anyone had questions about the upcoming bag ban, as Dini is an expert on the subject. Dini summarized the details of the bill and then answered questions by members. Issues discussed were carryout paper bags, compliance and enforcement, curbside grocery pickup, and more. Garbage hauling was also discussed. The public was invited via Facebook to join the meeting to ask questions but no members of the public attended.

4. Reports:

- a. Tree Report—April 2022
 - Inspections—There were 3 tree inspections with 24 trees to be removed and no trees to be replaced. Removals involved trees too close to the house and/or damaged and dying trees.
- b. Planning Board—No meeting
- c. Recycling
 - New Legacy Books—Awaiting preparation of area for box placement possibly this week. Bin will be delivered upon completion of site. Information to residents will be provided once bin is in place.
 - Styrofoam—With no Warren-Watchung Green Fair this spring, a Styrofoam recycling collection was proposed for mid-June. BC needs to approve. A Styrofoam collection is set for Sept., 2022 providing there is no Green Fair in the fall. Approval of the June, 2022 proposal would mean an additional opportunity for Styrofoam recycling in 2022. Rachel will provide Council Member Robinson with a proposed June date.
- d. Green Fair/Farmers Market—A farmer is available who will bring in produce from other farms. Efforts to reassemble former vendors are ongoing, and labor shortages are a continuing issue. Better press coverage, more social media, additional signage to attract customers, and word of mouth are needed.

5. Unfinished Business:

- a. Seedling Giveaway/Operation Pride—Events were held on Sat., April 23rd. 250 seedlings were received—50 of these seedlings (40 Arrowhead Viburnum and 10 Silky Dogwood) were set aside to be planted at the riparian restoration area east of Best Lake. EC also had 75 baggies of milkweed seeds to give away. Attendees at Operation Pride took about 50 seedlings (morning) and a few more at Best Lake (afternoon) along with milkweed seeds. In addition to these plant materials, reusable bags, Spotted Lanternfly larvae scrapers, and environmental handouts were offered. With leftover seedlings and milkweed seeds, Rachel advertised on 2 Watchung Facebook pages and held an additional giveaway in her driveway. All the remaining seedlings and milkweed seeds were taken by local residents desiring to repopulate their properties with new trees.
- b. Riparian Planting East of Best Lake—Special thanks to Doug's expertise in native plants and his organization and follow through and Jim Damato's coordination with DPW. Six larger trees (2 River Birch, 2 Silver Maple, and 2 Swamp White Oak) were ordered and planted by DPW alongside the stream bed. In addition, within the same area, 49 seedlings were planted by volunteers including Mayor Balla, Council Members Jubin and Robinson, and local residents including families with children. Plants were mulched and surrounded by fencing. These plantings will help to reduce soil erosion, shade the stream, lower the water

temperature, and improve the habitat for birds and pollinators. This project was a great example of the Tree Bank funds being used for a good purpose. Much praise to Doug and Rachel for their many hours invested in bringing this project to fruition and completion, and acknowledgment of all volunteers for a great job. Appreciation was expressed to the DEP Nursery for the excellent seedlings that they provided.

--Rachel spoke to Alex McCartney at the Forestry Service about possibility of additional seedlings if there were seedlings left over after orders were fulfilled. The Service has trees in tubes for \$3.00 a piece which are sold in groups of 30. Also, an idea for 2023 is the purchase of Black Willow sticks (50 for \$20.00) which would be placed into the stream to grow without digging.

c. Board of Adjustment Application, 1375 Plainfield Ave.—BOA had second meeting on 3/31/22 with final testimony by applicant. Before vote was taken, applicant proposed making changes related to density, parking, and number of buildings. Board will consider revised design at the next meeting—on 5/12/2022.

d. County Spraying for Vegetation Control—Question was asked whether Borough could say no to this spraying for weed control. County stated that no spraying has been done at the Best Lake guard rail (primary concern), and aquatic version would be used if need arose. With the main roads belonging to the County, it would be difficult for the town to say "No" to proposed spraying, but the County works with the town. A combination of Epsom salts, vinegar, and dish detergent can kill weeds. County also said that aerial spraying for mosquitos is only done for emergency and urgent reasons and over specific areas. Jim S. was thanked for researching specific chemicals contained within sprays.

--Well Water—Concern was expressed about herbicide and insecticide spraying and the impact on well water.

6. New Business:

a. Giant Salem Oak Seedling—The seedling was planted on Earth Day, 4/22/2022, on the north side of Watchung Lake by Jim Damato, Rachel, Karen, and Council Member Robinson, with Mayor Balla in attendance. Plaque will be embedded in stone with a commemorative dedication to be planned. The acorn producing this seedling was one of 565 acorns, one given to each town in the state, from a tree that lived for 565 years.

b. Community Picnic—May 21, 2022 from noon--3:00 PM at Bayberry School. EC discussed possibly having a table there and maybe a beekeeping demonstration.

c. Other—ANJEC promoting "No Mow May" to encourage residents not to mow and allow lawns to grow naturally to help pollinator habitat.

7. Special Announcements, Correspondence: Mayor's Regatta, June 11, 2022, Best Lake—10:00 AM-12:00 PM—Canoe races. Rachel asked for volunteers to represent the EC.

8. Public Comment: Rachel was thanked for her time, organization, and dedication to the EC. She thanked members again for their hard work in the 2 tree events of last weekend and said the EC has a lot to be proud of. She stated that between last year's Operation Pride and this year's, the Commission has given away 600 seedlings and planted 56 trees.

9. Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 10:06 PM with the next meeting scheduled for May 23, 2022.

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

May 2022 Tree Report

Tree inspections 8

Trees to be removed 94

Trees to be replaced 26

Inspections completed by K. Pennett Watchung Environmental Commission

55 Friar Lane: **21 Trees no replacements – trees being removed during inspection**

1 Maple dead

20 Ash dying

65 Friar: **6 Trees no replacements**

6 Ash dying

73 Lakeview Terrace **1 Tree no replacement**

Town received complaint from neighbor about hazardous tree. **Reviewed:** The tree in question is a dead Ash Tree. The tree shows signs of the Emerald Ash bore, which is what most likely killed the tree. The tree is on the left side to the property leaning towards neighbor at 73 Lakeview Terrace. The tree is also close to wires, If the tree falls, could do damage to 73 Lakeview Terrace and/or take wires down. Town personnel to contact resident

Inspections completed by K. Twisler, Remington & Vernick Engineers

480 Mountain Boulevard: **9 Trees 1 replacement**

98 Ridge Road: **10 Trees no replacements**

78 Crestwood Drive: **6 Trees no replacements**

125 Johnston Drive: **6 Trees – no replacements**

448 Johnston Drive: 35 Trees replace 24 under building review

New house being built. Plan shows 5 trees to be replaced.

K.Twisler recommends 24 replacement due to steep slope