

**Watchung Environmental Commission – Zoom Meeting\***  
**Monday, February 27, 2023 – 7:30 PM**  
**Minutes**

1. **Call to Order** – The meeting was called to order at 7:32 P.M.
2. **Roll Call** – Present: Rachel Funcheon, Karen Pennett, Andy Stout, Doug Speeney, Coraleine Kitt, Denise Soppas, Council Member Sonia Abi-Habib
3. **Approval of Minutes** – January 23, 2023 Teleconference – Minutes Approved
4. **Reports**
  - a. Tree Report
    - i. Inspections – There were 3 Tree inspections: 75 trees to be removed 20 replaced.
    - ii. Tree inspections throughout 2022: 69 inspections, with 1069 trees to be removed and 202 replaced. This total excludes inspections completed by Borough for applications for tree removal of < 6 trees.
    - iii. Tree issues – Discussed steep slopes, replanting, and Tree Bank funds. A subcommittee will meet to discuss some of the tree issues that need to be resolved. Rachel, Karen and Denise will meet and Sonia will join.
  - b. Planning Board – Reviewed recommendations submitted by Board of Adjustment in their Annual Report. Karen will send recommendations to EC.
  - c. Recycling:
    - i. Styrofoam – Bill Hance issued purchase order for the new bin, which has been approved. Council still needs to approve program.
    - ii. New Legacy Books – We collected 5.14 tons of books since July 2022 and Borough received \$328 for this program so far.
    - iii. Bottle caps – Westfield recycling center is not able to recycle bottle caps. A resident reached out to Rachel to request bottle caps for an art project for her students. Rachel asked residents to bring bottle caps to her driveway and was able to collect large bags of bottle caps in her driveway, which the resident and her students used for murals. Rachel will ask Westfield about recycling batteries for Watchung.
  - d. Green Team
    - i. 2023 Priorities include the Farmer’s Market and Sustainable NJ re-certification
    - ii. The Farmer’s Market will be moved to Best Lake and is scheduled to run from June through October
    - iii. Due to limited resources there may not be a Green Fair this year
    - iv. The town has purchased an electric vehicle
5. **Unfinished Business**
  - a. Spring newsletter – The EC submitted an article for the Spring newsletter. Members wrote paragraphs on trees, hiring an arborist, book and Styrofoam recycling, organic landscaping, and rain gardens.

## **6. New Business**

- a. Plans for Operation Pride – Operation Pride is scheduled for Saturday, April 22 (Earth Day), with a rain date of Sunday, April 23.
  - i. The rain garden at the Rescue Squad wasn't maintained.
  - ii. Doug reached out to Rutgers to request information regarding how to properly maintain a rain garden, including what plants should be planted etc. It was decided we would work on this project after Operation Pride.
  - iii. For Operation Pride we will continue to improve the riparian buffer along the stream east of Best Lake. EC will invite residents to help out, including weeding, mulching, and adjusting deer fencing on seedlings planted last year, adding supplemental plantings, and installing bird boxes.
  - iv. Doug will draft a formal plan for the Mayor and Council for consideration
- b. Budget recap  
Council had a budget meeting over the weekend and EC budget for \$5000 was approved.
- c. Tree maintenance  
The town no longer has an arborist on staff to advise residents on tree maintenance and potential alternatives to tree removal when trees are unhealthy. We discussed providing residents a list of tree services with ISA certification.
- d. Stormwater grant  
Grants are available for stormwater from the State. Doug forwarded info to the Mayor and Sonia and encouraged the Borough to apply. [https://www.nj.gov/dep/newsrel/2023/23\\_0013.htm](https://www.nj.gov/dep/newsrel/2023/23_0013.htm)

## **7. Special Announcements, Correspondence**

- a. Going forward, all emails within Commission will be sent to and from the official .gov email address ([environmental@watchungnj.gov](mailto:environmental@watchungnj.gov)) for the group.

## **8. No Public Comment**

9. Adjournment- meeting ended 9:58 P.M.  
The next meeting is scheduled for March 27, 2023

# March 2023 Tree Report

**Tree inspections: 5**

**Trees to be removed: 47\* excludes 115 East Drive**

**Trees to be replaced: 5\* excludes 115 East Drive**

Inspections completed by D. Soppas & K. Pennett

5 Jared Court: 19 trees permit indicates 17 no replacements, homeowner replacing on own  
All trees on berm along Valley Road. Trees all marked as dead/dying/hazardous.  
Owner to replace with Norwegian Spruce to provide fencing/cover to back yard.  
Many smaller trees to also be remove. One large oak to remain.

17 Sunbright: 11 dead trees no replacements  
Many additional dead trees, not in budget

115 East Drive: 12 trees, many trees previously removed.  
Stop order placed trees being remove without permit.  
Reviewed site: Found 31 fresh stumps, 2 trees marked to come down.  
Map and permit indicated 12 trees to be removed all back towards right. Trees  
not marked: 2 trees marked to come down on left side of driveway. 31 fresh  
stumps found, all around house. Not sure if 12 trees already removed or 12 to  
come down. Maria to contact owner.

220 Valley Road: 6 trees with another 3 possible, no replacements  
4 of the trees ashes, 2 unknown  
3 additional trees 2 ashes in front to left of driveway, may be neighbors. 1 dead  
unknown in back to right may be on other neighbor's property.

91 Tuttle: 11 trees mostly Tulips replace 5  
8 trees already removed. Per permit: 1 dead ash, 5 hazardous, 5 remove for  
grading. 3 trees remaining to be removed are large Tulip trees

Maria will now be tracking all tree permits.

YDT including above

**Tree inspections: 44**

**Trees to be removed: 273**

**Trees to be replaced: 59**