

Watchung Environmental Commission Meeting Minutes
Monday, February 26, 2024 – 7:30 PM

1. The meeting was called to order at 7:30 PM.
Present: Rachel Funcheon, Karen Pennett, Doug Speeney, Andy Stout, Denise Soppas, , Coraleine Kitt, Jennifer Principato
2. Reorganization for 2024
 - a. Introduction of New Member – Jennifer Principato introduced herself, wants to start a no-littering campaign, environmental/recycling center.
 - b. Election of Officers
 - Chair – Rachel Funcheon
 - Vice-Chair – Doug Speeney
 - Secretary – Coraleine Kitt
 - c. Meeting Schedule for 2024
 - The Commission reviewed the meeting dates.
3. Minutes for the December 4, 2023 Teleconference were approved.
4. Reports
 - a. Tree Report
 - Inspections: 7 tree inspections took place. 158 trees will be removed, no replacements.
 - Letters were sent to some residents reminding them of their required tree replacements
 - b. Planning Board – Bonnie Burn complex has been approved. No traffic lights will be put in. The project will move forward.
 - c. Recycling – Styrofoam program continues but DPW will not take it to Long Hill anymore. Due to overwhelming response from other towns, LH is now charging for that service. DPW will take foam to company in Middlesex for recycling at no cost to Boro.
 - d. Green Team – The Green Team's priority is preparing the documentation for Sustainable NJ certification. Our goal is to apply for the bronze level certification by June. We will begin preparing for the Farmer's Market in March. The Green Fair will not take place this year.
5. Unfinished Business
 - a. Best Lake project
 - Status of area – Buffer looks good. Some fencing is down or needs to be enlarged. Could use mulching. 6-10 ash trees were removed in park near road.
 - Sign – Rachel gave final approvals for sign. Now it will be constructed and DPW will install it when it arrives.

- Boy Scout project – Six birdboxes were completed and installed – 2 near Best Lake, 2 at Mobus, and 2 at Phillips Field.
 - River-Friendly certification – Review is waiting to be completed.
- b. Spring Newsletter – Article was submitted with help from several members. Main subject of article is how to create an eco-friendly yard.

6. New Business

- a. 2024 Budget – Mayor and Council will hold a budget meeting. Bill Hance will review our submitted budget with Council. Will be mostly the same as last year.
- b. Operation Pride – O.P. will take place on Sat., 4/27, from 9 AM – noon. EC will receive 300 free seedlings to be given out to residents. Members will meet at 2 PM on Friday, 4/26, to prepare seedlings. EC will work, with help of volunteers, on O.P. Day from 1-3 PM near buffer by Best Lake. Will ask Boro to send out email blast asking for volunteers.
- c. Sewage overflows – Sewage material overflowed in Mobus Field and into the stream at least twice in January.
- d. Discuss initiatives/priorities for 2024 – some possible initiatives discussed include getting a plaque for Salem oak tree, a freecycle event, creating and installing no-littering signs, and plans for the Ness property.

7. Adjournment at 9:57 PM. The next meeting is scheduled for March 25, 2024.

March 2024 Tree Report

Tree Inspections: 4

Tree Removal permits approved: 4

Trees to be removed : 63

Trees to be replaced : 2

Tree Re-Inspections: 1

Permit Closed: 0

Trees replaced: 3

D.Soppas & K.Pennett

Tree Inspections:

81 Nottingham Drive: 18 Trees (17 Ash, 1 Live Oak) – Approved with 1 Replacement

- Inspection done 3/10/24. (DS)
- Dani Landscaping & Tree Service
- 17 Ash, 1 Oak (26 " diameter) near pool
- Replacement tree required with at least 4 ½ inch diameter

78 Century Lane: 7 Trees (6 dead conifer/1 live conifer) – Approved with 1 Replacement

- Inspection done 3/10/24. (DS)
- Precision Tree Care
- 6 dead conifers, replacement required of one live conifer

69 Oak Ridge: 26 trees dead – approved no replacements

- Inspection done 3/12/24. (KP)
- Trees all looked dead, no buds on trees.
- One tree near mailbox, verify to determine if tree on 69 Oak Ridge or neighbors.
- Several of neighbors trees recently cut down. Different ribbons on these trees and basically large 20' stumps. My be 99 Oak Ridge from last month tree report.

34 Spencer: 12 trees (10 pines, 2 Ashes) - Approved no replacements.

Possible 13 with additional ash

- Inspection done 3/12/24. (KP)
- 10 pines alongside house lot of erosion around base of trees. Can see water issues. Owner indicated after house above/next door redid driveway she receives a lot of waterflow from house above. 2 pines previously fell. Landscaper said all dangerous. Water damage most of back
- 2 ash trees not an issue
- There was a larger ash tree, splitting and damaged from ash bore. Told home owner that I would add tree to permit so if she wanted to include she could.
- Owner said she would replant. Waiting for recommendations from Landscaper. Ok to put in smaller trees or bushes.

Tree Re- Inspection's:

151 Anderson Road – 3 replacement trees required - replacement trees less than 2 ½ inch in diameter – Not approved - Permit not closed

- Re-Inspection done 3/10/24. (DS)
- Original permit dates:
 - o 10/11/23 (2 live trees (Norway Spruce, Mulberry) required replacement
 - o 7/10/23 (2 dead trees, 1 live tree (Oak) required replacement
- Replacement Trees:
 - o Cornelia Dogwood
 - o Flowering Dogwood
 - o Eastern Redbud
- Replacement trees are all native but are less than 1 inch at base. I discussed with homeowner that the trees needed to be at least 2 ½ inch in diameter and that I would report that the trees were only 1 inch at the base.
- I did not approve - I referred this reinspection to Jim Demato