

Watchung Environmental Commission
Monday, April 29, 2024 Minutes

1. The meeting was called to order at 7:30 PM.
Present: Rachel Funcheon, Karen Pennett, Doug Speeney, Andy Stout, Denise Soppas, Jennifer Principato, Coraleine Kitt, Paolo Marano

2. Guest Speaker: Rutgers Prep High School student, Mimansa Kumar, gave a presentation on a proposed Green Amendment to the NJ State Constitution. She asked that the EC ask the Borough Council to pass a resolution in support of this amendment. Also in attendance were Rachel Dawn Davis and NJ Environmental Lobbyist Dave Pringle. The proposed Amendment would do the following:
 - a. Add certain environmental rights and environmental justice obligations to Article I of the New Jersey Constitution. Specifically, the Amendment would recognize a public right “to a clean and healthy environment, including pure water, clean air, a safe climate, and ecologically healthy habitats, and to the preservation of the natural and scenic qualities of the environment.”
 - b. Obligate the State of New Jersey to avoid infringing on those enumerated rights and further to affirmatively serve as trustee of the State’s natural resources for present and future generations.

The Commission asked questions of the speaker and will discuss the proposal at the May meeting. The presentation was also made to the Green Team at their meeting.

3. Minutes for the March 25, 2024 Teleconference were approved.

4. Reports
 - a. Tree Report
 - Inspections
 1. 3 tree inspections this month, all were approved.
28 trees will be removed and 9 trees will be replaced.
 2. There were no re-inspections this month
 - Replanting letters - A number of letters have been sent out but as of now no one has contacted the Borough re: tree reinspection.
 - b. Planning Board
 - No meeting last month.
 - c. Recycling
 - Plastic bottle caps: TerraCycle is partnering with a new company called Neighborhood Compost, who will be taking over the TerraCycleHome program. The EC could pay for this service and start collecting bottle caps again. The Commission discussed enrolling in the program. Rachel will ask the contact regarding pick up locations such as Borough Hall.

- d. Green Team
 - Work is being completed for bronze-level certification from Sustainable Jersey. The Farmer's Market will be held this year at the Police Dept parking lot.
5. Unfinished Business
 - a. Operation Pride
 - The tree giveaway and the afternoon volunteer event were discussed. All 300 tree seedlings were eventually given away. Turnout was light at the cleanup event in the morning. Andy, Jennifer and Rachel worked the EC table/seedling giveaway.
 - b. Best Lake project
 - Six new large trees were planted by DPW prior to the event. Doug, Andy, Rachel, Jennifer, and Denise were at the stream project in the afternoon, along with some resident volunteers. The group did weeding, mulching, fence repair/replacement and some planting.
 - The new Riparian Buffer sign was installed by DPW the day before the event. It is right in the middle of the project and draws attention to all the EC has done in the area.
6. New Business
 - a. BOA applications
 - 55 Acorn Road – Comments were submitted to the BOA with the EC's objection to allowing additional impervious coverage on this property. Pervious pavement was offered as a possible alternative to asphalt.
 - 10 Watchung Crest Drive – This application is for construction in a Conservation Easement. Waiting for the Engineer's Review to be issued before we submit comments.
7. Adjournment - The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, May 28, 2024.

May 2024 Tree Report

Tree Inspections: 5

Tree Removal permits approved: 5

Trees to be removed: 48

Trees to be replaced: 0

D. Soppas & K. Pennett

332 Mountain Blvd 7 Trees, 6 dead Ash 1 live Holly, replace 1.

- Inspection 5/3/24.
- Holly tree leaning over house. Concern tree will damage the house.

25 Century 7 trees, only 6 marked, --Need to verify count of trees, numbers to not tie.

- Inspection 5/17/24.
- Douglas Fir & unknown dead
- Map and permit noted 2 Maples 4" diameter. Only one marked, other three Maples in area marked tree on map. These 3 were alive.
- 2 of ashes are dead/dying. One tree on map labeled as Ash near road, large and seemed healthy, full of leaves, did not see signs of Ash Bore. Question owner on.
- Noted 1 dead tree in back, near line of pines to right of Douglas Fir. Not marked not on map. Told homeowner if they wanted to add to permit that would be ok. Need to verify tree on this property.
- DID NOT Sign off wanted to verify unmarked tree and Ash in question.
- Homeowner spoke to Maria. The one maple, less than 3". Permit not required for small tree so not marked. Will take down the dead tree in back EC noted. The Ash in front that EC questioned is an ash and taking precaution. Permit approved: number trees remain 7. Maple less than 3 inches excluded.

311 High Tor: 13 Trees, dead no replacement, many Ashes, no replacements

Inspection 5/17/24

109 Wildwood Terrace 7 dead Trees, many Ashes no replacements.

Inspection 5/17/24

159 Knollwood 14 dead trees no replacements

Inspection 5/17/24

Maria Fittipaldi informed me that a couple of residences replied to letters regarding replanting. One put money in tree bank, another planted a tree.