

Watchung Environmental Commission
June 24, 2024 Meeting Minutes

1. The meeting was called to order at 7:30 PM.
Present: Rachel Funcheon, Doug Speeney, Andy Stout, Coraleine Kitt, Denise Soppas, Jennifer Principato, Paolo Marano
Absent: Karen Pennett
2. Minutes for the May 30, 2024 Teleconference were approved.
3. Reports
 - a. Tree Report
 - Inspections – There were 4 tree inspections this month and 3 permits approved. Trees to be removed - 39; trees to be replaced – 13. No responses were received for letters regarding tree replacements.
 - b. Planning Board – There was no Planning Board meeting this month.
 - c. Recycling
 - The ShopRite in Stirling has a new bin for recycling all flexible plastics. In addition to stretchy plastic bags, many other types of bags and packaging can now be recycled. The program is sponsored by TerraCycle, and the bin is located outside in front of the store.
 - d. Green Team
 - The Green Team is on track for obtaining the Bronze award from Sustainable Jersey and is still deciding about going for the Silver.
 - Farmer’s Market – Denise reported that there were around 270 visitors each week so far. The GT is looking for additional vendors.
4. Unfinished Business
 - a. Best Lake project – The Commission discussed the state of plantings and bird boxes. Shrubs getting really big and tall. May want to take deer fencing off some plants soon. One of new large trees had shifted after planting, and the DPW helped put topsoil down and adjust it. DPW added water bags to the 6 new big trees. Doug reported that almost all bird boxes have nests. Andy and Doug cut away invasive vines. Still waiting for River Friendly certification.
 - b. Green Amendment – The Commission discussed supporting a presentation of the Green Amendment to the Council. Councilman Marano said Council has no problem with supporting the amendment. Will try to get Mimansa on Council’s August meeting agenda.
 - c. Board of Adjustment applications
 - The Commission discussed the application for 55 Acorn Road and the EC’s comments to the BOA. Members feel that EC should stand its ground in objecting to increased impervious cover. Case was discussed at BOA’s meeting on June 11, and discussion will be continued at their August meeting.
 - The Commission discussed the application for 10 Watchung Crest Drive. The work has already been completed. Rachel read emails

between the Board attorney and the Borough engineer as to whether or not this project requires NJDEP approval.

5. New Business
 - a. The Commission discussed BOA Case 24-04, 74 Lakeview Ave, and its nonconformities. House has already been built and exceeds allowable impervious coverage. Questions were asked as to why this project went forward without prior approvals. Suggestion was made that owners be required to put money in Tree Bank to compensate for overage.
 - b. The Commission discussed the EC's article for the Fall Newsletter, due Aug. 6. Assignments were made as to who would write a paragraph and on what subject. Jennifer, Denise, Doug and Rachel will contribute.
 - c. Rachel read an article that said NJ is considering a ban on gas-powered leaf blowers and phasing out of two-stroke models. The bill has already advanced in a state Senate committee.
6. Special Announcements, Correspondence
 - a. Mayor's Regatta was postponed due to a fire department convention. It was rescheduled for Saturday, September 14.
7. The meeting was adjourned at 9:35 PM. The next meeting is scheduled for Monday, August 26, 2024.

June 2024 Tree Report

Tree Inspections: 4

Tree Removal permits approved: 3

Trees to be removed : 39

Trees to be replaced : 13

Tree Re-Inspections: 0

Permit Closed: 0

Trees replaced: 0

D. Soppas & K. Pennett

Tree Inspections:

343 Johnston: 9 Trees (4 Oak 5 Ash) – Approved with 0 Replacement

- Inspection done 6/11/24. (KP)
- All dead/dying

90 Valley Dr: 10 Trees (9 Ash, 1 Dead Pine) – Approved with 0 Replacement

- Inspection done 6/13/24. (DS)
- EM Associates Tree Service
- 9 Ash, 1 dead pine

51 East Drive: 13 dead trees – Not Approved

- Inspection done 6/24/24. (KP)
- RG Tree Service
- trees not marked – Maria will contact them

264 Ridge Road - (17 live, 3 dead) – Approved with 13 to be replaced

- Inspection done 6/24/24. (KP and DS)
- Campos Tree Service
- New construction
- 3 dead, 4 within the building envelope, 13 live outside the envelope
- 7 need to be replaced with trees that have a 2 ½ inch diameter (trees were < 18 inches), 6 need to be replaced with trees that have a 4-inch diameter (trees were > 18 inches)
- approved with a request for a replacement plan