

Watchung Environmental Commission Minutes
Monday, August 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, Coraleine Kitt, Denise Soppas, Jennifer Principato, Councilman Marano
2. Minutes for the June 24, 2024 Teleconference were approved.
3. Reports
 - a. Tree Report
 - Tree Inspections: 2
 - Trees to be removed: 23
 - Trees to be replaced: 8
 - b. Planning Board
 - Meeting report- The Planning Board approved the Stormwater Control Ordinance amendment. Still needs approval by Mayor and Council.
 - Bonnie Burn – awaiting approval from Somerset County. EC had long discussion about environmental oversight of construction project (tree removal, endangered species, soil conservation, etc.)
 - Case PB 24-02, Raising Cane – Discussed stormwater management concerns for the project. The Planning Board has not discussed the project yet.
 - c. Recycling – The Borough’s Styrofoam recycling program is going well. The book recycling bin has earned the Borough \$375 so far this year.
 - d. Green Team
 - Sustainable NJ Status – Based on the feedback from the May submission, the Green Team needed to revise several items from their original submission. The team resubmitted on July 31st with 355 points, which qualifies Watchung for a Silver Level certification if approved.
 - Farmer’s Market Status – Averaging about 12 vendors and 310 attendees each week. The market is held on Tuesdays 3-7 pm through the end of October.
 - Doug provided data on 168 wells that were sampled in the Borough. 23.5% of wells showed elevated levels of PFAS. The complete data is housed at DEP, labeled by zip code not by address.
 - The Green Team will be collecting printer cartridges for recycling at their weekly Farmer’s Market.
4. Unfinished Business
 - a. Best Lake Project

- The EC will be receiving an Environmental Achievement Award from ANJEC for the Riparian Buffer Restoration Project! Award will be presented at ANJEC's Environmental Congress at Rowan College on Sept. 27th.
 - Doug provided an update on the plantings, some of which are huge. He will look for fall plant sales and suggested planting some cuttings from the project.
- b. Green Amendment
 - The Amendment needs to go through committee reviews, legal review, and then approval by the Borough Council.
 - c. Fall Newsletter
 - Article was submitted before the Aug. 6 deadline. Rachel thanked the Commission members who contributed. EC article contains info about Best Lake Project, Bird Boxes, Littering, Tree Removal, and Recycling.
 - d. BOA applications
 - 74 Lakeview Drive – already approved and built.
 - 55 Acorn Road – has not been built yet. Will be on BOA agenda again this fall.
 - 10 Watchung Crest Drive – construction already finished in conservation easement. DEP will not have to weigh in. Up to the Borough. Case will be before BOA this fall.
5. New Business
 - a. BOA Applications
 - 1040 Johnston Drive – new home construction on steep slope, needs multiple variances.
 - 149 Mountain Blvd. – adding front porch, needs multiple variances.
 - The Commission discussed writing a letter to the BOA re: concern about impervious cover overages on many projects.
 - b. Adopt-a-Drain Webinar: The Commission discussed getting residents involved in clearing off their own storm drains. One issue would be getting the message out to residents. Rachel will attend ANJEC webinar on this nationwide program.
 6. Special Announcements, Correspondence
 - a. Change of December meeting date
 - The Commission discussed and agreed to change the December meeting date from December 2 to December 9, 2024.
 7. The meeting was adjourned at 10:14 PM The next meeting is scheduled for Monday, Sept. 23, 2024.

September 2024 Tree Report

Tree Inspections: 2

Tree Removal permits approved: 2

Trees to be removed: 30: 25 per permits, 5 added

Trees to be replaced: unknown number of Arborvitae

Tree Re-Inspections: 0

Permit Closed: 0

Trees replaced: 0

D. Soppas & K. Pennett

Tree Inspections:

185 Knollwood Replacements

Remove 14

Replacing with Arborvitae, more than 14

Inspection done 9/9/24. (KP)

* Trees not marked, reviewed trees to be removed with homeowner. M. Fittipaldi discussed trees not being marked with homeowner, homeowner said too confusing.

- Owner plans to plant Arborvitae around property for privacy. Need to remove trees to allow space for Arborvitae.
- Trees also dangerous, kids playing underneath and limbs have fallen.
- Many trees already down, not along edge of property, wood stacked. Owner said those trees previously fallen.
- Permit noted all trees to be removed were ashe trees. None of the trees around perimeter were ashes. Saw one ash on Deer Run side of property. This ash is not one of trees to come down, not in Arborvitae line. Also not sure whose property Ash is on.
- Permit marked September 5th.
- Owner said trees have been slowly dying on his property and neighbor's since he's been here 3-5 years. Had people come out and review trees. Suggested he get soil tested.

120 Oakwood

Inspection done 9/12/24. (KP)

Remove 11, after inspection changed permit to 16, all ashes

- Wire fence around property could not enter area
- Could not get through gate, Covered with separate piece of fence. Would have to take a large piece of fencing down.
- Map submitted with permit showed trees in wooded area in front of house. Could see many marked trees that were dead through fence. Could see tops of many trees that were dead could not determine if marked. Total number seemed to be approximately 11 per permit.
- Along road 5 dead trees on edge of property, fence goes through. These trees not on map. These 5 can be added to the permit.
- Tried calling number on Permit, received voice mail. "Not taking calls at this time."