

WATCHUNG ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION MINUTES

JANUARY 24, 2017

Present: Rachel Fruncheon, Karen Pennett, Don Pote, George Sopko, Jim and Andy Stout, Joan Tak

Guest: Arlene McCoy, Watchung Assistant Engineer

Absent: Sondra Epstein

Call to Order, Minutes:

The meeting was called to order at 7:37. The December minutes were approved as written.

Tree Report:

Sondra joined the discussion of this portion of the meeting via cellphone. Together with Arlene, they presented a combined December, 2016 / January, 2017 Tree Report. (See Attachment). There was considerable discussion concerning four of the five referenced properties. In order for the property owners at 41 Lakeview Ave. to accomplish their tree removal objective which is in conflict with the Tree Ordinance, they must present their case to, and obtain approval from, the Borough Council. Arlene once again offered to explore with the owners, an alternative proposal to the Council. For example, allowing the trees along the border to be cut down with one to one replacement.

Inputs for tree or other plant suggestions leading to an optimal solution for the island plantings along Somerset Street were requested. Jim volunteered to help determine what trees would be optimal for this project. Arlene mentioned that in the future a number of these islands would have water piped in.

Joan will be Sondra's back up on tree inspections with Arlene during her absence. George reported that there was \$6,272 in the tree bank.

Planning Board:

Karen reported that the redevelopment plan for the Sears property has been postponed until the next Planning Board meeting on February 21.

Open Space:

George reported that the Council has three plans for open space use of the Ness property and will be presented at the February 21st Open Space meeting. He will e-mail a copy of the plans to Karen for distribution.

Miscellaneous:

Bottle caps:

Rachel indicated that collection of bottle caps at the library is still going strong. She also mentioned that Warren's program, modeled after Watchung's, appeared to be going well. It was clarified that the #5 bottle caps are permitted in the library recycling bins.

Pipe Line

Rachel indicated that things have been relatively quiet concerning news about the Pilgrim pipe line. In addition, Pilgrim has not filed for permits.

Other (old, new business)

-Spring Newsletter

Karen requested that EC members come up with suggestions for Watchung's Spring Newsletter. Don suggested that information on the "value of trees within our community" from an older brochure

previously distributed to Watchung residents, be offered as a reminder of Watchung's commitment to tree preservation. Joan volunteered to write an article for the Spring newsletter.

-Budget

The EC budget for 2017 is expected to be about the same as the 2016 budget.

-Geese droppings removal

At the September EC meeting it was reported that there was a commercial product available that contains a grapefruit- based formula that, when sprayed on areas such as walkways, grass, etc., it discourages geese from walking (and therefore eliminating their droppings) on these areas. It was important that we obtain information on its composition, toxicity, cost, etc. prior to any trial runs. Karen will pursue.

Assignments for next meeting

In addition to those assignments mentioned in the above agenda items, there are the following assignments for the February meeting:

- Joan will obtain costs from additional suppliers for several varieties of 2 ½ and 4 inch diameter trees.
- Karen will obtain new borough office hours for 2017.
- All: Your thoughts and suggestions relative to a need for an increase in the current fee of \$200 per tree when a resident of Watchung elects not to replace a tree that has been removed.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 9:35pm. The next regularly scheduled meeting will be Monday, February 27, 2017 at Borough Hall at 7:30pm..

Respectfully submitted,

Don Pote, Secretary, January meeting,
Watchung Environmental Commission

TREE REPORT DECEMBER 2016 & JANUARY 2017

50 Lakeview Ave. Dec 21 notice of violation, the lot was clear cut except two trees in the front yard. All the trees in the rear yard were removed. The owner was issued a permit to cut the trees that were marked, but the plan was not followed. Garcia's Contraction was responsible for the tree work. Boro Engineer informed the owner that they have to hire a landscape architect and submit a replacement plan.

41 Lakeview Ave, stop work order was issued. 2 trees were taken down without a permit. 12/22/2016 The new homeowner said they were not aware of tree ordinance. They want to take down all the trees on the property. The borough engineer told owner that not more than 50 % of the tree can be taken down without consent of the Borough Council. All the trees are mature conifers and are tall and straggly. The lot frontage is approximately 75 - 100 feet. The trees had been planted for screening and are no longer useful as a screen. Remove 8. We recommend to the owner to appear at the borough council to remove the remaining trees

340 Stirling Road, Dec 12, A stop work order was issued. The owner was taking down 2 dead trees with a issued permit and trimming the remaining ones.. The owner was compliant with the issued permit.

77 Knollwood Drive. 12/22/2016. New owners want to put in a pool. However there were trees planted in the rear yard from the builder for the tree replacement plan. The trees were inspected after 2 years and the bond was returned. There were no trees in the back yard. After inspection the borough engineer determined that the trees planted were moved to the side of the lot. The trees were looked alive but the trunks had been battered. There is now a large open back yard.

105 Nottingham Drive, 1/11/ 2017 remove 6 trees, 1 diseased, all trees were within 15 feet of the house.