

WATCHUNG ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION

MINUTES

May 29, 2018

Present: Sondra Epstein, Karen Pennett , Joan Tak , Don Pote, Jim and Andy Stout

Absent Rachel Funcheon, Maria Alberto

Call to Order, Minutes:

The meeting was called to order at 7:28 pm. Environmental Commission April minutes were approved.

Reports:

Tree Report: Sondra reported that there is no Tree Report this month.

Planning Board: Karen reported that there is no update since she was unable to attend the meeting.

Green Fair

The Green Fair was held on April 28 at Bayberry School. Karen thanked those Commission members who participated and did a great job at our Environmental Commission's booth.

Joan, with the help of her husband, set up the EC booth with the new "Watchung Environmental Commission" sign attached to a canopy. It assisted in attracting attention to the booth. Joan assessed the Fair as moderately successful. The set up for dropping off the various recyclables was both smooth and convenient. Turnout was fair as compared to previous years and may have been due to insufficient signage / advertising. EC members who attended were instrumental in educating the public on the cap recycling program, alternatives to chemical weed control, town requirements for cutting down trees, Neespresso pod recycling, and some potential new programs such as Styrofoam egg carton recycling.

There were discussions and suggestions on how we could improve next year's Fair:

- Plan well in advance and secure vendor commitments by Sept. / Oct.
- Consider a site that can be used each year and benefit both Watchung and Warren. For example, one that will provide adequate visibility, parking and easy recycling drop off, e.g., our high school.
- Secure required permits well in advance.
- Expand the scope of environmental topics to include pollution, industrial & household waste, genetic engineering as it relates to food and urban sprawl.
- Have more things for the children to do.
- Better representation / involvement with the Green Team

- More and better located signage and advertising.

These suggestions will be passed on to the appropriate people responsible for next year's Green Fair.

New Business:

Merging of Open Space Committee with Environmental Commission:

There was a brief discussion concerning the effort and impact of the recent Council's decision for this merger. Jim briefly reviewed Watchung's open space inventory.

Balloons at Spring Town Festival:

Harm to ocean environments has been widely documented as a result of helium filled rubber and plastic balloons released to the atmosphere, causing ocean pollution and demise of fish if consumed. It was the recommendation of the Commissioners that consideration be given to prohibiting the distribution of helium filled balloons at Watchung sponsored events.

Library Closing: Relocation of Bottle Cap Recycling Bin

Possible relocation sites for the bottle cap recycling bin, currently located in the foyer of Watchung's library, were discussed in the event the library is permanently closed. Discussion of alternatives will continue.

Next Meeting: June 25, 2018

Respectfully submitted,

Don Pote, Acting Recording Secretary