

WATCHUNG ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION

MINUTES

November 26, 2018

Present: Rachel Funcheon, Karen Pennett, Don Pote, Sondra Epstein, Jim and Andy Stout

Absent: Maria Alberto, Joan Tak

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 7:30 pm.

October Minutes to be reviewed at January meeting

Tree Report see below.

Many residents cut trees down without getting permits, as shown the tree report below. Discussion ensued on having Council enforce fines for violations of the tree ordinance. Commission also discussed how to better inform the public about the rules governing tree removal.

Planning Board

Non Condemnation Re-development Plan

Planning Board Reviewed Ordinances for the Re-development Plan on Bonnie Burn Road. Borough Planners Marcia Shiffman and Mark Healey were present to discuss the ordinances. This area consists of approximately 41 acres. For tree replacement, the ordinance states 1 tree, 2 ½ - 3 inches in diameter for each dwelling unit. There is to be 230 dwellings. This varies from the tree ordinance. I did not object. The one per unit replacement may be more than what the tree ordinance would allow. I did recommend that the 75% deciduous to 25 % conifers.

Clothing Bins at Blue Star and BJs'

Approval was given for Texima to place clothing bins at two locations in the Blue Star Shopping Center and one at BJs'.

Deer Survey

Effects of White-tailed Deer on Forests in Watchung Borough in October 2018 was reviewed with much discussion. Members of the commission raised concern that this study did not review all areas of Forest Health, just the deer impact. Main arguments against the study:

- * Dr. Kelly has a known bias against the deer and is closely allied with the Wildlife Commission.
 - * The effects of over-development, tree disease, pesticides, climate change, drought, or invasive were not part of the study.
 - * Selection of sites to evaluate questionable: mostly private properties of Wildlife Commission members.
 - * The deer were counted and numbers then extrapolated. Deer are not evenly distributed around the Borough which makes report questionable.
 - * Old data and studies from deep forest areas were used as comparison which do not apply to Watchung.
- Environmental Commission to review sources for future studies of Watchung Forest Health.

Next Meeting: January 28, 2019

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Pennett, Acting Recording Secretary

Tree Report November 2018

185 Washington Drive, 10/24/2018, remove 7 trees all dead

233 Ridge Road 10/24/2018, stop work order was issued last year on this property. They applied for a permit to take down 10 trees this year. At the site we found several trees that were cut into logs on the ground and two high tree stumps that were left when the stop order was issued last year. It was hard to determine the condition of the trees in late October. Removal of 10 trees, 8 dead, 2 live. Total replacement 2: 1@2 ½ "1 @ 4"

708 Mountain Blvd, 10/24/2018, O'Connor's restaurant site. All the permits were issued for this site by other boards. The tree inspection was overlooked, and all that could be done was to increase the size of the trees to be replanted. Remove 93 trees, replace 30 trees@ 2 ½", 10 trees@ 4"

5 Sherwood Road, 10/24/2018, neighbor called about tree cutting. A stop work order was issued. A permit was obtained to cut one tree near the house and work was allowed to continue.

833 Mountain Blvd 11/1/2018, remove 15 dead trees.

69 Washington Drive, 11/1/2018, Approximately 5 trees were removed without permit. A tree had fallen across the road, the homeowner was cleaning up. 6" to 10" trees dead or damaged.

Crystal ridge Oct 29, 2018, Tree removal without permit. Please submit completed application along with a 1 to 1 re-planting plan. This area provided a screening and buffer area to the residents on East Drive. Replanting must be done immediately. Arleen was called by New York management. They said that they were told to clean up the area, by the town property management. Better communications are needed between departments.

151 Sunlit Drive, 11/9/2018; The Borough Engineer, Tom Herits, signed off to remove 8 trees on the property. Tom Herits substituted for Arleen while she was away for a 2 week vacation. No trees were noted for replacement at the time. The environmental commission was not called. 11/20/2018: 8 trees were cut, nothing was to be done except replace 8: size pending

115 East Drive 11/210/2018, Remove 12 trees: New retaining wall, 6 dead, 6 live,
Replace 4 @ 2 ½ "2@ 4"

205 Parlin Lane 11/20/2018, virgin lot, new construction, 50 trees removed. This lot abuts Route 78.

1017 Johnston Drive 11/20/2018 a violation letter was sent to the homeowner for tree removal without a permit.