

Minutes for the Environmental Commission
July 17, 2017
(Rescheduled from July 13, 2017)

The meeting commenced at 7:02 pm.

Members present: Beaumont, Clapp, Coyne, Haug, Neufeld, Urbanski, Van der Veen, Zuzov, Dale (TC liaison).

Members excused: Andreoli

Members absent: Piel

Approval of minutes: June 8, 2017: Approved with no changes.

Opportunity for Public Comment: There were no members of the public in attendance.

The detention basin/rain garden at the municipal property has been replanted with 700 plants, including Riverbank Wild Rye, Boneset, Rose mallow, Blue flag Iris, Soft Rush, Blue Vervain, Purple Coneflower, Oxeye Sunflower, Black-eyed Susan, and Little Bluestem. Cathy was there for the planting and questioned Steve about installation of a drain. It was explained that because of the concrete nature of the outlet, that a drain would not be feasible and that the plantings should solve the water retention problem.

The vegetative swales will be redone in the fall. They have been mowed now because of the thistle infestation. Roundup will need to be used. Members agreed that it might be the only way to control the thistle.

Dave Clapp reported that he marked 50-60 ash trees at Hewitt Park, along the hedgerows and driveways. He also noted a pocket of mile-a-minute. Dave recommended that an expert look at the trees and remove them if necessary. Mayor Dale said that the DPW would be removing the marked trees, probably 30 trees/year. This had previously been discussed at a Township Committee meeting. Discussion, but no conclusion, as to what to do with the firewood.

Cathy presented a PennEast update: A federal bill, HR2910 is before Congress and it essentially would allow pipeline companies to circumvent federal, state, and local permitting authorities and undermine public participation in permitting decisions. Cathy to send information to the members as per contacting our legislators.

The invasive spotted lanternfly problem was discussed. Members were given information from the Pennsylvania Dept. of Agriculture and from Rutgers Cooperative Extension. The lanternfly is currently not in New Jersey, but there is concern since Pennsylvania has a serious problem. Members discussed this and decided to put a short informative piece on the website, with links for further information.

Members then entered into a lengthy discussion as to the need to write a tree cutting ordinance or an ordinance to prevent clear cutting. Jennifer had supplied the tree cutting ordinance from Hopewell Township. Members finally concluded that such an ordinance would not be viable. The discussion then

continued to the removal of trees adversely affecting a neighboring property. It was concluded that the only recourse in such instances would be a civil suit.

Members then discussed the problem of possible clear cutting. It was noted that West Amwell does have a very protective woodlands ordinance, but it is for development. It was also noted that residents in this regard have the right to use their property as they see fit. Mayor Dale noted that larger wooded parcels often have a woodlot management plan and thus are farmland assessed. Cathy mentioned that our most important forested area – the Sourlands – is very well preserved. In order to determine if a potential problem exists, Cathy will contact David Gill for information on the non-farmland assessed wooded parcels and will report at the next meeting.

Joel wanted to do something to educate the public and promote turning lawn areas into ecosystems, with native plantings, etc. There was a brief discussion of possibly doing a newsletter or having a lecture, possibly asking Stonybrook to participate. Discussion to be continued at our next meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:00 pm.

Minutes prepared by C. Urbanski.