

Watchung Environmental Commission

Summary of Accomplishments

Year 2012

Responsibility for the administration of Environmental consciousness in the Borough of Watchung is shared by four organizations: Public Works Department, Environmental Commission, Watchung Green Team and the Traffic and Beautification Committee. The organizations meet periodically to discuss and delineate areas of responsibility for each element of the Plan. In addition to these organizations, the Watchung Engineering Department assists to assure compliance with the Borough's tree ordinance.

Some members of the four above-mentioned organizations have received the required the CORE training in order to meet the training criteria. The Environmental Commission takes great pride in our community forest and has taken a number of steps to insure its continuing benefits to the community. With the incorporation of a tree bank in its tree ordinance, the Environmental Commission has assisted the Borough with suggestions on how the money from the tree bank should be used insuring the need for a healthy community forest and replacement of those trees in public areas. The tree bank will also insure that funds are available to the Borough for the planting of additional trees in public areas. This is most important in these economic times. The Commission has made recommendations to tighten the requirement in the Tree Ordinance.

Accordingly, a concerted effort is made to incorporate articles concerning the care and maintenance of trees in the Borough Newsletter, which is distributed to all Watchung households. The Borough has changed the quarterly distribution of the newsletter from bi-annual. In light of the distribution changes, the commission has taken steps to incorporate tree related articles on the Borough's website. Articles that have been included in the Newsletter include the educating the public in recycling, When to prune trees, reinforcing the tree ordinance, supporting renewable energy and buying green energy to mention a few.

Arbor Day & Earth Day programs are conducted annually basis with the Third Grade Environmental Club at our Bayberry School with the ceremonial planting of trees at Best Lake. The Environmental Commission is actively looking at options to help enhance those programs. They will be joining a neighboring community in their Earth Day event for the coming year.

Each year a budget is prepared by each of the responsible organizations and includes requests for funding elements relating to our community forest and education. These are reviewed and submitted for approval to our Borough Council. The 2013 budget will not reflect an increase due to the economy.

In addition to the 2012 accomplishments above, other accomplishments include:

- ◆ Participation in Somerset County "Operation Secure Shed" sponsored by the Somerset County Board of Chosen Freeholders. The commission incorporated Styrofoam & metal recycling in the event. Approximately 50 pounds of Styrofoam was recycled. The metal wasn't as successful, but the vendor offered to pick up metal free of charge to any homeowners. 137 cars brought their documents to be shredded. 56 were from Watchung. The remaining participants were from around the county.
- ◆ The commission has actively monitoring the legislation on Hydraulic Fracturing in NJ and its effects on the environment.
- ◆ A presentation by the Tree Whisperer: Dr. Jim Conroy and Co-founder of the Cooperative Bio Balance by Ms. Basia Alexandra attended our meeting. The presentation explained their approach in creating a paradigm-shifting mindset as well as bio-energy- based practical techniques. The techniques involve healing inner functionality within trees and plants by coming from their point of view. The bio-energy balancing processes connect/interconnect and establish /restore dynamic balance amount the multi-dimensional relationship with ecosystems - including all plants, insects, micro-organisms and people
- ◆ Members of the commission attended a movie night sponsored by the Warren Green team. Movie: Food Inc. is based on a investigative report on live stock and the foods we eat.

- ◆ Ongoing efforts by Public Works Department to identify and respond to calls to mitigate hazardous tree occurrences. The evaluation process is based on routine visual inspections performed concurrently with daily operational activities as well as citizen inquiries. Any trees affected by significant weather events are evaluated for obvious damage. These trees/limbs are recorded, prioritized and addressed accordingly. This has assisted PWD in light of recent super storm “Sandy”.
- ◆ The Department of Public Works continues to provide an ample supply of wood chips from pruning and removal of tree/limbs to borough residents for their use.
- ◆ The Traffic & Beautification committee has identified public areas, which are in need of tree planting.
- ◆ A member of the Environmental Commission has been named to the Traffic & Beautification Committee to further encourage the collaborative effect.
- ◆ A member of the Environmental Commission participates in the “Watchung Green team” in a coordinated effort to promote a more sustainable community.

We will continue to focus on issues that affect our community and the environment.