

**Township of West Milford
ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION**

MINUTES

May 7, 2018

The May 7, 2018 Regular Meeting of the Township of West Milford Environmental Commission was called to order at 7:01 p.m. with a reading of the Legal Notice.

ROLL CALL

Present: Tim Dalton (7:23), David Ofshinsky, Douglas Ott, James Rogers, Thomas Tamayne, Chairman Stephen Sangle, Clinton Smith (Alt #1), Douglas Trainor (Alt #2),

Absent: Don Weise.

Chairman Stephen Sangle requested Clinton Smith to sit in for Don Weise and also Doug Trainor to sit in for Tim Dalton until his arrival. He further advised that there was a quorum for this meeting.

PRESENTATIONS – Richard Buchtman – Invasive Species

Emerald Ash Borer Update – Mr. Buchtman, a local licensed tree expert with Timber Tree and Shrub Spraying, was present to provide an update to the Environmental Commission on several invasive species affecting our trees, including the Emerald Ash Borer. His original presentation in 2011 alerted the Commission about the impending infestation of this insect. To provide some background, Mr. Buchtman reported that the insect was first identified in 2002 in Illinois, arriving on crate material from Asia. Since that time, the insect has killed millions of ash trees in New Jersey. It was discovered in South Jersey in 2014 and identified in Mahwah in 2017. He reviewed a map indicating the presence of the Emerald Ash Borer in the United States, and noted that the Federal Government tried to keep the infestation contained, but it is currently in 31 states. He indicated the locations in West Milford where it has been detected, and stated that it takes several years for the insect to be apparent since the trees show stress very slowly, before the infestation is actually confirmed. He reviewed various types of trees and branch systems, and stated that West Milford contains mainly white ash, with a few green ash, both male and female trees, with either single or compound (5-9 leaflets) leaf systems. He noted that mountain ash was not considered a true ash tree. Mr. Buchtman stated that an assessment program on the ash trees should be conducted as soon as possible, and encouraged homeowners, as well as the municipality, to identify and inventory any ash trees on their properties. He commented that Pinecliff Lake has a large number of ash trees in the lake community.

Mr. Buchtman reported that a Pest Alert was issued by the NJDEP in 2017, although the insect was present in New Jersey in 2014. He stressed that mortality for the tree was imminent with the presence of the emerald ash borer. Unfortunately, when an invasive insect is introduced, there are usually no regulations in place at the time to keep them under control. In Asia and Russia, the insect is present, but is kept under control with other insects that feed on them, and only the weak or old trees succumb. He noted that the United States has no natural predator to limit the effect of this insect. Mr. Buchtman observed that the purple traps installed on trees by the NJDEP and EPA were intended to attract the emerald ash borer with a stress hormone that is emitted by a tree. He reviewed the symptoms of a tree infested with the emerald ash borer, noting that the insect starts in the crown and feeds down, with the larvae feeding under the bark and eventually into the Cambrian layer. Mr. Buchtman displayed an example of a section of bark damaged by the emerald ash borer and stated that, if a tree is showing decline, it has been infested for some time. Homeowners should identify any ash trees on their property and a professional can determine the condition of the tree and whether treatment is needed. He cautioned that treatment is continual and will not end unless an effective deterrent becomes available, and commented that towns should budget for treatment and/or tree removal before the trees die and create hazards and liabilities. He noted that some of the uses for the ash wood include baseball bats, hockey sticks, furniture, as well as many other items.

Alternate Commissioner Clint Smith inquired if the Emerald Ash Borer can be stopped from coming into the country, and Mr. Buchtman responded that the insect comes in on international pallet material, but only 2% of the imported pallets are inspected for insects. He explained that if the pallet wood is properly kiln dried, it is heated to 160 degrees, which kills boring insects, but not all the material has been dried in this manner. When the insect was initially identified, studies in the source country discovered three parasitic wasps that feed on the borer. He reported that all the states are now rearing and releasing these wasps, but the borers greatly outnumber the wasps. Doug Trainor suggested that hybridization of the trees, including grafting with resistant stock, might be a solution. Mr. Buchtman stated that, with regard to treatment options, cover spray, which is used to treat gypsy moths, is not effective since the borer is inside the tree. Another option is systemic insecticide, which includes drilling holes into the tree and injecting the insecticide from mid-April to June, and it is effective, although expensive. Still another option, which can be done by a homeowner, is the soil injection or drench method, which involves pouring the appropriate amount of insecticide into the base of the tree. This is drawn up into the crown of the tree and works for about one year. Mr. Buchtman reviewed several insecticide options, including Merritt and Safari, as well as organic pesticides which are derived from plant material. He reviewed the labeling that is used on pesticide products, which may indicate "Caution" "Warning" or "Danger", and noted that with proper use, and applied at the recommended rate, the risk for harm is low with the chemicals that are suggested for treatment. He noted that billions of dollars are spent in government testing of pesticide products, and if new information becomes available, the labels are adjusted accordingly.

Commissioner Tim Dalton inquired about the Township's involvement in determining the impact on ash trees that are located on Township owned property, and Mr. Buchtman suggested that the cost of tree maintenance could be spread out over time, but it should be under consideration now, along with the liability issues that may arise. An assessment of the affected trees, via a walk thru, should be completed. He noted that ash is a prominent tree in West Milford since the tree prefers clay soils, which are common to the region, and stated that the Macopin corridor and Pinecliff Lake community have a large concentration of the ash. Commissioner Jim Rogers inquired about the cost for treating a large number of trees, and Mr. Buchtman advised that it is based on volume at approximately \$2. - \$10. an inch per tree, depending on the circumference. Mr. Trainor commented about the gypsy moth caterpillars, and inquired if there was an effective biological agent that will attack the emerald ash borer. Mr. Buchtman responded that a soil fungus, as well as the biological agent BT is used to control the gypsy moths, but there is no biological bacteria that is effective on the emerald ash borer.

Spotted Lantern Fly – Mr. Buchtman reviewed the most recent information on the Spotted Lantern Fly, a newer invasive insect that will be affecting trees in New Jersey. The insect feeds on the nutrient rich floam (sugars) present in a tree and are plant hoppers, feeding like an aphid. The insect was identified in Pennsylvania and was 1/2 mile from the New Jersey border, but is active in Delaware and Virginia. He reported that the spotted lantern fly lays its eggs on everything, included rusted metal, and was found living on Christmas trees that were brought in from Pennsylvania. It is active from May until October and lays several egg masses during the season, with very few predators to keep it under control. Since the insect prefers grape vines, apple and cherry trees, as well as hops, the agriculture world is trying to find an effective method in dealing with it. The insect is still under research, but the scientists are investigating the secretions that may be attracting more insects. Mr. Buchtman advised that the insect feeds on the Ailanthus tree before it lays its eggs. The Ailanthus tree, an invasive plant species, is prevalent along Greenwood Lake Turnpike near Long Pond Ironworks, and he displayed a tree branch as a sample. He advised that, in an attempt to control the Spotted Lantern Fly, Pennsylvania is cutting down the female Ailanthus trees and treating the male trees, and so far it has been effective. The insect is suspected to have arrived from China on shipping containers which ended up in Philadelphia.

Hemlock Woolly Adelgid - Mr. Buchtman gave an overview of the Hemlock Woolly Adelgid (HWA), an insect that came from Asia, which has affected the hemlock trees in the region for many years. He noted that a parasitic lady bug (beetle) that was introduced into the forests seems to be effective in

controlling the adelgid. He observed that West Milford has one of the largest stands of surviving hemlocks in the State, situated along the Clinton Road corridor, and although they are not the best looking specimens, they are surviving. He commented that it may be the most studied stand of hemlocks in the country, with the US Forest Service, Rutgers, and the University of Virginia all researching the trees to determine why this particular stand of hemlocks has survived in this location. Some theories are that the microclimate provides the optimal conditions for tolerating the HWA feeding on it better than other locations, or the trees may be resistant through their DNA. The parasitic beetles are feeding on the adelgid on the trees at Clinton Road, and Mr. Buchtman observed that whether they are having a significant impact on the population is yet to be determined, but the fact that they have lasted through several winters is good news for the hemlock species. South of West Milford, almost no hemlocks are left, and north of the Township, the hemlocks are fairly abundant, with West Milford right on the cusp. Since we have temperatures that fall below 0° every few years, it seems to be enough to deter or reduce the population of the woolly adelgid and gives the beetles a chance to feed on what remains. Mr. Buchtman noted that we have lost about 80% of the hemlock trees in the Township, but we still have trees that have survived.

American Chestnut – Mr. Buchtman provided an update on the American Chestnut tree and the “back breeding” program that was instituted to revive the tree. He advised that in 1900, it was one of the most prevalent trees east of the Mississippi River, and was used primarily for timber and food. The tree was almost entirely lost due to the efforts to crossbreed the American with the Chinese Chestnut tree to produce a larger and better tasting nut. When they brought the Chinese Chestnut tree over from Asia, a fungus was introduced from the tree that destroyed the American trees. He reported that the Chestnut Blight did not kill the entire tree because the valuable root system survived. The roots sent up sprouts that provided living DNA to use in the research. In the early 1980’s, the American Chestnut Foundation instigated a crossbreeding program that they proposed to replace the American Chestnut. They used trees from Clinton Road in West Milford for the program, and this included attaching bags over the chestnut flowers so that pollen could be introduced from the Chinese Chestnut tree. These then produced seeds that were a 50/50 mix. The seeds were planted, and in six to seven years, they followed the same procedure to produce seeds that were 2/3 American and 1/3 Chinese Chestnut. The process was repeated six times and they were able to produce a tree that had no physical characteristics of the Chinese Chestnut, but one that is resistant to the Chestnut Blight. The trees are now available to the public, online and also in stores.

Mr. Buchtman concluded his presentation by commenting that the Chestnut tree experiment provides hope for some of the trees, but he noted that the emerald ash borer and spotted lantern fly need to be addressed before they do irreparable harm. The Environmental Commission thanked Mr. Buchtman for his informative presentation on some of the invasive species that threaten our trees.

APPLICATIONS FOR REVIEW

RANDA INVESTMENTS

Use Variance #ZB-02-18-02

Block 7601; Lot 2

1463 Union Valley Road; VC Zone

Seeking: Use Variance approval for the construction of multi-family residential townhouse units (10) where the use is not permitted and Bulk Variance relief requested for a 60.7 ft front yard setback where 20 ft is required in the Village Commercial Zone.

- The Commission inquired about the source of the potable water for the proposed townhouse units.
- The Commission inquired whether the applicant has resolved the contamination issues that were present at the site.

GRANT MANAGEMENT AND STATUS REVIEW

NJDEP NNL \$620,197.00 Reforestation Grant Project: Tim Dalton reported that he and Ron Farr were present with staff from the NJDEP Forestry Division, which included Rosa Yoo and Susan Seyboldt, as they conducted an inspection of the tree planting sites the prior week. The contractor, Fullerton Grounds Maintenance, was in the process of removing the baskets from the trees and replacing the dead trees at various locations. They visited over half the sites and checked every tree for caliper, distance and baskets. Four of the trees still had the baskets on the root balls. Mr. Dalton noted that the contractor was working through the weekend to correct the issues that were identified from prior inspections and reports, and the NJDEP will be returning to complete their inspections. He also reported that many of the trees were under the caliper minimum, but these might possibly be waived if they are included in large groupings of trees. In addition, some of the trees were planted too close together. The total number of trees that were planted was 1253, not counting the 28 apple trees that were planted at Wallisch. Mr. Dalton advised that we should receive a report in about a week or two from the NJDEP following their final inspection.

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ON GOING BUSINESS

Environmental Contamination Issues: Commissioner Tom Tamayne reviewed some of the environmental notices that were received as well as those listed on the agenda.

Shade Tree Committee / Community Forestry Mgt. Plan: Commissioner Tim Dalton reported that the Township needs to assign one of the staff to obtain the CORE Training for the Shade Tree Commission/Community Forestry Management Plan since Dave Stires, Recycling Coordinator, will no longer be involved in the tree management program. He noted that the Emerald Ash Borer presence must be included in the next CFMP with the plans that will be implemented to address the damage to Township trees. He advised that the Invasive Species presentation by Rick Buchtman early in this meeting qualifies as 1.5 hours of training for nine members.

Lakes Committee/Greenwood Lake Bi-State Commission: Clint Smith reported that the contractor hired for stump removing and Greenwood Lake overturned his boat and he was not sure if another contract would be awarded to perform the work.

Open Space Committee: Don Weise was absent and there were no updates to report on open space matters.

Belchers Creek Testing Project: The Belcher Creek Testing project is temporarily on hold until the testing equipment is located following the flooding of the offices in the lower level of Town Hall.

Green Team–Sustainability Committee-Sustainable Jersey Re-Certification: Commissioner Tim Dalton advised that he will be attending the Sustainable Jersey Summit in June.

He reported that the Green Fest may be revived, possible at its former location at Bubbling Springs. He will update the Commission as more information becomes available.

NEW OR CURRENT BUSINESS

NJ Tree Recovery – Tim Dalton advised that this program is part of the Arbor Day activities and one of the local volunteers wants the West Milford First Aid Building to be one of the designated pick up sites for free trees next year. He noted that this is related to the Shade Tree Commission, and he planned to speak to the Supervisor of Public Works to go over the numbers. If the Township becomes involved with the Tree City USA program, they require that the Township budget \$2.00 per person for tree maintenance which would be approximately \$50,000.00. Grants are available for tree maintenance if the Township qualifies for the Tree City designation.

Lake Management Planning – Lake Integrity Study and Highlands Council – the Commission briefly discussed this matter. Copies will be provided to the Commission for review and discussion at the June meeting.

MINUTES

The minutes from the March 5, 2018 regular meeting of the West Milford Environmental Commission were **approved** on a **motion** by Dave Ofshinsky with a **second** by Doug Ott.

CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED: *The following correspondence items were reviewed by the Commission:*

Highlands Water Protection and Planning Act Correspondence

1. None.

NJ Department of Environmental Protection Correspondence

1. Application for a NJDEP Freshwater Wetlands Letter of Interpretation and Transition Area Waiver, dated April 19, 2018, received for Block 16052 and Lot 3, 250 Oak Ridge Road for Lakeland Bank regarding the expansion of an existing parking lot and associated site improvements.
2. Correspondence received from John Moyle of the NJDEP, dated April 13, 2018, regarding Hank's Pond Dam, NJ File No. 22-242, advising that the correct contact information must be included on the Emergency Action Plan (EAP), with corrections to be submitted by May 15, 2018.
3. Hazardous Substance Discharge Notice received from the NJDEP, dated April 25, 2018, regarding 29 Larchmont Drive, Block 409; Lot 16, for the removal of a 550 gal UST, with clean up pending.
4. Notification of an application to the NJDEP from PSE&G, dated April 2018, regarding a Freshwater Wetlands Permit, Flood Hazard Area Permit and Water Quality Certification regarding the BPU and NERC Vegetation Maintenance Compliance Project.
5. Hazardous Substance Discharge Notice received from the NJDEP, dated April 10, 2018, regarding 1911 Union Valley Road, for antifreeze and motor oil materials spilled as a result of a motor vehicle accident.
6. No Further Action notice received from the NJDEP, dated April 27, 2018, regarding 14 Upper High Crest Road, Block 13103; Lot 8, for the removal of one 550 gal #2 H.O. UST.

Miscellaneous

1. Notification from Randa Investment regarding a Use and Bulk Variance application hearing scheduled for May 22, 2018 at 7:30 pm before the Board of Adjustment.

PUBLIC COMMENTS – Justin Mooney, 15 Beacon Hill Road, addressed the Commission regarding concerns about the Bald Eagle Village septic repairs that have been conducted recently. He reported that on one day during the daily pumping of the system, he noticed that fumes were spewing from the septic contractor’s tanker trucks for about 30 minutes while children were waiting for the school bus. Shortly after this incident, the road was blocked off and traffic was diverted from the area. He also expressed concern about the condition of the tap water, and surmised that there may be violations with regard to water quality. Commissioner Doug Trainor advised him to speak to the Manager at the site about what he witnessed with the school buses. Chairman Sangle noted that the Commission was conducting stream testing on Belchers Creek before Suez takes over the operation of the utility to determine if there will be a difference once the proper repairs have been made to the septic system. Commissioner Dave Ofshinsky commented that the septic fields at the site were originally constructed correctly, and they have been pumping the system continually. He observed that Suez may be taking over the utility in the Fall, and they have the resources and expertise to be able to address the deficiencies with the system. Commissioner Tim Dalton and Chairman Sangle thanked him for taking an interest in this environmental issue and suggested that he become involved with the Green Team as a volunteer.

ADJOURNMENT

With no further business to come before the Environmental Commission, the May 7, 2018 regular meeting was **adjourned** at 9:15 p.m. on a **motion** by Tim Dalton and a second by Doug Trainor.

Approved: September 10, 2018

Respectfully submitted by

Tonya E. Cubby, Secretary