

WARREN TOWNSHIP
ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

September 9, 2020
ZOOM Meeting

I. CALL TO ORDER AND STATEMENT OF COMPLIANCE

The Environmental Commission (EC) of Warren Township, in the County of Somerset and State of New Jersey convened in a Regular Meeting at the Warren Township Municipal Building, 46 Mountain Blvd., Warren, New Jersey on Wednesday, September 9, 2020.

The Chairperson, Laura Mandell called the meeting to order at 7:00PM via a Zoom meeting Conference.

Flag salute

Pursuant to the requirement of Chapter 231 of the Public Laws of 1975, Adequate notice of this meeting was given by posting a copy on the Township Bulletin Board and sending a copy to the Township Clerk, Echoes Sentinel and Courier News as required by the Open Public Meetings Act. All Commissioners are duly appointed volunteers working for the Township of Warren.

II. ROLL CALL

Present: Laura Mandell, Karen Kaiser, Susan Zeitels, Christina Lewis, Sal DiBianca, Wayne De Feo, Malcom Plager, Dave Gabel
Absent: Karen Task, Harold Black

III. Discussion

Laura Mandell welcomed the WEC to the Zoom meeting. Tonight's meeting was to discuss the current issue of the Spotted Lanternfly and discuss solutions to combat the problem in Warren Township. Prior to the meeting Laura Mandell shared with the group information from the Board Of Health, the NJ Department of Agriculture and links to Warren's Tree Removal and Replacement Ordinance.

In addition to the WEC, David Gabel, a former WEC member, and Green Team member, town resident and Environmental Professional.

Wayne DeFeo spoke to the group regarding his knowledge of the Spotted Lanternfly and the difficulties in destroying the insect and its seedlings. He stressed the importance of destroying the seedlings so the spread could be minimized. Currently the tree most affected by the Spotted Lanternfly is the Ailanthus tree (an invasive tree and noxious weed according to Penn State University) but Wayne and other members discussed seeing the insect in other trees and long grasses. Christina Lewis has also seen an infestation in her yard and discussed contacting other organizations to assist with the issue. The cost for residents for tree removal is very expensive and it was questioned if there could be support to help with the costs. There was a discussion on how local tree removal companies could help with the infestation but many are so busy due to recent storms and their seasonal business.

David Gable shared his experience with the Spotted Lanternfly on his property in Warren Township. See attached letter from David Gabel dated August 24, 2020 to Laura Mandell, WEC Chairperson.

David summarized and showed the group one of numerous ailanthus trees that are on his property and the damage to the tree, the actual Spotted Lanternfly, Once the Spotted Lanternfly attach the trees it produces a sticky sap, which attracts stinging insects promotes mold growth. David shared with the group his plan to eradicate the infestation of the Spotted Lanternfly from his property and his tree removal plan as a result. He plans to have all the ailanthus trees removed with the exception of one male host tree. His idea to keep the male host tree will help keeping the Spotted Lanternfly on this tree of preference in hopes that egg masses will be laid here and not on other beneficial trees.

To help reduce the spread of Spotted Lanternflies and as the tree's removal cost is expensive, he requested the group recommend changing the tree ordinance so residents would not have to pay for the tree permits associated with the removal of the ailanthus trees.

With ailanthus trees, in addition to removing the trees, the stumps need to be treated with an herbicide that the trees do not grow back. It was discussed on treating the remaining tree with an herbicide, most likely Roundup using glyphosate and triclopyr. David discussed doing this at the end of September into October before the colder weather. Mal Plager suggested using a root wash herbicide. Members stressed their concern over the use of the chemicals and the harm it could do to other beneficial trees and plants. Dave feels that this targeted approach will not affect the beneficial insects and good plants.

Mal Plager raised concern that once residents remove trees the lanternfly will hop or jump onto another valuable tree. He also questioned when the tree is cut down how does the insect interact with the wood chips. Wayne DeFeo cited an article (he will share with WEC) that stated it is not recommended to keep the wood chips as many people do after tree cutting. However, at this time it appears that chipping the infected trees does get rid of the Spotted Lantern Fly and the infestation.

The discussion then moved into the tree replacement plan and removal ordinance. Christina Lewis discussed her previous town of Berkeley Heights plan. She stated that a tree permit was not needed for hazardous trees and recommended Warren revise the ordinance to state this. It was agreed the best way to reduce the Spotted Lanternfly spread is the encourage the removal of the ailanthus tree. This could be done by changing the Tree Protection Ordinance to adding the ailanthus tree as one of the exceptions to requiring a tree removal permit. WEC would need to prepare a recommendation to the Township Committee. There should not be a tree permit fee for a tree that is not a benefit to the environment. Christina Lewis asked if there were county or state resources to help identify the trees. Laura Mandell said most likely not due to tight budgets in a very tough year. Laura suggested educating and publicizing to the community the issue of the Spotted Lanternfly and the invasive ailanthus tree.

Sal DiBianca suggested getting feedback from residents to see how widespread the problem is across the entire township.

The group agreed that toxic herbicides are not recommended. As there is information readily available regarding the Spotted Lanternfly, Laura Mandell recommended that we need to develop 1) An instruction sheet with information on the ailanthus tree. 2) a recommendation for ailanthus tree removal.

Laura Mandell recommended keeping the tree removal limited to the ailanthus tree only and not having a fee for the permit. It was discussed how we can identify this tree on township owned properties and coming up with a plan to have those trees removed.

Laura Mandell asked Wayne DeFeo and David Gabel to work together on a proposal with recommendations on educational information and a targeted change to the tree protection ordinance. Both the educational information and revision to the tree protection ordinance will be shared with the Township Committee. Once approve the goal is to ultimately shared this information with residents.

Mal Plager will speak to Chris Kastrud, township engineer regarding changing the tree ordinance to include removing the ailanthus tree at no cost to residents.

IV Adjournment – 8:23PM Laura Mandell adjourned the meeting

The next meeting will be held on October 14, 2020 at 7PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Krisann Bintley, Secretary
Environmental Commission