

# WENONAH ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION

Meeting  
Minutes  
October 13, 2021

Chairman Scott Barnes called the Wenonah Environmental Commission to order at 7:33 P. M. in accordance with the Open Public Meeting Act at the at the Jack C. Sheppard Community Center.

<u>ROLL CALL</u>	<u>PRESENT</u>	<u>ABSENT</u>
Scott Barnes (Chair. / Planning Bd. Rep.)	X	
Sharon Ceravolo	X	
Scott Conway		X
Rich Dilks (Sec.)	X	
Julia Horn (by teleconference)	X	
Dave Kreck		X
Julie Ream (V. Chair.)	X	

**Associate Members Present:** Dave Coates

**Public Guests Present:** Jim Ramsey, Alex Pozza.

The minutes of the September 2021 meeting were approved as amended.

(Motion: Ceravolo, Second: Ream, AIF)

## **Public Remarks.**

Alex Pozza expressed concern for some of the damaged trees in the park and on the streets. He feared that should funding be currently available to remove damaged trees that trees would be taken down that otherwise might be saved. He said that if a tree has a chance to survive and presents no safety hazards, it should be spared. Scott Barnes noted that street and park trees are under the jurisdiction of the Shade Tree Commission and ultimately Borough Council. It was noted there is not currently extra funding to remove trees, although some assistance may come from FEMA. Julie noted that STC members receive training and have standards for managing trees. Further, it was noted that the STC will begin to put together a master plan to deal with street trees and would use established criteria in making its decisions. Sharon suggested that Alex write a letter to the STC with his concerns or attend the STC meeting to discuss them. Sharon also said she would reach out to Gary Oldenbrett on behalf of the Green Team to assist in developing a street tree plan.

## **Chairman's Report- Scott Barnes**

### **Review**

**Clay Hill Project.** Sharon said she has submitted the final report to ACE. The report included a budget and receipts. Sharon was told at the 2021 Sustainable Communities Grantees Reception that the \$2,500 balance of the grant would be sent out soon. Sharon and Scott C. both have bills to submit for reimbursement. Sharon noted that the actual costs of the project exceeded the grant and Lions donation by only about \$110. Scott B. inquired whether the video shot by ACE would be available to us. Sharon noted the drone video flight was cancelled but that she will inquire about the other video that ACE shot at and near Clay Hill. Sharon also noted that the ACE regional president used the Wenonah trails and has offered assistance with trail clearing and removal of debris.

### **Near Term Projects**

**Fall Work Party, Sat. Nov. 6 at 9AM.** It was decided we would meet at the end of West Cedar then clear debris on the trail. Scott B. will write a short description of the activities planned and give it to Julia for social media postings. Scott B. said there are still some overhead trees on MCT and possibly ACE could help with their removal. He also noted perhaps ACE could assist us with the trees leaning at an angle on the S. West Ave. trail extension and additional trees and woody debris that could block the flow of Mantua Creek. Volunteers can clear trail sections of vines and small debris on their own and as a part of the Nov.6 work party. Scott B. said we will need to assess what debris should be removed and what debris can be scattered near the trails and also determine what major operations we should request help from ACE with.

**Stewart Estate.** Scott B. noted that changes to the Stewart Estate rules means we may be eligible for funds for trail maintenance since much of Wenonah's conservation area was purchased using Stewart Estate funds.

### **Trail Maintenance.**

**Glen Trail.** The Glen Trail is completely blocked with downed trees and debris, and it is unclear when or if we will be able to clear it. ACE assistance could be helpful here. Unless the trail can be reopened, it may need to be removed from the trail map. Scott B. also noted the Cedar St RR foot crossing (on RR property, not conservation area) is also currently blocked.

**Tea House.** Scott B. noted a small work party earlier this month removed woody debris and generally cleaned up around the Tea House in advance of the Mad Hatter's Tree party on Oct. 24.

**Lenape Trail access area.** Julie noted the eroded areas filled in at the recent work party have washed out again. She said a permanent solution may include water bars or a trench.

**Bog Walk.** The lumber for the project was purchased by Scott C. and paid from our municipal budget. The start date is uncertain.

**Eldridge Trail** Julie reported the trail is in good shape for the MHTP on Oct 24. She said she plans to remove one of the punchons by the small foot bridge and reposition another.

**W. Willow St access trail.** The trail is currently blocked, largely by debris dumped there from nearby private property. Dave has spoken to the property owner about this. It was decided we should clear the trail rather than re-route it.

**New WEC Member.** Dave Coates agreed to serve on the WEC effective Jan. 1, 2022 with the expiration of Dave Kreck's term. Welcome back, Dave C. Sharon said she would like to step down when a replacement can be found for her. She would then remain active as an assoc. member.

**Wenonah Fund.** Scott B. said that Chompsky's owner, Alex McPhail, is starting an online portal to coordinate funding, assistance and cooperation among Wenonah's volunteer groups. He has said McPhail plans to apply for 501c3 status, but it is unclear how quickly that can happen.

**WEC fundraising.** Scott said the WEC will continue its own fundraising campaign and will have PayPal available for donations to be made on the redesigned website. Rich noted the recent call for donations for the Bog Walk project has raised \$800 to date.

**T-shirt fundraiser.** We have no recent news on the independent fundraising efforts by a Pitman based t-shirt business.

**Shade Tree Commission fund raising for tree replacement.** The STC plans to work with several area nurseries so that these nurseries will set up funds that people can donate to and which support the purchase of trees by the STC.

**Wenonah Park Restoration Committee.** Scott noted this committee will be headed by Jack Sheppard Jr. and will begin meeting later this month with a public forum later in the fall. The committee is charged with developing a master plan for the restoration of Wenonah Park. It will include representatives from community groups, including the WEC, Borough Council and residents.

**Hiking group fundraiser.** Julia mentioned the Hiker Babes group will be holding a fundraising walk in the conservation area on Nov.2., Proceeds raised will be sent to Rich for deposit.

**Bee signs.** Julie inquired whether we should remove the temporary “bee signs” warning hikers about bees and ground nesting yellow jackets. It was agreed that the signs could now be removed as the insect activity has waned.

**Mad Hatter’s Tree Party Sunday, Oct 24, 1 -3 PM.** This annual GCNC event on the Eldridge Trail and at the Tea House is back this year. Scott B. said a new person to portray the Mad Hatter has been found. The WEC volunteers will help out with logistics and also interpret at some of the tree stations. Scott B. showed the WEC the Mad Hatter’s Guide created by Erik Mollenhauer. It is a lavishly illustrated 200+ page book that organizations can use to create their own Tree Parties.

**Yellow berry hollies donated.** Mr. Ross Beitzel has donated two small yellow berry Am. Hollies (var. Longwood Gold) to be planted in the conservation area. He gave the trees to Rich earlier this month. Mr Beitzel said one should be planted at Dilks pond near the tree he purchased for us this spring and the other one at a location of our choice. Rich planted one at Dilks Pond and we decided to plant the other one at that location as well. Rich will do so then inform Mr. Beitzel. Rich also noted he still has a winterberry shrub purchased for Clay Hill. Sharon said she could pick it up for planting on Nov. 6.

**Activities calendar** Rich presented the WEC Activities Calendar for 2022 and it was approved by the WEC. Rich will now get a copy to the Borough so the events can be added to the town calendar.

**Homeowner mowing on conservation land.** Rich had presented a neighbor’s complaint to us about the owner of 204 E. Pine St mowing a large section of conservation land behind his property. It was suggested that Rich write him a letter explaining that the mowing violated the Borough Conservation Lands Ordinance and why the land should be left in a natural state. Rich should include a copy of the ordinance. At this point, Alex Pozza said he knew the property owner and would be happy to talk to him. Alex said he believed he could resolve the situation and that no letter would be necessary. Rich and the rest of the WEC agreed to give him that opportunity and then report back to us.

**WEC 2021 budget.** Rich reported that with purchases of stone, lumber and the Princeton Hydro contracts, the WEC spent \$277.05 in excess of our \$7,500 budget. Rich said he informed Karen Sweeney and offered to make up the shortfall from the Friends of Wenonah Trails account. Karen replied that would not be necessary and that the Borough would cover the shortfall out of general revenues.

**Friends of Wenonah Trails Account Activity since the September 2021 meeting.**

**Deposits:** \$400.00 donations

**Expenses:** \$ 59.00 to Julie Ream for the Clay Hill plaque.

**Current balance: \$5,041.10**

MEETING ADJOURNED at 9:03 PM.  
(Motion: Ream, Second: Ceravolo, AIF)

Minutes respectfully submitted,

Rich Dilks, Sec.