

Beautification Commission (BC)

Meeting Minutes

March 12th, 2012 ~ 9:00 am

Town Hall Room B-3

Present: Suzanne Schutte, Heather Pommernelle, Phyllis Hawkins, John Schlachtenhaufen, Marcia Meinerth, Pam Elliot, Bob Baker, Sabina Harris, David May

Absent: Sandy Filmer, Sandy Drimal, Cindy Ryan

Action items are noted in red.

Financial

MM

Budget – anticipating \$26,000. All bills paid up to date; remaining budget will cover outstanding bills to include funds required for The Berm grasses.

The Berm plantings (slope at N side of Darien Train Station between parking and tracks) – check request being processed for Northcreek Nurseries. Costs required for perennials are pending; Planters Choice, Valley View suggested as potential suppliers. Funds have been earmarked in the budget for this expense.

Complete Designs proposal to water hanging baskets received and compared to budgeted amounts; proposal does not include AAG maintenance which is required. **SS/SD/HP to confirm exactly what should be included in the proposal, and pass to MM to discuss further with the vendor.**

Baskets – SS confirmed that DPW will have men available to help with hanging baskets.

Spring Clean-Up, Saturday April 28th

- SS is managing requests for permits. Not every clean-up location needs a permit.
- Volunteers will be cleaning assigned areas as follows: Friends of Weed Beach - Weed Beach, The Congregational Church of Darien – church parking lot and ABC house, the George family & Daisy Scouts - Cherry Lawn park, Katie Keith (KK) and Anne Finn - Tokeneke from Post Road to Tokeneke school, Girl Scouts – planting a garden at the Darien Train Station, Depot – NH train station and Depot, Pear Tree Point School – Pear Tree Point beach (on 4/27), Friends of Tilly Pond - Tilly Pond, DHS community service group – The Berm, Senior Men – Darien Train Station + Mechanics Street. Groups being approached: **SS to approach Post 54 to clean their area to 95; SH to approach Cub Scouts, Boy Scouts and Indian Princesses; DM to approach Tally McDonald with Friends of Tilly Pond; PE to approach Friends of Gorham's Pond – Gorham Pond.** Town gateway areas – near Whole Foods and exit 13 will be assigned.
- KK asked that those picking up trash separate bags so they can be collected. The group wants to help show accurate numbers of how many bags are really lying roadside, but felt it's not practical for all volunteers (of all ages) to carry a 2nd bag while collecting trash, and collection – potentially on another day – would likely show fewer bags collected than are actually found. Perhaps volunteers could just estimate the number they collected? Perhaps the Choose to Reuse group will want to help/has another suggestion? **SS to speak further with KK.**
- PR. Carol Wilder-Tam is promoting the Town Clean-up in her CT gov blog, numerous calendars, and weekly Chamber of Commerce update in The Darien Times. The point was made to highlight Upper Crust as the location of the meeting place, as they kindly provide coffee and bagels for clean-up volunteers.
- On the clean-up day, the BC team will likely need to help around The Berm project (see The Berm Project below). Details to be confirmed.

Adopt-A-Gardens (AAGs)

- HP updated the AAG brochure, with great assistance from Jon Olmstead. The commission agreed to retain the \$200 charge for signs though the signs cost slightly less. The extra funds will help offset the cost of replacement signs. Sig is to be added, as he is just pending confirmation. Contact names of BC members to remain on the brochure, as only small quantities will be printed using home printers so as changes are required they can be easily made. **HP to make changes.**
- Exit 13 large garden - sponsor? CR will update us if a sponsor is confirmed.
- Clean-up of AAGs. There are 7 islands (AAGs) that are not maintained by current sponsors, and are thus to be cleaned up by BC (to save money this is no longer contracted out). **SS to email BC members to coordinate clean-up prior to 4/28.**
- Possible new AAG sites. 1. Entrance to I-95N (exit 11, near Darien Animal Hospital). Would require a lot of work as large amounts of Winged Euonymus (a CT state invasive). **SS to ask DPW if they will start cleaning the area by taking out the shrubs.**

The Berm Project

- Holding space for pots of grasses over the summer. **BB/DM to (hopefully) confirm Weeburn CC this week.**
- Update on assistance from Eagle Scouts. Pending. DM
- Water source. SS reported there is no fire hydrant at Ledge Road or at the Tea House, the closest is near Brooks Brothers. Approximately 300ft of hose would be required; over that length, will there be enough pressure? **DM to ask SF to borrow Land Trust pump, and to gain use of the tap at Penny Glassmeyer's building, to test the two options.**
- DPW cut existing grasses under DM's instruction.
- Tree planting at The Berm. Will the Tree Conservancy of Darien (TOC) provide and plant these? **DM and JS to view site and confirm trees desired.** JS has requested 5 trees be donated by TOC; pending approval.
- DM advised that the ordered grasses are scheduled to be shipped on 4/23. Once received, some will need to be potted up for Weeburn CC to hold, the rest would be planted at The Berm (possibly by BC on our 4/28 clean-up day).

Illegal Lawn Signs

- BB submitted website wording suggestion to the BOS. **SS/BB to follow up for feedback.**
- BB is working to have political groups jointly agree to rules around signs, that match the current town signage regulation. This initiative is intended to dramatically reduce the amount of illegal signs in town; it will additionally save the groups money currently spent on signs. He attended a DTC meeting and they were happy to follow guidance as long as it is agreed to by other groups. **BB working to schedule his attendance at a RTC meeting.** BB distributed his proposal document which included the key points of discussion:
 - By current regulations, only Tag Sale signs are authorized on public property at the moment.
 - By current regulations, For Sale and other signs are not allowed on public property, they are only allowed on private property as 'yard signs', and then only back several feet from the roadside
 - The distance the sign is to be set back from the road varies depending on the road; this point creates confusion, as many believe their property extends to their mailbox if not the road (which is not the case).
 - The recommendation is for the groups to agree to guidelines that say they will adhere to the existing rules, placing signs only on private property, and then 3-5 feet from roadside (3-5 feet as it varies based on the road).

BB to slightly adjust proposal wording to allow signs on private property outside of 7 feet of the roadside; 7 feet was selected so there is just one distance to recognize, and the signs are definitely on private property. BB additionally to adjust 'circles' to 'islands' when describing the public property space that is frequently inundated with signs.

- BB submitted a letter to the editor which should be published shortly.
- BB is tracking down whether permission had been received to post Occupy Darien parking signs on trees. He's requested the letter from the state approving this sign placement, which has now been misplaced. JS to speak to Mike Cotta to see if he submitted this letter.

Other

- SS spoke to the DPW re: spare garbage cans for Tokeneke and Post Road. They have none, but they'll look for cans that aren't being used much, that could be moved to this location.
- BC members/BoS approval. DM and PH have been approved. Sig is up for confirmation; pending April meeting.
- Exit 12 improvement. **JS will also look at exit 12 as a possible additional site for trees, to add to the sites where the TOC plants this year.**

Next Meeting April 2nd, 9am Town Hall Room B-3