

Beautification Commission (BC)

Meeting Minutes

Sept 5th, 2012

Town Hall Room B-3

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

Absent: Sandy Drimal, Sandy Filmer, Pam Elliot, Sig Buchmayr, Cindy Ryan

Action items are noted in red.

Financial

- Overall finances are looking good at the moment.
- MM looked at Elder's fees versus past year fees for care of baskets and Adopt a Gardens. We have approximately \$750/month more than past years.
- Of all AAG invoices sent out, all are paid except 3 gardens (\$1800 outstanding).

The Berm Project

- The First Selectman and Debbie Bussey (representing the Garden Club of Darien) set up a meeting to discuss potential projects around town that the GCD could support with funds they will soon have. They invited BC so SS & DM joined, and suggested a project completing the center of the berm. DM created a design and proposal which suggested full size plants (not plugs) and included maintenance for a couple of years. Other discussed potential projects were Exit 11 N or Mather's garden. **SS/DM will continue with the discussions to hopefully obtain some funding for this unfinished site.**
- DM reported that there are many of plants to get back into the ground at the berm. This Friday from 9am we will have a planting party.
- SH confirmed that George is delivering chips tomorrow to the berm. If it is not enough for the berm, **JS will contact Brown & Company for more.**
- Watering schedule for September: **JS week of 9/10, SS week of 9/17, MM & HP week of 9/24.** 1-2 times a week is fine for all plants and trees.
- DM would like to purchase Russian sage - full size plants - to plant at the top of the berm. **HP to contact Valley View (they have fall sales currently) to determine availability of this as well as grasses in quantity.**

Signage

- BB updated all on the signage proposal in regards to placement of political signs around town. No written response has been received from the parties or the BOS, but from conversation, the BOS have been advised by their lawyer that the ability to post election signs on town property is a first amendment right. BB distributed excerpts of court cases that showed this is not a first amendment right; the town has the right to control what is on their property (which is supported by the fact that Darien signage laws even exist). **BB to write a letter to the BOS**, correcting their understanding that our signage proposal violates a first amendment issue, and attaching the supporting legal evidence. to the RTC and DTC representatives advising them of the results of our appeal to the BOS seeking the BOS support of controlling election signs on public property
- The BOS further communicated that their focus is more on neon signs and the signs that restaurants put out that are illegal; they do not intend to enforce the wider signage law.
- Signage placed in AAGs was discussed; as the AAGs are town property, any signs placed there are illegal. It also can appear that a sponsors supports a cause/service whose sign is in their adopted garden. We as BC members will continue our practice of removing signs from AAGs. **MM will prepare a letter to the editor from BC to state that signs are not allowed on AAGs, and that we will remove them.**

Adopt-A-Gardens (AAGs)

- Going forward, **HP/CR will spend all Adopt a Garden funds on the gardens.**
- Town activity within AAGs. HP mentioned AAGs at Kelly's and behind Good Goods have had some work done. By the town? **HP to email SS** with details of recent work, **to ask George** to remove tree roots at Kelly's, and ask to be notified if an AAG will be or has been disrupted (so we can save plants and clean things up promptly).
- Status of gardens:
 - Exit 13 design: **PH will organize donations** on behalf of 'Varina Mason Steuert's Garden' to adopt the garden; **MM to confirm if they will be tax deductible.** **PH will clarify the best name for the sign;** it will not include 'memorial'. **MM will contact Susan Haynes design to mimic that at Exit 10S, and**

plant it. The supporters of the garden will pay for Susan's design and installation costs, the AAG sign, and annual AAG fees going forward.

- Exit 11S sponsorship: we have lost sponsorship of Exit 11S. HP commented that we will need to improve the design and plantings in the garden in order to again look for sponsorship.
- Kelly's planting. Once the stump is removed, **CR/HP will re-plant the area** with a mix of evergreens and perennials to match those already on the bed will be planted. Should a replacement tree be warranted, the Tree Conservancy of Darien would be interested in helping.
- The board discussed the creation of a planting design that could be use for AAGs going forward, so we have a more consistent look and the beds just look better. **CR/SS to look for designers.**

DOT forms/work to be done

- Forms for Exit 11N onramp cannot be submitted without the design, so a project in this area is on hold until a design is available. We would like to have this planted this fall (within the next few months). JS confirmed the Tree Conservancy of Darien will plant trees in the space, in line with the overall design.
- Tokeneke Road project, at exit 12: this areas was recently cleaned up by a group – yeah! SB has made a list of further clean-up and removal still required. He recommends we don't tackle the right side. Once we tackle an area, George will have his guys mulch it. **SS will organize this project** possibly in October.

Citizen complaints

- Mike Tschebull suggested we plant wildflowers garden. CR/SB plan to visit his garden.
- Josie Mullen complained that there are no baskets in N. Heights, and the Welcome to Darien signs near Giovanis and Friendly's as well as the island at the bottom of Hollow Tree Ridge Road.
 - SS explained how budgets were cut, and there are not enough baskets to cover N. Heights.
 - The group requested that **SF send a letter to neighbors of spots needing care**, asking for someone to take care of the spot.
 - **SS to ask Elder to clean up** at the Welcome to Darien sign near Friendly's.

Hanging Baskets

- The baskets are not all flowering; they don't all look great. Elder has been fertilizing them on a monthly basis. Discuss ideas – maybe a mix of plants rather than just one? Change watering or fertilizing schedule? Switch around some baskets? Should we take some down soon?
- **SS will send SD Elder's email and phone, for her to give Elder further instructions.** (email elder_santiago@att.net, cell: 203 545 9808)
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Annual report

- Annual report is due by end October. **SS will ask various board members to submit pieces** and compile the whole.

Next Meeting Oct 1st, 9am Town Hall Room B-3 (Sept 10th meeting cancelled)