

Tree Committee

September 4, 2013, Mason Library

I. Chair Dennis Gibbons called the meeting to order at 5:16. pm. Present were members Dennis Gibbons, Lisa Bozzuto, Hilda Shapiro, Michael Wise, Beth Moser, Maria Ahlin, and Laurie Epstein, and tree warden Michael Piretti. Absent: Jess Wikle, Steve Adams, Susan Sheridan.

II. Draft minutes from the meeting of August 7, 2013 were approved without objection.

III. New business

A. Proposals for community service, public education and tree fund projects

Gibbons invited suggestions for community service ideas.. It was observed that Project Sprout at the high school is dormant, now that the students who initiated it have graduated; the rolling greenhouse could not move now because of weed overgrowth. Gibbons thought that the three-school campus could be considered an arboretum. The Parks Commission may be willing to help maintain it, although it is up to the school district directly. Piretti said that the faculty advisor is supportive, and noted that much of the planting is on the back side. Gibbons noted that his father is on the Parks Commission and involved with the school, and could coordinate some support. About 50 trees have been planted on the campus, some of them by a group of freshmen last year; they could a core of a new group of enthusiasts.

Shapiro suggested creating an award, for scholarship or other purpose, to recognize students who have made particular contributions, such as helping with the inventory. She could take the initiative to raise the funds.

Epstein inquired about the extent of the planned inventory of the town trees. Gibbons said the first stage would extend from Taconic to Cottage, from the railroad tracks to the river, of significant trees on public property and other "specimen" trees. Bozzuto thought we should try to get a college student to help. Moser said a faculty member at Simons Rock, Tom Coot, might be able to recommend someone there, bearing in mind that those students are high school age and maturity level. Gibbons said he planned to be involved hands-on. Piretti encouraged looking for a motivated student at the high school, perhaps by checking with the guidance counselor.

Identifying places where trees ought to be planted or replaced would be useful. Piretti said there are locations to put trees and stumps where prominent trees have been removed, but the town is not getting requests for action. To get funds for town plantings could require a separate budget line item. Piretti has already spent half of this year's \$40K budget in the two months of this fiscal year on removal projects. The Town Manager is meeting with town committee chairs on September 11; Gibbons will raise this issue. Bozzuto will ask the Amherst town tree committee where they get their funds; they do quite a bit of planting.

IV. Old business

A. Grove Street Park

A replacement tree is needed; it was removed in violation of the protocol (though it did appear to be dead). A neighbor, John McGrewer, wants to support the replacement. The Parks Commission would like suggestions about species and placement. Gibbons asked members to look at the park for ideas. The park already has significant canopy.

B. National Grid Tree Placement

Gibbons said he has asked Joe Sokul every month about the status of the three replacements that are owed for trees that have died. He will try again, noting that prime tree planting season is coming. One of the trees is on park property, so it will have to be coordinated with the Parks

Commission. Gibbons will talk with Adams to be sure they have complete information about the problems.

C. Tree City USA signs

Shapiro has been trying to reach Joe Sokul about placement of the signs. Moser said she had heard from Sokul, finally, about the location. the signs are at National Grid on route 7 and on Route 183 leaving Housatonic. Sokul's secretary, Joan, volunteered to take a picture of the sign with someone from the Tree Committee. Hilda will tell Joan to contact Dennis about setting a time for a picture.

Moser showed the committee a draft press release about the town's designation as a 2012 Tree City. She will hold it until we have a picture to send with it.

For designation for 2013, another application will have to be submitted by the end of the year. Since all the qualifications have been met, it should be simple to put it together again. Gibbons has it on his computer.

D. Main Street specifications

Gibbons inquired about the plan for mulching or capping the tree wells. A composite product is now available that is permeable and suppresses weeds.

E. Elm tree health

Piretti said this has been a bad year for Dutch elm disease. An untreated tree on Route 23 is in poor shape. The town treats its elms on a regular cycle, about every other year. Some untreated trees are surviving, notably the big one by the video rental on State Road.

V.. The next meeting will be October 2, 2013. The principal agenda item will be plans for the tree inventory.

VI. The chair adjourned the meeting without objection at 6:12 PM.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Michael", with a large flourish extending from the end of the name.