

Tree Committee

November 5, 2014, Mason Library

I. Chairman Dennis Gibbons called the meeting to order at 5:15 PM. Present were members Dennis Gibbons, Lisa Bozzuto, Hilda Banks Shapiro, Maria Ahlin, Jess Wikle, and Michael Wise, and tree warden Michael Piretti. Absent: Beth Moser, Laurie Epstein, Susan Sheridan. Also present: Selectboard member Ed Abrahams and town manager Jennifer Tabakin.

II. Minutes of the meeting of October 1, 2014 will be submitted for approval at the next meeting.

III. Old business

A. DCR grant matching funds

The chair explained the situation with the matching grant application, and suggested that some of the town's match come from the funds that the town manager had suggested be used to replace the National Grid trees that died. Bozzuto suggested that it would be easier for the town to buy three or four trees and treat that as an in-kind match. Tabakin noted that there were two issues, and the town might be able to deal with both: the three or four dead trees from the National Grid project, and the DCR grant application. For the latter, the town would send a letter promising the funds; that would need to be done during this fiscal year. For the National Grid replacements, she would like an idea about how much they would cost; Joe said he had the funds. Gibbons suggested \$250-400 each.

B. Main Street tree care

Gibbons noted early concerns, from how the oak at Taconic was pruned too harshly, without contacting the arborist on the project. He asked how we can be assured that the contract obligations were being followed. Tabakin reported that she had brought up this point at the project meeting this morning. Adams is working for the contractor; Ingersoll is working for the designer. They are the point people and are supposed to consult. Ingersoll would be responsible for oversight, and Adams for seeing that the contractor does it. This is the state's project, not the town's. At the meeting, it was clear that there was a disconnect about who was responsible for this issue. There will be a follow-up meeting with Adams, Ingersoll, the tree warden and the committee. There should be a protocol for prior consultation about trimming and removal. If the two arborists are in agreement, that should be enough.

Tabakin said the lack of consultation with Adams before trimming the oak was not good. Maybe the design people and the contractor are not in touch often enough. Piretti was present during the trimming. It was done by a contractor for Maximilian. Piretti had been asked to do a site visit before they started. The plan called for trimming that tree (and removing the other one). The town arborist, Haupt, was also in on this. But there was no particular communication before the crew started to cut, and Piretti felt like he was being asked to make decisions that he wasn't qualified to make. The contractor should have had its arborist present. Tabakin said the design and contract provide for attention to trees, and she will hold the contractor to it. She told the contractor that the tree warden should not be in the position of signing off on work. She also noted that construction projects have a chain of command, which should be respected: start with the town manager or the DPW manager. She observed that the tree warden might have some authority to intervene to stop damage to a town tree.

Piretti said he learned that the plan is to put protection fencing around the heritage trees next spring. But work is already impacting their roots. Protection should go up sooner rather than later. Tabakin agreed that we should not put this off; it is the kind of detail that might be ignored unless we push them. She said we should create a list of where protection is needed (maybe with Ingersoll) and give that to her, to transmit to the contractor.

B. St. James Place

Piretti reported on the St. James request to remove some Norway maples on St. James Place. This is in connection with creating a curb cut for the entrance to the People's Pantry. The curb cuts are on the approved site plan; removing the trees was not. Piretti said Fred Harris is likely to come to the Selectboard soon for approval of removing the Norway maples, which are town trees.

Gibbons noted the concern that those trees protect the heritage sugar maple. Bozzuto proposed that, in situations like this, there be a requirement to replace what was removed; Gibbons and the committee concurred.

C. Revised committee resolution

Gibbons will re-send the message with the proposed new resolution, reducing the size of the committee to seven members.

IV. New business

A. Election of vice chairperson

The committee elected Jess Wikle as vice chairperson, by acclamation.

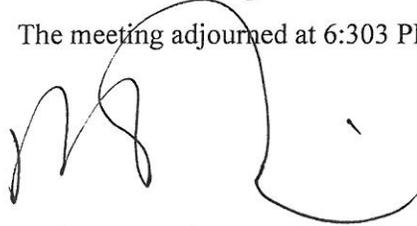
B. DCR grant

Bozzuto noted the need to meet to put together the application.

V. General

A. The next meeting will be December 3, 2014.

The meeting adjourned at 6:303 PM.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Michael Wise', with a large, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

Michael Wise