

Beautification Commission (BC)

Meeting Minutes

October 1st, 2012

9:00am, Town Hall Room B-3

Present: Suzanne Schutte, Bob Baker, Sandy Drimal, Phyllis Hawkins, Sabina Harris, Marcia Meinerth, Heather Pommernelle

Absent: Sandy Filmer, Pam Elliot, Sig Buchmayr, Cindy Ryan, David May, John Schlachtenhaufen

Action items are noted in red.

Financial (MM)

- Reimbursements are in process for PH and HP for expenses incurred; **MM will follow-up.**
- Wholefoods check has not yet been received: **PH to speak to her contact.**

The Berm Project

- Update on recent plantings, etc (SS)
 - Elder planted 100 grasses and 50 Russian Sage; chips are still to be spread over lower half of berm, plus top row where the Russian Sage is. DPW has been finding dead trees to chip for us; **SS will ask George for more chips, and have Elder spread them on the berm.**
 - There are 2 empty sections for plants. Discussed purchasing and planting more plants now; MM confirmed we have \$750 available. **SS to contact DM for plant suggestions**, so we can purchase and plant in the empty areas.
- Watering schedule: agreed that we should still have someone assigned each week to water only if it doesn't rain enough. **HP to email all BC members for coverage.**
- Proposal was given to the Garden Club of Darien, with a request for \$20,000 in funding to finish the berm. Pending reply. SS and DM were also asked by Jayme Stevenson to submit a request for funding, along with the berm proposal, to the Darien Garden Club for the work to be done on the island across from the new bridal shop at exit 11. Suzanne will do this once the plan for this new garden is finalized by Katie Keith and Karen Hughan (from the Tree Conservancy of Darien) who have volunteered to help with this project

Signage

- BB sent a letter to the BOS, pointing out that there was no freedom of speech issue with the removal of signs on town property, offering legal back-up.
- The Darien Times recently ran an article about lawn signs around time.
 - It mentioned that the BC didn't want many signs around town; which was an overstatement, as the BC is concerned with signs on town property, not on private property.
 - The article also mentioned that there was a fine for stealing election signs; BB found no statements confirming this either at the state level, in Darien or in nearby towns.
 - BB spoke to the author of the article; he'd like to do another article. **BB will help going forward.**
- **BB & MM will work together to submit a letter to the editor**, advising residents that BC members will remove signs from AAGs.

Adopt-A-Gardens

- Garden status
 - Noroton Ave: the town chopped the shrubs to keep to height restrictions.
 - Exit 11's garden (currently no sponsor): Elder has been keeping it clean. SS approached Katie Keith & Karen Hughan to design this garden, as well as exit 11 North (in front of the new bridal shop); they've agreed to help. Basic spec: low maintenance, drought resistance, must adhere to all town set-backs and height restrictions; designs should be somewhat consistent as they are in close proximity to one another. SD suggested that boulders be dug into the soil, rather than just being on top of the ground. The grass surrounding the garden is quite poor; **SS to ask George if he can work to improve it.**
 - Exit 11 north: **PH will contact Keith (Gardener's Center) to see if he has interest in adopting this garden.** Another option is to approach nearby businesses (bridal shop, Paw Prints, e.g.).
 - Darien train station: the Girl Scouts have contacted the Republican party to adopt this garden. Pending response.
 - Kelly's Real Estate's garden: the state cut a large tree down and left the stump and bare soil. George says they can't remove as it's state property. **HP to contact Sig to use his chainsaw to cut it down further; HP/CR to then plant over it.**

- Darien Realty garden: **SS to ask Elder to tidy it up.** SD suggested the roses be heavily pruned.
- Nearwater & Post garden: Fosters said they didn't want it, so MM cleaned it up, then Foster's sign reappeared. **MM to contact him;** if he isn't maintaining the space the sign will be removed.
- **PH to approach Complete Design** to see if they'll take the Welcome to Darien sign, Stamford sign.
- PH asked for other AAGs that are available, that are in need of sponsors. Pedal and Pump, CVS entry, the Berm, Welcome to Darien sign from Stamford side were mentioned.
- White Bridge garden at border to Rowayton: **HP to contact Jim McLaughlin's Landscaping** and likely need to find another sponsor.
- Exit 13 status
 - Sponsorship: PH has collected sufficient funds for the planting and AAG sign for this garden. It will not cover ongoing maintenance, but she'll continue to raise money for this on an annual basis. MM will keep funds separated from other BC funds.
 - PH will confirm wording for CR to order the sign.
 - MM to send a thank you letter from the BC to donors. PH would like to personalize these; **PH and MM will work together.**
 - MM has organized Complete Designs to begin working on the design for up to \$2000. She is managing this closely.
 - The town of Darien has not adopted the space, so the state will continue maintenance of the two islands (mowing).

Other town clean-up

- Tokeneke Road clean-up project: SS has submitted the state's form for permission to clear the area. Large logs to be cut up and removed and more. The plan is for George to spray poison on the vines to kill them; this would need to be repeated to keep the vines at bay. Discussed alternative organic methods – cut the vines regularly instead? **SS to organize a group visit to discuss adjustments.**
- Adopt a Spot: **SF to send out letter asking for sponsorship.** Pending status.
- **SS will contact George to repaint yellow perimeter of gardens.**

Hanging Baskets

- SD had Elder take them all down. In Spring and early Summer they looked great; nearer August they started looking leggy. SD had one test basket in a moss, self-contained basket, which she cared for directly; it did well. No decision made on how to treat the baskets differently next year.
- Discussion – shall we offer to order the same baskets for the library, Melting Pot area, etc. for a more consistent look throughout town? These new areas would need to pay for it. **SD will do this for 2013.**
- Discussion – why is it an issue to hang baskets on the side with parking signs, when they're not completely covered? Bob explained that some received a ticket before, and complained they didn't see the sign because of our baskets. Would the signs not be able to be adjusted to face the street so there's no issue? **SS to speak to George,** ask him what he thinks about this.

Other

- Annual report: SS has signage information from Bob, and will add details on the Berm from the proposal.
 - **CR/HP to provide paragraph on AAGs,** to include mention of Darien Train station, exits 13, 11N.
 - **SF to provide paragraph on hanging baskets,** to include how she'll offer to organize the same baskets for other areas next year.
 - PH requested a small piece on the Whole Foods donations project.
 - **SS to add piece on Berma Castle donations.**
 - **SS to em SF for Adopt a Spots paragraph.**
 - **SS to ask JS to provide a paragraph on the Tree Conservancy of Darien's work with BC.**
- Fall clean-up? We normally have a fall clean-up this time of the year. This year we have several projects happening: group agreed we're already doing enough, no fall clean-up will be scheduled.
- SD mentioned that many town lamp posts need repainting; **SS to add to George's list.**

Next Meeting Nov 19th, 9am Town Hall Room B-3