

Beautification Commission (BC)

Meeting Minutes

December 12th, 2011 ~ 9:00 am

Town Hall Room B-3

Present: Suzanne Schutte, Cindy Ryan, Heather Pommernelle, Bob Baker, Sandy Drimal, David May, Sandy Filmer, John Schlachtenhaufen, Pam Elliot, Phyllis Hawkins, Marcia Meinert, Sabina Harris.

Absent: none.

Action items are noted in red.

The Berm

DM

All referred to the handout David distributed prior to the meeting. The design covered the area from the steps to steps, and there are no references to trees though they are hoped for, possibly through the Tree Conservancy of Darien. Comments additional to the handout are below:

- **Flowers:** would include Echinacea and others that take dry conditions (pending selection). Some late blooming bulbs may work as well (eg allium varieties). Would be planted in drifts (large groups, not as single plants dotted throughout the design). Planting seeds won't work, as the seeds would be washed away down the slope with the first rain.
- **Woody perennials:** hollies require too much water, would rather be more drought tolerant varieties (pending selection).
- **Costs:** plug trays come in various sizes; landscape plugs from one supplier have longer roots so would not require growing on. If planting area is decreased to be from the steps to the trees and stream, it would be approximately 1/3rd less in area and thus (approximately) 1/3rd less cost (so around \$5000). Any labor cost is not included.
 - Would want purchase decision by February, with bill to be paid at that time, and delivery of the (4,000 or so) plugs in April.
- **“Growing on”:** this means to plant it in a 3-4” pot, care for it for 3-4 months as it grows, then transplant it to it's final location.
 - **Water and Care.** Water is the biggest requirement. Plants would also need to be protected from animals and checked regularly to ensure plants are watered when needed and ok. SD raised the concern that some plugs may be lost during the time of care; would we not be able to buy larger sizes so they can be planted directly? DM explained the mark-ups involved which make the larger size pots very expensive.
 - **Location.** Growing On area needs full sun. Plants can be broken up to smaller numbers, to be held and cared for in different locations. SS suggested residents that have large yards with sun could take some of the plants. SS suggested we go and look at the spaces that have been for growing on (Weed Beach, other); **SS to email BC members to organize a trip.** Weed Beach area – **SS to speak to Susan Balloch to see if a protected area for growing on will be available around the Weed Beach renovation project.**
 - **Pots.** We could use cow pots or other biodegradable pots, so plastic pots are not required; regardless of the type of pot, plants would need to be removed from the pot before planting so the roots have the best chance of spreading.
- **Maintenance:** Anticipated maintenance required was discussed.
 - **Watering.** Important for planted grasses for the first year, and woody perennials for the first couple of years.
 - **Weeding.** Important as well – anticipate to be required a couple of times a year for the first couple of years. Once grasses are established (within 3 years) weeding would be less of a requirement, as only bare spaces would need weeding.
 - **Sheering.** Grasses would additionally need to be sheered once a year, likely March, followed by raking of the grass clippings.

- **Labor.** While currently our free labor can be used, we cannot be assured we will always have free labor from board members over subsequent years. Alternative maintenance labor should be incorporated into the plan, be it paid laborers or those provided by a partner.

Financing for The Berm

MM

MM lead a varied discussion on current BC finances, options to lower anticipated expenses, and additional funding for The Berm project.

- **BC Current Funds and Expenses**

- Current funds are \$11,000.
- Main expense annually is baskets – hanging, watering, maintenance – and Spring to Fall cleanups of Adopt a Gardens. SS suggested we start paying for cleanups only from June, thus the expense would be only for June-September. Alternative vendors for cleanups were also discussed, which could result in a savings from \$42/hour to \$25/hour. This idea was well supported.
- With negotiations, MM expects the full annual contract for basket purchase, watering and care of baskets, and watering of some adopted gardens could be reduced to \$12,000-15,000/year.
- It was agreed to scale down The Berm plan to reach from the steps to the trees and stream, so likely plant cost would be \$5,000, 1/3rd less than the proposal.
- MM suggested that if we used \$5,000 for plug purchase, the remaining \$6,000 would cover the initial hanging of baskets.
- MM suggests we need \$15,000 by June to cover this project (purchasing and initial start up). Suggests we ask for a return to our 2009 level of funding (\$34,000). JS suggests we start with the First Selectman, gain BOS support, then to the board of finance. **SS will approach Jayme to request time to present.**

- **Additional Funding**

- Incremental funding ideas:
 - SF suggested we target Metro North commuters. Have kids, whomever visible at the station asking for even spare change. Donations would not be tax deductible (the BC is not a registered non-profit), but it is not expected that donors of these small amounts would expect deductions.
 - PH mentioned the 10 cents per bag we're receiving from shoppers (who chose to donate) at Whole Foods. Suggested we have tins for people to donate spare change at Whole Foods as well.
- Maintenance help ideas:
 - HP reminded all that targeting Penny Glassmeyer had been suggested in a previous meeting. May be as a sponsor for maintenance, or water, as she maintains properties next to the berm.
 - Could target Metro North and/or DPW to maintain the space once it's planted.
 - Social Services, Youth Commission – could we have interns? Or funding from them?
 - **SS to ask DPW if they'll rake and cut back tall grasses on annual basis for this plan.**
 - Watering could be handled with a pump out of the stream, maybe 200' of hose. **SS to speak to Sue Swaitek to borrow her 200hp watering truck.**
 - Land Trust just purchased a water pump; **SF to speak to Chris Filmer to see if it is available, and for advice on what type of pump would work for us should it be appropriate for BC to buy one.**
 - **SS to speak to EPA to gain approval for us using the water from the stream.**
 - JS offered a weed eater he has.

Other

All

- Discussed clean-up of town areas that have lots of trash. **SH to approach the Boy Scouts to see if we can gain commitment to clean up areas.**

Next meeting: January 9th, 9am. Room B-3, Town Hall.