

## **BEAUTIFICATION COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES: DECEMBER 07, 2009**

### **LOCATION: ROOM 9**

-The meeting began at 10:30 am, chaired by Suzanne Schutte.

-Note that this was considered a “special meeting” as the date had been changed from Dec. 14 to Dec. 7 to accomodate busy holiday schedules.

### **BC MEMBERS PRESENT AT MEETING:**

J. Olmsted, C. Merritt, B. Baker, L. Kroll, P. Elliott, C. Ryan, S. Drimal, J. Schlachtenhaufen, S. Schutte.

### **TOPICS DISCUSSED and subsequent follow up activities:**

-Sign Regulations and Enforcement

Bob Baker updated the group on the status of sign regulations and their enforcement (or lack thereof), and discussed the contents of a recent email that he sent to Dave Campbell on the same topic. He suggested to Dave that Darien has a culture of “non-compliance” with all sign regulations. Bob was recently advised by J. Ginsberg that following his discussions with F. Conze, Ginsberg will evaluate whether they believe the sign regs are appropriate, and that no enforcement will occur until the review is completed. Bob’s response was to question why they needed a review now as the regs have been unchanged for years, enforcement has been consistently lax, and we are not aware of any petitions for change to the regulations. Moreover, the regs are in line with neighboring communities where enforcement occurs on a regular basis. Bob also mentioned to Ginsberg that he has the unanimous support of the BC on this topic.

Bob informed the BC that this subject will be brought up at the next P & Z meeting, to be held on Tuesday, January 26th in Room 306, and asked that other BC members attend the meeting. Bob will question the P & Z what is the basis for making changes to the regs, the timetable for such changes, and will ask for agreement on enforcement of all sign regulations going forward.

-Adopt a Garden-Exit 13/Spring Grove Cemetery Veteran Memorial

Sandy Drimal updated the BC on her conversations with Jim Barnes from the State Dept. of Public Works. Basically they will allow our Adopt a Garden on exit 13 and will consider it “grandfathered” since plantings and materials are already there, but no new gardens will be allowed on state property unless plantings have been established in the past. Additionally, Susan Haynes/Complete Designs will not be required to submit design drawings to him, but she will have to submit drawings to the BC for approval.

Sandy has spoken to Susan to inform her of this requirement, and to review the list of flowers and plantings for this garden. Susan will plant the bulbs now and cut the beds, but all other plantings will occur this Spring.

The Chief of Police, Officer Isaac, called Sandy to discuss the Spring Grove Cemetery Veterans' Memorial Garden. They mentioned that the memorial has several dead shrubs and needs to be upgraded with new perennials and other planting, and would like the BC to assist them by designing a new plot for this site. They will get Darien Public Works to pull out the old shrubs and dig the new plot, and additionally will ask for funding from the Veterans' group for the perennial flowers.

Lesley Kroll volunteered to design the new site, has been busy sketching out plans, and will submit these to the Police Dept. for their approval. Timing for the new garden site needs be ready for 2010 Memorial Day activities.

#### -Noroton Heights Gardens

Suzanne Schutte and Cindy Ryan discussed the general clean up that occurred in late November at the NH train station. Elder Santiago was hired to clean out the two gardens near the NH train station parking lot. Cindy and Suzanne walked the site and determined a garden plan for these two areas including a design for new shrubs and perennial flower plantings. Cindy and Suzanne will purchase these new plantings, and Elder S. will plant them in the Spring. Suzanne and her college age son planted approximately 600 daffodil bulbs in these gardens and in the evergreen beds along the sidewalk on Noroton Heights Road (fronting the train tracks.) over the Thanksgiving weekend. The area should look great this coming Spring when in full bloom.

#### -Boys Scout Tree Project

The Boy Scout units in Darien are working on a town wide tree project, called the BSA (Boy Scouts of America) 100th Anniversary Tree Project, which is in response to the CT Yankee Council's Community Service Project Initiative to celebrate 100 years of Boy Scouts. Troops in Darien have taken the lead on this project by proposing to plant 100 trees throughout Darien, and will kick off this initiative by planting a commemorative tree at the scout cabin by May 31. They will plant the remaining trees in the Fall and thereafter. Other town commissions and community organizations are included in this project, such as the Tree Commission, the Nature Center, Land Trust, the schools, the Darien Garden Club, the town, etc. The Beautification Commission has been invited to participate in this endeavor and John Schlachtenhaufen has volunteered to act as our liaison on this project. The trees to be planted in the berm renovation will be used in the 100 tree count.

## -Whole Foods boulders saga

After reporting at the November BC meeting that Suzanne had been unfortunately contacted by Everett Adams, the Project Supervisor at Whole Foods, and that the approximate 20 large boulders that we (John, Lesley, Cindy and Suzanne) had reserved for the berm renovation had “inadvertently” been pulverized, Suzanne was again very nicely contacted by Everett on 12/9 with good news.... another dozen boulders had been located at the site, and could the BC check them out, select which ones we wanted for the berm, and arrange with the DPW to provide a town dump truck for pick up. After discussions with George Swift, it was determined that the most efficient plan was to move all of the boulders to Squab Lane to ensure their safety, and then subsequent selection and arrangement at the berm would follow. On 12/15 and 12/16 at 7:30 am, John, Lesley (her sons) and Suzanne marked the spots using spray paint where the boulders were to be located, and worked with George and his crew to select the largest boulders for placement. After numerous attempts on both days to place the largest and heaviest boulders on the berm, and after placing several boulders, George made the decision to halt the project until the ground was frozen enough to permit the use of heavy equipment without ripping out the grass. The project has been put on hold until after the holidays when Suzanne will contact George to reschedule.

Additionally, Suzanne has been in contact with the site engineer, Emile Paretis and the landscape architect to arrange a meeting to discuss Whole Foods' plans for the landscape design for the hilly area off the I-95 ramp, the island on Ledge Road and the Southbound exit off I-95 (adopted by Complete Designs), and the island on Ledge Road and the Post Road (adopted by Foster Inc. Designs). Everett Adams had shown to John, Suzanne and Lesley the plans for the redesign during their visit to Whole Foods to select the original boulders, and had given Suzanne the name of the engineer to contact. Emile has been very accommodating, and has agreed to meet with BC reps in January to discuss their plans. Suzanne will follow up to schedule the meeting.

## -Berm Renovation

Lesley Kroll did an excellent job of presenting her redesign of the berm central section, utilizing handmade models of the site, handouts showing photos, quantity and plant selection, and presented an in-depth summary of the overall concept. Lesley has named the project the “Linear Park Squab Lane” and suggests making a linear park at the base of the berm, turning it into a destination or resting area for commuters or for Darienites who are frequenting the local restaurants in the area (such as Neat Espresso). Her plan incorporated elements of Darien's natural environment (such as our proximity to the water, waves on the shoreline, and natural grasses, shrubs and flowers native to this area) in the overall design. Lesley utilized the “wave” idea in numerous areas of the re-design, such as in the wavy placement of 1000 daffodils planted on the crest of the hill and curving down to the far left section of the berm; and in the wavy placement of the natural boulders which, in addition to adding structural detail to the site, can also be utilized as benches for passing commuters.

Lesley recommended utilizing English ivy as a base plant on the entire center section of the berm to form a “natural green carpet”. Because it is a very cost efficient and fast growing plant, it would quickly cover the center section of the berm, would help control the erosion on the berm, and would require no further maintenance.

She also suggested focusing on sprucing up the flat areas of the site to stitch this strip of land into the surrounding commercial properties, and to borrow some of the plant palette from the far right side of the finished berm and also from the Glassmeyer property.

Lesley additionally recommended planting an “allee” of ten feet tall red maple trees on the grassy section of land in front of the berm. These trees would add color to the site, form a natural “pathway” for commuters, and would be included in the Boy Scout 100 Tree project count. The site currently has a pear tree, a princess tree, and a viburnum which will remain on the property.

The plant/flower selection that she recommended are butterfly weed, colombine, lupine, and spiraea bumalda. All new plantings based on Lesley’s plan will be purchased in the Spring and planted by Elder S.

It was noted by John, Lesley and Suzanne that Elder Santiago did an outstanding job of cleaning up the berm and planting the 1000 daffodils following Lesley’s wave line –at a very reasonable price, and within budget parameters.

Lesley prepared her plan utilizing a budget of \$4500 for the cost of the new shrubs/flowers. We have additionally included in the budget the \$1000 cost for Elder Santiago to do the planting in the Spring. All berm costs are to be deducted from the Special Account.

-Schedule of 2010 BC meeting dates

The group discussed and came to agreement on the dates of 2010 meetings. Suzanne will distribute the dates to BC members and to D. Rajczewski at the Town Hall in January.

-Hanging Baskets/Urns at Town Hall

Chris Merritt reminded the group that the baskets, currently stored in the Town Hall, will need to be moved by Susan Haynes/Complete Design in late December to Neilson’s so that Beds and Borders can pick them up for Spring planting. Also, Susan needs to be contacted to ask her to clean up the dead flowers in the urns in front of Town Hall. Chris, Suzanne and/or Sandy Filmer will follow up on these items (depending on availability over the holidays.)

-The meeting was adjourned at 11:35 am.

-The next meeting is scheduled for Monday, January 11 at 9 am in the basement room of the Town Hall. Note that if the meeting place changes, Suzanne will let everyone know the new location.

