

Advisory Committee on Trees – May 3, 2011

Present: Charles Jackman (chair), Ethel Dutky, Robert Trumbule, Lesley Riddle (liaison from Public works)

Meeting began at 7:17 PM at the New Deal Café

Minutes from previous meeting (April 5, 2011) were reviewed and approved.

Report from Public Works – Lesley Riddle

1 – Earth Day had unusually terrible weather, cold driving rain, but we had a productive day and good turnout of children showing up to work on the projects. We started the planting of the rain Garden and some of the tree planting (several large Crapemyrtles) at Schrom Hills Park a few minutes early before all of the City Council members had arrived due to the bad weather. Once Mayor Davis arrived we did the dedication (workers soaked and muddy but smiling). We rescheduled the rest of the tree planting for another day because of the stormy weather. Lesley emphatically suggests that we agree to start the event promptly at 10 AM and always have a dedication/photo op.

Next year Lesley would like to pick another area for a rain garden. Well in advance of the event publicity will go out to invite community members to present a design for the planting. The best design will win the contest.

2 – Restoration Projects. The devastated area behind Woodland Way has been cleared and the debris removed. There is a second devastated area near Buddy Attick Lake Park to be cleared. The plan for re-planting will start with a selection of understory shrubs and small to medium sized trees. A few large forest trees will also be planted, but the hope is that we can allow a natural re-seeding by oak and hickory to develop in the planted understory area and thus develop a more genetically diverse climax forest. A third area will be chosen at a site to be determined, probably in Greenbelt East for re-forestation. September 24 (Saturday) is National Public Lands Day.

3 – Public Works recent meeting with City Council. Public works had a very productive meeting with City Council to go over the budget. City council expressed interest in the ACT project for a preferred tree list. They were pleased to hear that ACT will favor plants that have an improved chance of adjusting to the warming trend predicted by global climate change models.

4 – Land Use Policy for Public Works. Once Mike McLaughlin has reviewed the document Lesley submitted “Sustainable Land Use Policy for Public Works”, it will become a Policy Document for Public Works to improve operations on City property. This is an internal policy and is not intended for home landscapes.

5 – Tree Takedowns. No big ones to report at present, but Lesley is concerned about a number of trees showing decline which are located in city playgrounds.

Next ACT Meeting

We will meet on June 14 at 5:30 PM at Public Works. This meeting will consist of a tour of city playgrounds to evaluate the trees. In case of severe weather, we will meet on June 21, also at 5:30 PM

Baltimore-Washington Partners Meeting

On Thursday, June 23 the Baltimore-Washington Partners for Forest Stewardship will meet at the Community Center. Time to be determined, but should be at 10 or 11AM. Activities will include a ceremony welcoming Greenbelt as a Partner. A tree planting will also be done. It would be great to have ACT members attend.

More Tree Problems

Lesley expressed concerns about some of the large established Crape Myrtles in the medians behind the Municipal building. They are showing branch dieback and decline. Lesley still has serious concerns about the fate of the willow oak in front of the Municipal Building. Another Willow Oak in the area in front of the Library is in sudden decline. We suspect this is due to damage to the roots from the Labor Day Festival. Lesley hopes to re-locate the playground at the Community Center serving the day care and nursery school. A very large tree overhangs the playground, and could pose a hazard to the children. Rather than risk injury to a child, we agree that moving the playground to a site close to the Community Center but with no large trees nearby would be the best option.

Greenbelt Garden Plots Issues

Bob Trumbule is an advisor to the Greenbelt Garden Plots. They want help in removal of invasive shrubs, trees and vines which have infested the area surrounding the Garden Plots and are growing into the gardens. The City has agreed to look into the situation. The Forest Preserve will also have to give consent. There is a lot of demand (far exceeding the current number of available plots) for garden plots. There are two demonstration "Square Foot Gardens" being done by the Three Sisters Group. One is in Schrom Hill Park and the other is in Franklin Park (formerly Empiriam Village). Bob pointed out that there is a tradition of Community Gardens going back to the founding of Greenbelt and the WWII era Victory Gardens. ACT is in support of the City finding suitable space for additional garden plots to meet the demand.

Revision of wording in proclamation

We have tabled the issue of the wording of the proclamation establishing ACT. We will work on this at a later meeting, to revise the wording to more accurately reflect our role.

Next Meeting: Tuesday, June 14 (rain date June 21). We will meet at 5:30 and go on a field trip of playgrounds.

Adjourned at 8:30 PM