

ACT Meeting July 13, 2010

Present were: Charles Jackman, Lesley Riddle, Ethel Dutky and Bob Trumbule.

We met at the Public works building at 7:30PM

We reviewed and approved (with corrections) the minutes from May 4, 2010 and June 22, 2010.

Damage to the Longleaf Pine at Schrom Hills Park

Background on this tree: Lesley had sent an e-mail in early July requesting ACT to look at the large longleaf pine (*Pinus palustris*) because it was shedding excessive amounts of brown needles. This native southern pine is an exceptional old specimen, rarely seen in Maryland landscapes. ACT members visited the tree and reported back to Lesley that the symptoms were most likely due to drought stress, and supplemental irrigation should be provided ASAP. Unfortunately at this time there was a WSSC water restriction in effect. Once the restrictions on water use were lifted, the tree was irrigated. Public works staff has been providing extra care to this tree. It is regularly irrigated during droughts, and has a "Tree Protection Zone" erected to protect the root zone.

Lesley reported a shocking development in the condition of this tree. The tree had been pruned, with many large lower branches hacked off leaving long branch stubs. This was an un-authorized action. Lesley investigated and determined that the contractor (Brickman Group) hired to do mowing and maintenance in the park had done the sloppy pruning. Lesley has contacted Brickman to express her distress about the damage done to this historic irreplaceable tree. The contract with Brickman does not include any tree pruning. Lesley has consulted the City attorney to inform him that the tree was damaged by this un-authorized work, and that the City should seek compensation. Lesley will advise the City not to renew the contract for mowing and maintenance with Brickman which expires at the end of 2010. ACT supports Lesley completely.

Damaged Junipers (*Juniperus chinensis* cultivars) located near the new restrooms at Buddy Attick Park

Two large multi-stemmed blue Juniper specimens located near the restroom on either side of a wooden swing were damaged by the heavy February 2010 snows. The plants were crushed and spread open with many broken branches. The dead and broken limbs have been removed, but the plants are very odd looking with branches bent outward, and a hollow open space in the center. They are attracting small children to climb into this inner hollow. ACT members expressed concern about the safety of these damaged plants as playground fixtures because small branch stubs can be sharp and inflict deep cuts. The plants hang into the swing, so it hits them when in use. Lesley expressed concerns about the plants for security and safety. Recent security problems at the restrooms (vandalism inside the women's restroom) has raised concerns about security aspects of the landscaping in this area. ACT agreed that removal of both specimens would be the best course.

Other Tree Work

The willow oak (*Quercus phellos*) in front of the City Building on Crescent Road continues to show decline symptoms. Several branches in the top are now dead and will be removed. At present only dead wood is being removed by the contractor Care of Trees. Lesley expressed great concern about the future of this tree.

A large Tulip Poplar (*Liriodendron tulipifera*) in Stream Valley Park will need to be removed ASAP. It has a hollow center in a co-dominant trunk. ACT strongly supports prompt removal of this tree. This stimulated a discussion about the art and science of identification of hazard trees. A recent tragic case in Central Park (New York City) where an infant was killed and her mother seriously injured by a falling branch from an elm was an example. The branch that suddenly fell on the family was not dead, it had green foliage. Lesley mentioned another case of concern. A large white oak (*Quercus*

alba) located in the vicinity of the Playground on Crescent Road across from the Library has a large cavity at the base of the trunk. Lesely requested that ACT visit the site and advise whether the tree should be removed. When trees are damaged at the base and rot sets in, this can weaken the tree and increase the risk that the tree will fall during a storm. This is called “Buttress Rot”. We agreed to visit the site and report back to Lesley. We discussed the utility of placing warning signs at the entrance to woodland trails warning about the danger of injury from falling tree limbs. Lesley will discuss this with the city lawyer.

Awards for Tree Care

Lesley showed us a trophy awarded for Greenbelt's ten years of recognition as a Tree City USA. It is an etched glass piece. Public Works will install a display case to display this and other trophies and awards for merit..

Regional Drought impact on city trees

Public works and Care of Trees have been doing some supplemental deep irrigation and fertilization of selected specimen trees. Recently installed (within 3 to 5 years from planting) trees and shrubs are much more susceptible to damage from heat and drought. Unfortunately it is not possible to irrigate all of the at risk plants. Well established trees can usually withstand drought, but may show symptoms of decline and dieback.

Pesticide Policy for the City

Lesley reported on the Pesticide Policy Report in progress. She will circulate a draft to ACT, Green Aces and PRAB (Parks and Recreation Advisory Board) for review and comments.

ACT Supplemental Reading Club

Bob Trumbule mentioned an interesting book “The Botany of Desire” by Michael Pollan, and recommended it to us to read and if we can, watch the PBS special based on the book. Ethel mentioned a book “Five Plants That Changed the World” as another interesting book on the historical impact of specific plants. We may provide copies for the library at Public Works to share with other staff.

The meeting was adjourned at about 9:15PM