

TOWN OF WESTON
TREE ADVISORY GROUP
MINUTES OF AUGUST 7, 2019
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

Present: Lori Hess, Chair; Kristin Barbieri, Nina Danforth, Marilyn Doyle, Barbara Fullerton, Ed Recka
Absent: Luke Mcneil, Laura Perry, John Skillman
Guests: Richard (Skip) Burck, Richard Burck Associates; Leslie Glynn, Planning Board

1. The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m. There were no citizen comments
2. Lori announced that the Planning Board will conduct site walks with Eversource for removal of trees. The schedule is as follows:

August 12 and 21 (Barbara, TAG representative)

September 13 and 20 (Lori, TAG representative)

Duration of each walk is about four hours and members of TAG are encouraged to attend and relieve Barbara and Lori for some of the time. There are 170 trees marked for removal, and a hand held GPS device will identify each tree.

3. Town Center Tree Planting Discussion:

Lori introduced and welcomed Skip Burck, landscape architect for the project. He gave some background on his career, which encompasses early experience on Pennsylvania Avenue in the Nation's Capitol; work on U.S. government projects, National Park Service, National Arboretum. His firm has been established for 30 years. Locally, he has been involved with projects at M.I.T., Boston waterfront, Mass Port, etc.; and he has been involved with public advocacy.

Skip noted his interest in history and its relationship to landscape. He spent a lot of time with Pam Fox (Weston Historical Society President), working to establish guidelines for the project. Two major goals are:

- a. Plantings: A mixed palette with a large variety to create a healthy urban forest.
- b. Flexibility: Due to undertaking of many landscape projects, there has been depleted availability of some plants on the list. Project managers might not like what is available, and other plants might be substituted.

Skip mentioned ecology and the education of children about the importance of insects and vegetation. He paraphrased an author who said plants that don't support insects can be considered "plastic".

Reference was made to the Town Green and its informality as expressed in Schurcliff's design.

Some sources used for the project are Cornell, Georgia Tech, Department of Transportation, City of Boston tree list, Colomaine's column of insects most destructive.

Last, Skip mentioned climate change. Studies have addressed mostly woodlands, not urban forestry. Therefore, some of the research can't be used. The climate IS getting warmer, and there is more rain. Will there be more insects, more diseases? At present, it is difficult to determine. It is necessary to use one's own experience.

Burck presented a diagram showing the character of a tree. In the Town Center Plan, trees of similar character will be planted together in order to strengthen the design. The width of trees will be taken into consideration. For instance, oak trees will be planted further west.

The use of root barriers was explained. Deeper barriers will be used on sidewalks to control heaving.

Addressing the concern about messy seed drop, Burck said most trees are messy to some degree. The "Espresso" cultivar of the Kentucky Coffee Tree has no seed pods.

Ed asked about the possibility of planting a sycamore tree. Unfortunately, there have been large problems, plantings at M.I.T. and Fan Pier being noted for failure.

Kristin wondered how the existing trees will fit in with the proposed planting. Some trees marked for removal are in bad shape and not worth trying to save or are too big to move.

On the Town Green, Skip recommends replacing some trees with diverse specimens when existing trees go. Leslie would like to see a little more formality there. Skip referenced a book entitled "Great Streets."

In response to Lori's question about dying trees, she was told that some trees marked for removal are out of the scope of the project and are not slated for removal by the contractor.

Lori said gas leaks will be taken care of as the project proceeds.

Some trees in the plan were discussed. It was noted that birch and red bud trees are not as vigorous as other trees, but they are beautiful in the natural landscape. Red bud has had problems with canker and leaf splitting. The choice of "Princeton" elm was questioned. It was chosen because its habit resembles the Burgoyne Elm and it is a cultivar of the true American elm. It was suggested that two more elm cultivars be included—Jefferson, Valley Forge, New Horizon, and New Harmony being mentioned. Nina said a slippery elm on her homestead is doing very well.

Barbara reported that she read that the Emerald Ash Borer is in decline. Skip noted that the disease affecting shingle oaks is not life threatening.

Maintenance and management issues were discussed informally with Tom Cullen. One more person on his staff might be necessary. Skip suggested initiation of a program to prune trees every five years: perhaps pruning 20 trees each year. In response to a question about pruning "architecturally," he referenced Rolf Briggs, tree specialist arborist, who has a lot of science in his background.

The declining dogwoods on Town Green are in bad shape and removal, not transplanting, is recommended.

Skip described the root barriers to be installed. Provisions will be made for supplying highly aerated structural soil. The shoulder will be irrigated as well as soil under the sidewalk. There will be a two-tier system of irrigation around the tree: irrigation will be provided inside the root ball as well as outside.

Lori asked if there was anything missing that we could advocate for or underscore. Skip replied that maintenance was the key issue.

Trees will be ordered in September. Sources are dependent on where the contractor wants to send the landscape architect. Tree sizes are indicated on the list.

Nina emphasized the importance of continuity of information.

Skip kindly offered to give TAG a copy of his comprehensive tree matrix which can be used as a guide for future plantings.

Asked about specific aspects of interest regarding the project, Burke said he is interested in seeing how the relationship of the southwest corner of Town Green with the small park next to the real estate office on the Boston Post Road works out. Because the area is ADA accessible, no cars should block the view.

Lori said TAG should address maintenance, replacement of dead trees, and irrigation. She thanked Skip for making time to explain the project and address our questions.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:55 a.m. The next meeting is scheduled for September 11, 2019, 2:30 p.m., Department of Public Works.

Respectfully submitted,

Marilyn Doyle