

Good evening.

Before sharing with you the activities of the Landscape Committee for 2009, I would like to recognize the members of the Committee and thank them for their work on behalf of all of Tollgate. Members include: Bob Donaldson, Gayle Phillips, Joe Romer, Tom Smoliniski, and I.

As you know, the Landscape Committee is charged with overseeing and maintaining all Tollgate grounds beyond the boundaries of individual homeowner courtyards. The committee selects and guides the Landscape Contractor in addition to selecting and overseeing the planting of new shrubs and trees. Specific areas are targeted after a request is made by a homeowner, or the Committee as a group decides that an area warrants attention. Traditionally, the priority for requests has been: front yard areas, side yard areas, and finally areas behind courtyard walls. Bob Donaldson oversees the tree component of our Committee and he will give you a specific tree report.

Since agreeing to Chair this Committee, I have tried to keep better records of any activities and expenditures, and, whenever possible, take individual homeowner desires into consideration when making decisions. The Committee sometimes "walks a fine line" balancing individual requests with maintaining a uniform and appropriate appearance for Tollgate. Landscape design is subjective, not everyone is going to agree with what looks best. It is the Committee's job to try to protect and enhance the wonderful appearance of Tollgate's grounds, while being sensitive to homeowner opinions. I can't guarantee that everyone will be happy with every decision. I do give you my word, however, that we take our responsibility seriously, and all decisions are decided by a vote of the Committee.

The Committee's biggest challenge for 2009 was the selection and initiation of a new Landscaping Contractor for Tollgate. Last year we used the services of McFall and Berry who bought Mr. Flores' business. We were not happy with the quality of service provided, and after a lengthy process hired Ramiro Lawn Services for the current year. I hope that all of you have noticed an improvement in the landscaping services that Tollgate is receiving. As happens with any new working relationship, it takes time to establish good communication and understanding. The Ramiro group has done a very good job following the dictates of our contract and being responsive to specific requests. Due to the failures of the previous contractor, there was a great deal of work to be done and not all this work could be accomplished in this first year. I have worked very closely with the contractors to reinforce how we like things done, and what additional work needs to be added in the next year. If anyone ever has any general concerns about the overall care, please share those with me. In the meantime, I ask you to understand that this is a relationship in progress, and next year I will be asking them to do some additional routine tasks. There is still work to be done.

In addition to general Landscaping, the Committee deals with individual requests. This year the Committee addressed the following:

Tony and Jacque D'Erme (103) requested that the row of shrubs facing the front of their parking pad be replaced with new bushes all of the same type and size. Several years ago, a partial replacement of bushes was carried out in this area, but the new bushes and the old bushes never blended in an appealing manner, and the Committee agreed to this request. The "newer" of the bushes removed from 103 were transplanted to an open area in the front of the Kahn's home (123), and new yew bushes

were planted at 103. One of the older bushes removed from 103 was transplanted by Garry and me to the side of 117 to block the view of a transformer box.

The Melhems requested that work be done in the front of their home along their walkway to raise the level of the yard and address any further erosion. The Committee had the landscapers remove the brick edging this area, add additional top soil, and then reposition the bricks.

Eric Kirschner (108) requested that the laurel in the front of his steps be replaced with a flowering shrub. With Eric's input, it was decided to try a camellia in this area. Eric himself researched plants and found a shrub that the Committee approved. Garry graciously agreed to transplant the laurel to an area in front of Julie McNamara's (122) garage, Chuck Murray was volunteered to remove a dying bush to make room for the transplant and Eric planted the new plant himself.

The Rivikin's requested that dead boxwood be removed from the front of their home and a replacement bush be planted. This work is complete.

The Ehmer's requested that a dead azalea bush be removed from the front of their property, which was done. A new bush will be planted in the spring to replace this bush.

The Powell's had specific pruning requests and a request to explore a solution for an erosion problem to the side of their home. I worked with the Landscapers to address the pruning request and also asked that some gravel be used in the side area to at least begin to address any safety issue in the area affected by the erosion.

The Committee initiated several other activities, following discussion and agreement:

Mulch beds were increased around specific trees to enhance tree health.

An overgrown evergreen between 115 and 117 was recommended by committee for removal. After agreement by both homeowners, we had the tree removed.

Following approval by the rodent control professionals, Marie worked with the Landscapers to fill in a series of rodent holes and to reseed any areas. Hopefully, this will put an end to a recurring problem for some homeowners.

As reported last year, the Committee, in addition to responding to individual homeowner requests, will each year target certain areas for more substantial replanting. Two properties were identified this year #111 and #135. The work on both these areas was started, but for different reasons most of the replacement planting will take place early in the spring of 2010. For this reason, the Committee notified the Board that funds allocated to the Landscape Committee for 2009 were not exhausted, and asked that the unspent balance be available for spending in 2010.

Jim Guyette's (111) front plantings were once again reviewed and after meeting with Jim a two year plan was agreed upon. Our goal is to improve the appearance of the property by preserving some of the existing plantings and adding new shrubs. To accomplish this without "denuding" the entire area, disturbing two bushes that were planted several years ago, and requiring several more years for new plants to even begin to look in scale, we began a pruning process on the existing Laurels to prepare

them for a more significant downsizing in the spring. Early in 2010, with the laurels reduced in size, the aging junipers will be removed and new plants will be added.

The front area of #135 presents a very different challenge. Since the beautiful red maple now shades this area, and presents a series of surface level roots, little if any grass can grow in the area. Existing foundation plantings are overgrown and ugly. The Committee voted to do a substantial replant of the area. To date, several old bushes have been removed and one new bush has been planted. The existing mulch bed was enlarged. Early in 2010, we will be planting a series of shade loving plants and further overhauling this area. The Committee will work closely with Tom and Edie to address any concerns they have with this project.

The planting season ended with just one unfulfilled homeowner request. Mark Kaye requested that the Committee address the alley area behind his courtyard wall. This is an area that presents specific challenges, and Mark asked to have input on possible solutions. Late in the season, Mark forwarded the information and the Committee will make this an area of priority for the spring.

On a final note, I want to assure all homeowners that we, as a Committee, try to be fiscally responsible. Whenever possible, we transplant rather than discard. Plants that are often no longer attractive in the front yards of Tollgate are moved to areas to the side or rear of Tollgate and survive and flourish. The Committee with the help of others often does the work to save money. To the best of our ability we try to prioritize our activities, and as was the case this year, if the planting season draws to a close, we will schedule unfinished projects early in the next season. Whenever possible, we try to honor the requests of individual homeowners but also base decisions on our responsibility to maintain a consistent and complimentary community appearance. We try to distribute our funds fairly and prudently, and ask that you do your part by watering plantings around your home, especially if they are newly planted or we are dealing with dry conditions. As always, please feel free to contact me with your requests or concerns.

Marie Murray, Chair

November 15, 2009