

Tollgate Landscape Committee Meeting Minutes

February 26, 2008

The meeting was held at 7:30 pm at the home of Terry Zawacki. Attending were: Terry Zawacki, Kathy Doherty, Gayle Phillips, Bob Donaldson., Joe Romer, Tom Smolinski, and Marie Murray

Old Business

Discussion of Priorities for 2008 as identified and discussed at the 2007 Annual Homeowners Meeting.

Replacement trees for #104 and #109, as well as perimeter trees behind #127-135.

The committee discussed possible trees for the sites along Tollgate Way in front of #104 and #109, to replace the Beech and Red Oak that were taken down in the fall. Several trees were considered, including an Elm, Linden, Sycamore, and Tulip Poplar. The committee agreed that Bob and Marie would talk to Amy Strunk at Merrifield Garden Center and get her suggestions for the areas. They will also explore possible acceptable alternatives to Holly trees for the areas behind #127-135 where White Pines were removed. Once suggestions have been gathered, the information will be shared with all committee members and a final decision will be made at the March meeting. The committee plans to have the trees planted in April.

Bob Donaldson informed the committee that most of the 2008 money budgeted for tree removal has all ready been spent to remove the White Pine that fell in February. The committee may have to ask the Board for additional money if other trees need to be removed. In the meantime, the committee agreed to be particularly cautious in spending money allocated to other areas of landscape expenses.

Shrubs identified by Committee for attention

Several areas in Tollgate have been identified by the committee as being in need of replacement plantings. After reviewing the sites, the committee decided that the front yard of #104 would be the first area to receive attention this spring. Marie will contact Amy Strunk at Merrifield for recommendations that would be compatible with the adjoining neighbors. Laurels are a possibility, with perhaps some flowering shrub as an accent. Marie will also contact the homeowner to discuss any changes.

One bed in front of #111 is also a possible area for replacement bushes. Marie will contact the homeowner to discuss the current landscaping and the homeowner's desire for new plantings.

The azalea bushes in several areas around Tollgate are in need of pruning. As the weather improves, the committee will contact individual homeowners and do selective pruning.

Tollgate Master Plant Inventory

A preliminary plant inventory now exists for all of Tollgate. Marie asked Terry and Kathy to help her in finishing this task, in preparation for future work on a Master Plan for Tollgate plantings.

Tollgate Entrance

In 2007, the Tollgate Board asked the Landscape Committee to work with the Architectural Committee to explore ways to improve the visibility of Tollgate's front entrance. Both improved lighting and signs are possibilities. Marie Murray asked Gayle Phillips if she would lead this effort and report back to the committee.

Landscape Guidelines

The Landscape Committee was also asked by the Board to establish written guidelines clearly identifying priorities and policies for making decisions. These guidelines will be reviewed and approved by the Board and then will be circulated to all Homeowners. Kathy Doherty volunteered to do a first draft of these guidelines with the help of Bob Donaldson and Joe Romer. The committee briefly discussed certain factors that should be considered in any decision process and agreed to meet on March 25, to review the draft and make any revisions. The committee hopes to have the document finished and to the Board as soon as possible.

Review of City Regulations Concerning Plantings at Tollgate

In the fall of 2007, the Board asked the Landscape Committee to research any relevant City regulations that affect the selection of trees for Tollgate. Joe Romer was asked to work on this effort. Tonight, Joe reported that he has begun his review of relevant codes and documents, and has had a preliminary discussion with the City Arborist concerning Tollgate. He and Bob Donaldson propose to meet with the Arborist to better clarify the exact requirements and obligations of Tollgate. As information is learned, Joe will brief the committee.

New Business

Request for Tree Removal

Joe Romer addressed the committee concerning his request to remove the Blue Spruce and Magnolia trees that flank his front sidewalk. Joe presented his request to the Board in the fall of 2007 and the Board requested that the Landscape Committee handle the request. Joe withdrew the request for the winter, and presented it to the committee at this meeting. The request is based on several factors including: the fact that the trees are too large for the area in which they are planted, both trees are competing for light with two of Tollgate's largest trees, and the trees obstruct the view of the Romer's home from the street and are aesthetically unappealing. The Romer's have proposed to have the trees removed at their expense and will replace the trees, contingent upon City approval for removal, with two understory trees approved by the Landscape Committee.

A lengthy discussion followed this request, with concern by some committee members that this consideration was being made in the absence of the written Guidelines that would outline the priorities and policies for Landscape decisions. Members of the committee shared information on previous decisions by the committee to allow individual homeowner's to remove trees. Members also shared their thoughts on the Romer's request. After a great deal of debate, the committee voted on whether or not to allow the removal of the trees. Five of the seven members voted to allow the removal of both trees. Marie Murray was in favor of the removal of only the Blue Spruce at this time, but agreed to defer to the majority. Terry Zawacki stated that she would not vote to remove the trees without the written guidelines

that would address the issues to be considered and weighed. Since the City must approve the removal of the two trees, it was agreed that between tonight and the meeting of March 25, Joe and Bob will ask the City Arborist for permission. Marie Murray will attend the March Tollgate Board meeting and inform the Board of the Committee's decision. And, as stated earlier, Kathy Doherty will prepare a draft of Landscape Guidelines that will include a discussion of tree removal considerations and policies, for this Committee's review at the March meeting. The final outcome of all these efforts will be discussed at the March meeting.

Other New Business

Kathy Doherty reported that a large branch fell from a tree behind her house and needs to be cut and removed. Bob and Tom agreed to look at the branch and perhaps cut the wood into manageable pieces. When the new Landscape contractor begins work, Marie will ask that they handle any remaining wood from this branch.

Bob Donaldson shared with the committee the problem of water runoff from the drainage hoses for the cisterns installed at the new homes on Cherry Street. Of particular concern is the runoff from #105 Cherry Street, which is being directed to the side yard of Tom Smolinski, and is resulting in considerable flooding of Tollgate property. Marie Murray agreed to contact the owner of that property to ask that the hoses be repositioned so the water first runs over the Cherry Street property.

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, March 25 at 7:30 pm at the home of Marie Murray