

Minutes of March 25, 2008
Landscape Committee Meeting

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

Old Business

Tree Committee

Bob Donaldson gave his report on trees. Five new trees will be planted, a Princeton Elm at #104, a Red Maple at #109, Red Cedars behind #129 and 135, and an American Hornbeam behind #135 at Tollgate's border with #107 Cherry Street. The rationale for the selections was briefly discussed.

The committee reviewed the letter Bob had prepared regarding trees to be circulated to the Tollgate community. The letter included a list of the trees to be planted and notified homeowners of the Committee's vote in favor of allowing the Romers to have the Blue Spruce and the Magnolia trees in front of their home removed at their expense. Bob included a brief explanation as to why this action was approved and mentioned that the Romers would be having two Redbud trees planted to replace the two trees removed. The committee suggested a few minor changes and the letter was approved.

Bob shared with the committee that the Romers had two estimates- one by Save-A-Tree, our usual contractor, and a second from another firm whose estimate was half of that given by Save-A Tree. The Romers will be using the company with the lower estimate, and Bob will get estimates from that company for future tree removal to hopefully save money.

Bob also reported that the invoice from McFall and Berry, the new landscape contractors, arrived and was not the price that Mr. Flores had quoted for this year. Bob called McFall and Berry and they will honor the Flores price. Since the landscape contract was being discussed, the committee raised issues that need to be addressed with the new contractors. Of particular concern is pruning and mulching. Marie Murray will contact the landscape company and arrange for a meeting to discuss our concerns. She will also inquire about the possibility of the new company supplying trees and shrubs for future planting and establishing whether that will be a less expensive course of action.

Shrub Update

Marie Murray reviewed the areas identified as needing new shrubs and the cost estimates for each. These included: #103 – one holly to replace a dead holly, #104 – three laurels to replace the aging junipers, #108 – one laurel to replace a dead shrub, #109- two weeping laurels to replace the overgrown shrubs covering the lower level windows, and #112- one new heather to replace dead heather. Purchasing and planting of these shrubs will cost approximately \$1000.00, leaving \$1500.00 in the shrub budget.

There was considerable discussion concerning the replacement of the heather at #112. Kathy D. suggested that we make sure that any new heathers planted be of the same variety as those transplanted

from the Kahns to the Melhems. There was debate over variegated versus non-variegated heather. Gayle Phillips suggested that we consider the gold and emerald euonymus that is in the front of their adjacent parking pad. A suggestion was made that if necessary, we should replace all three of the heathers, with three new matching heathers. Marie Murray will contact the homeowner, Helga Johnson, and discuss this situation with her before proceeding. The committee approved all the other shrub choices and approval of the plants for #112 will be handled by an email.

Tree Removal Guidelines

Kathy Doherty presented to the committee a draft of Guidelines to be followed for discretionary tree removal. Kathy, with the help of Bob and Joe, developed a comprehensive rating system that takes into consideration six factors: homeowner's rationale, proximity, health and life expectancy, enhancement of the home, enhancement of the street, and opinions of the neighbors. It is the desire of the committee to use these guidelines to, "apply some objectivity to what is essentially a subjective judgment." The committee will make its final decision only after all six factors are rated on a one to five scale and the total score is determined. The committee reviewed the draft and made only minor changes, and unanimously approved the guidelines. Kathy will prepare a final draft and send it to committee members by email. The Committee expressed their appreciation to Kathy for the significant work that went into the creation of these guidelines. Marie Murray will present the draft guidelines to the Board on April 5 for their approval.

City of Falls Church Arborist

Joe Romer briefed the committee on the meeting that he and Bob had with the City Arborist, Jill Spense. Joe had prepared a written report that had been circulated to the committee prior to the meeting. Joe has verified what City requirements Tollgate must follow in relation to the removal and planting of trees- City codes 35 and 38 both relate to trees. The City of Falls Church has not adopted all of the State provisions, and the City requirements were grandfathered in. Basically, Tollgate's original site plan remains as the guiding document. Joe and Bob were also able to get some clarification concerning the approved tree list, and learned that there is some discretion on the part of the Arborist. Joe obtained the approval of the Arborist for the removal of the two trees in front of his home and the replacement of the trees with two Redbuds. Joe also shared that there are openings on the City's Advisory Committee and his interest in perhaps volunteering for one of the vacancies. The committee greatly appreciates the efforts that Joe has made to verify Tollgate's legal responsibilities, and supports his desire to join one of the City's committees.

New Business

Expansion of Mulch Beds

The Committee received an email from Ed Bronikowski concerning the size of the mulch beds surrounding the trees of Tollgate, and suggesting that the mulch beds be increased. The committee has been looking at the use of larger mulch beds, and increased the beds surrounding the three red oaks that

were in poor health. Recognizing that large mulch beds are not tasteful to all homeowners, and are not necessary for every tree in Tollgate, it was agreed that a study of the property would be done to identify which trees need larger mulch beds. Bob and Marie will walk the property and prepare a list of specific sites. Estimates will then be obtained from the landscape contractor to determine how many of these beds can be done this year. Kathy D. requested that the ivy be removed from around the tree in her front yard and be replaced with mulch.

Request from Tony D'Ernes

Tony sent an email expressing his concern over possible damage to one of his drainage pipes by the landscapers when they edged the beds using a larger cutting tool. Gayle also had concerns with pipe damage. This issue will be raised in the proposed meeting with the landscape contractor. Tony also mentioned that one of the holly bushes in his front yard was dead, and his concern with the pruning of these bushes. Pruning will be a second topic in the discussion with the landscapers. Marie will share this information with Tony.

Future Committee Projects

Marie Murray suggested that in the near future the committee might consider doing some planting as a group. Possible group activities might include: the thinning of plants in the entrance beds, replacing groundcover, and planting of day lilies. This topic will be discussed at our next meeting.