

**Trees for Watertown Minutes
Board Meeting
January 19, 2017
Sasaki Associates, 64 Pleasant Street**

TFW Board members present: Dennis J. Duff, Jane Holden, David Jay, Genie Johnston, Bob Lauricella, Libby Shaw.
Absent: Michele Waldman.
TFW members present: David Meshoulam, Katy Wolff

The minutes for the November meeting were accepted unanimously (Dennis moved, Genie seconded)
The treasurer's report for the past month was accepted unanimously (Dennis moved, Bob seconded)

Delta redesign project

The stately trio of heritage maples that have graced the Watertown Delta for nearly a hundred years are nearing the end of their lifetimes; one is already gone. Trees for Watertown is working on a proposal to the town for a new signature landscaping design that continues the theme of a beautifully balanced arrangement of tall, healthy, heritage trees in a landscape that can provide another century of calming beauty and environmental value in the heart of this busy intersection.

David Jay has drawn up a draft landscaping plan for the Delta. An important next step in refining the plan is to precisely locate underground utilities, in order to ensure minimal disruption to the long term health of the trees.

Tonight David J reported that last summer, Town Engineer Matt Schuman provided him with an old Delta plot plan prepared in the early 1980's for a Delta redesign carried out at the time. David J noted on this plan faint markings indicating underground gas and electric lines.

David J will transfer those markings to his draft landscaping plan. Dennis Duff suggested that DigSafe may have updated information about those underground utilities.

David J said the old diagram also shows asphalted areas which may have been overlaid with soil rather than removed. Buried asphalt should be removed in the new plan to allow for healthy long-term growth of tree root systems.

Dennis said that the soil in the granite-curbed island in front of the gas station at Arlington & Mount Auburn was overlaid on asphalt.

Libby Shaw stressed the importance of involving other stakeholders in Delta planning, for instance Watertown Savings Bank and other abutters, and interested Town Councilors. The group discussed pros and cons of several tree species for this site (honey locust, red and white oaks, non-tap-rooted Swamp White oaks versus tap-rooted oaks, evergreens).

David J will arrange to meet with Tree Warden Chris Hayward to review the plan and strategize about next steps.

Siena Village Public Shade Tree Planting

Michele Waldman was not present but has reported that her condominium development, Siena Village, is on board with at least one new tree. She plans on meeting on site with Chris Hayward to get these on his list for spring planting.

TFW Tree Nursery at the Grove Street Community Garden

Genie Johnston renewed the rent on TFW's nursery plot for another year. The Community Garden will close down in three years, after which Mount Auburn Cemetery will likely develop the site as planned.

Three years should be enough for one more round of saplings to reach transplant size. There's room for up to 8 saplings.

The purpose of TFW's nursery is to grow tree species that might serve well as street trees in Watertown but aren't in common use as street trees. Genie would like to try *Prunus avium* (Mazzard sweet cherry), which is used as a root stock for varietal cherries. Genie said Mazzard cherry grows as straight as a pin oak, has a cloud of white flowers in the Spring, and doesn't provide a huge crop of fruit. It can be a relatively large tree so should be given a larger tree strip. She welcomes other species suggestions too.

Genie will try propagating a few Osage Orange saplings from midsummer soft-wood cuttings, might try swamp white oak, and will look for wild Mazzard cherry seedlings. Libby has a Mazzard seedling in her garden which could be transplanted to the nursery in the Spring.

Sweet Gum Allées at Mosesian Center for the Arts

David J and Jane Holden will coordinate to get together with Mosesian Center Executive Director Roberta Miller in early February to discuss preservation of these healthy established trees. The wrought iron fence along Arsenal Street is historically protected but perhaps it would be possible to negotiate removal of a short fence segment in order to open up the view from Arsenal Street up to the theatre.

White pine at 32 Church Street condo development

Bob Lauricella reported the name and address of the developers for the site of the former Watertown Masonic Lodge. The town permitting documents indicate the big healthy white pine on the property boundary will be saved. Libby will write a letter to the developers to thank them for preserving the tree and to request good care be taken to preserve and protect the tree's root system during construction. Bob thinks the existing basement is not being rebuilt, if so this could mean less tree root disruption.

Tree protections during street reconstruction

Genie and Libby inspected tree protection measures at several street renovation sites in October and felt that while overall the contractors were doing a better job than in the past, there were still some systemic problems. Libby took pictures and will discuss this with Chris Hayward when they next meet.

TFW-Tree Warden monthly meeting

Libby and Chris Hayward have agreed to meet monthly to exchange info and coordinate efforts. Meeting date not yet selected, ideally it will be during the week before the TFW board meeting.

Edenfield Avenue Stormwater Management Project

Find out if Chris is willing to come to a TFW meeting to talk about the Edenfield project greenscape.

New England Grows

In November Libby attended the annual New England Grows conference for the green industry, which she strongly recommends. She attended eight different presentations of which six were directly relevant to urban tree issues.

Openings on the Conservation Commission and CPA Committee

Libby relayed Patrick Fairbairn's notice that there's a long-standing unfilled position on the Conservation Commission, and four positions opening up soon for representatives of the public on Watertown's Community Preservation Committee. He hopes to make it to TFW's February meeting.

Outreach ideas for TFW

Member David Meshoulam presented a slide show on ways to address the problem of engaging the public with trees and tree-related issues. His presentation focused on four main concepts:

1. A public gathering, perhaps a tree-themed film at the library. This could be an entertaining educational community event and provide an opportunity to engage people in TFW's activities and to spread the word about the Google map application David M is developing.

2. Engaging the public in telling stories about trees is a great way to engage a broader spectrum of citizens in thinking about trees. David M demonstrated the Google map application he developed (<http://bit.ly/tfwmaps>) which will allow Watertownians to tag favorite trees in town. They could do this by emailing the tree's street address or a geo-tagged smart phone picture of the tree to treesforwatertownma@gmail.com.

David M demonstrated how trees and associated pictures and info can be added to the map - species, size, remarkable features, anecdotes about the tree... The group immediately started thinking about trees to add - Katy Wolff proposed a giant horse chestnut at the corner of School and Sunnybank Roads. David J remembered that Nannette Schwartz compiled a photo album of big Watertown trees some 12-15 years ago. Libby will look that album up in the TFW archives.

David M asked whether the Davey Watertown tree database, which presumably is public information, could be downloaded into the app. Libby suspects the database is in a proprietary Davey format, will ask Chris about it. David M proposed limiting TFW's "favorite trees" app to trees in public spaces, not back yards, so that anyone can see them.

David M said another great app is provided by the Nature Conservancy: "Healthy Trees, Healthy Cities". It's based on civic science, the concept that regular citizens can contribute lots of useful data to environmental science research by inputting local observations of natural phenomena. It lists five things one can do for trees, complete with how-to videos: plant, steward, prune, monitor, and early pest detection. It's designed to encourage people to steward a specific tree in their neighborhood.

3. A group walking tour or self-guided walking tour once the map is well populated with favorite trees. This might tie in with a contest to find the largest/best tree of various species in Watertown.

4. A day of action - perhaps an Arbor Day planting with the Tree Warden, or a hands-on pruning course. TFW has sponsored pruning courses in the past, and Chris Hayward has given them as well.

A discussion of what films would be suitable followed David M's presentation. There was some concern that the first movie he suggested, "City of Trees", which he showed the trailer for, was too focused on social action and not really about the value of trees. David J wondered if a movie exists about the NYC program "A Million Trees." David M showed a trailer for a kids' film called "Mia and the Migoo". The animated film "The Man Who Planted Trees" was mentioned. Jane thought combining with Watertown Citizens for Environmental Safety would be a good fit to co-sponsor a film.

David M will look for three more tree movies to propose at the February meeting.

David M concluded by emphasizing that to engage people it's important to introduce the engagement in a way that feels authentic to them - out of their own volition, already interested. A movie screening, or Arbor Day planting. He mentioned he'd heard there is a fifth grade class doing a unit on trees. Libby mentioned Chris Hayward's Arbor Day assemblies, and said there are trees that started out as slips handed out to kids years ago at Arbor Day celebrations. Ruth Thomasian, past TFW president, may recall where some of those trees are, Libby will ask her.

Arlington Street-Mount Auburn Street intersection beautification plans

Jane talked with the manager of the 7-11 store about improving the planting sites on that property by replacing dead and dying trees with healthy new trees and other compatible plantings. He is interested, and suggested she get back in touch in March. Gerry Mee told Jane the DPW can't be involved since it's on private property, but that Newport Construction might be willing to give 7-11 a good price, perhaps \$15 a linear foot for granite curbing.

Ozzie Bateman, a new Watertown resident with substantial horticultural experience who lives right across from the 7-11 and next door to the gas station, is enthusiastic to help on both Jane's and Dennis's projects. Jane and Dennis will each follow up with him. Dennis said that watering solutions need to be found for these sites.

New Arsenal Street trees

Bob mentioned that there are six trees newly planted on Arsenal where a row of six honey locusts had been removed, but that the planting area looks tiny. He didn't know whether any soil preparation had been done to ensure the trees have adequate root volume and irrigation. Libby will ask Chris whether he has any info.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:40.