

Advisory Committee on Trees meeting, Tuesday February 15, 2011

Present: Charles Jackman (chair), Bob Trumbule, Ethel Dutky, Carl Skaggs (city liaison from Public Works)

Meeting started at 7:30 PM in the New Deal Café

Minutes from January meeting

The minutes were reviewed and approved with minor corrections.

Report from Public Works

Carl Skaggs presented the report for Lesley Riddie.

1 - **Recent Events:** Snow storm and associated tree damage. High winds in early February caused additional tree and property damage. Estimated number of trees lost is 50! The most commonly damaged by the snow and high winds were the Callery Pears (Bradford and other cultivars) and various pines, especially the Eastern White Pine (*Pinus strobus*) and the Virginia (Scrub) Pine (*Pinus virginiana*). Most of the Scrub pines were mature trees grown from volunteer seedlings. This pine ages poorly, and tends to uproot and fall when loaded with snow or to have the trunk snap. Most of the White pines were planted, leading to problems as they become large and crowded near parking areas and buildings. This is a very attractive pine, but the wood is weak, and in “sticky” snows, the long needles hold the snow, and the weight causes large branches to break. Often a cascade effect is seen resulting in many branches broken down one side of the tree. We should exercise prudence in using White Pine near buildings, parking areas and streets in the future. Bob commends Public Works in their maintenance of the Callery Pear plantings. The policy of thinning the canopy, and guiding the growth through removal of weak branches resulted in many of our older (15 to 25 years old) plantings holding up well despite the very damaging snow storm. A greater percentage of tree loss and damage was seen in Greenbelt East. Public Works continues to work with the contractor on damaged and downed trees from recent storms. Work continues on the extensively damaged areas from 2010 in Buddy Attick Park woodlands.

2 - **Concerns expressed about PEPCO tree pruning.** Carl expressed concern about PEPCO pruning trees along Greenbelt roads. Their practice of cutting back only branches near the power lines is creating a situation where the lop-sided trees are made more likely to fall into the street.

3 – **Things to do.** Lesley reminds ACT to schedule field trips to examine large trees near/in city playgrounds. ACT respectfully requests Lesley to prioritize the playgrounds for ACT. We discussed scheduling a weekend field trip probably in late March. It is difficult to evaluate trees before they leaf out.

ACT would also like to schedule a trip to visit the USDA tree breeding program. Perhaps we can delay this trip until Bill Phelan returns to Greenbelt.

4 – **Upcoming Events**

Earth Day will be celebrated on April 16th. The event will include a storm-water management system in Schrom Hills Park and the planting of trees near the Park entrance.

Lesley would like to have a community/volunteer restoration planting sometime in the fall. ACT asks "Where would this be located?" Public Works would like advice and assistance in tapping into various sources of volunteer labor. Some ideas include Boy Scout Eagle projects; Use of middle and high school students who are required to do community service. We need to find out how to make the activity qualify as community service.

ACT would like to see a project to correct the unsightly situation in Roosevelt Center opposite the entrance to the COOP where poor drainage is killing the Cherry Trees which were planted in a poorly drained site that also receives water from the roof of the COOP.

We discussed the impact of the past 4 to 6 years of unusual weather. We have seen severe storms; very heavy snow; tornado winds; severe down-draft storms; severe growing season droughts. These combined with our aging trees to produce a lot of damage. Is this Climate Change or just natural cycles? Should our Tree list reflect planning for climate change, such as warming allowing plants that are presently on the edge of their cold hardiness zone?

List of Preferred Trees

Dr Richard Olsen was unable to attend this meeting due to illness but hope to come in March. Ethel suggested that we table the discussion of Preferred Trees until our next meeting. We will review our references and come to the March meeting with ideas of specific tree species and cultivars for consideration. Our goals are trees that will be less likely to become weedy, to age poorly, and to present Public Works with extreme maintenance problems.

Meeting adjourned at 9PM

Next meeting will be Tuesday, March 15 at 7PM at the New Deal Cafe. Come a few minutes early to select your beverage or desert/snack.