

Tree Committee Report To Board of Trustees  
South Nyack, New York 4/23/19

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The Mayor has asked that we address the work to date of the Tree Committee, re-established just about a year ago this month. Since prior committees had prepared much of the infrastructure around which the committee operates we went about the task of setting a new mission for our team and getting about the work quickly. We first met in June, 2018 and average one meeting every other month on Sunday mornings. The team is knowledgeable and committed to the task at hand. It has been a personal delight for me to work with both Kevin and Diana. Unfortunately Diana cannot be with us this evening, but I think you all know Kevin VanHise.

Our primary mission had been to create a mechanism to focus on the replanting of trees, shrubs and flowering perennials across the village property as well as to attend to fallen trees. This work could not be possible without the help of DPW, as they are the lead department in this effort and has been for many years.

In reviewing the prior tree committee's work on file here in the village, we came upon the knowledge that in 2009, under Don McMahon's leadership, a comprehensive inventory of the village trees, street by street, had been undertaken. We asked DPW Superintendent Jimmy Johnson to update it. We received that update in February, 2019 and we have used that data to give the board and residents an understanding of where we are with assessing the state of things as it pertains to our village trees.

Why concern ourselves with this you might ask? I refer to scientists who assure the public there are multiple proven benefits for tree planting. Economically they enhance property values, reduce cooling costs for homeowners, improve air quality by reducing carbon in the air, and add to the biodiversity of the environment.

What is the state of Village trees? In 2009 Cooperative Extension completed an extensive inventory of all village trees on public streets. This was again updated by DPW in 2019. During this 10 year period the following occurred:

- 92 trees were removed
- 165 tree baron sites were identified for planting
- 2 trees were planted
- 6 trees are recommended to be removed shortly

That data tells us really one thing, we have been careful to remove diseased and fallen or dangerous trees but have not prioritized in an active and precise way, the replanting of trees, shrubs and perennials across the village in quite some time. Nothing has been done in 10 years to address the baron sites. We say to our board and community that we have to right this situation.

The 2018-19 accomplishments:

We have met with the Mayor, Deputy Mayor, DPW Superintendent, consulted with our Village Attorney, and Treasurer; as well as conferenced with neighboring Piermont Tree Conservancy head in an effort to understand what we have done, and ought to do, in order to gain momentum in setting the goal for the village to plant trees.

Kevin is back here tonight; having given a presentation on the landscaping plans the Thruway Authority provided the village for areas like the Shared Use Path (SUP), Elizabeth Place Park, the Esposito Trail, the new bus stop on Road F, and the area surrounding Village Hall last fall. Just today, we heard from George Paschalis, of the Thruway Authority, of plans to landscape their land adjacent to Eagle Rock and Salisbury Point properties on Piermont Avenue. That is earmarked to begin May 13, 2019. Kevin will review with the contractor any changes to the planting plans prior to them being put in the ground at that site. He will also offer his insights on the important work of the Tree Committee, with the Board, as I conclude this overview. We have spoken about our efforts with the community at the last summer concert held in September, 2018, and again last week at the April 11, 2019 community meeting held at the fire house.

Website:

The Tree Committee has distributed to the Village Board assorted forms and lists for the Tree Committee page on our website. The website includes descriptions of all of our village parks, a map of the village marking the parks sites, updated list of trees recommended to be planted in our area, user friendly forms residents can pull up to report dangerous trees, how to plant a tree in their yard and the like. All board members have seen these documents. Some of you have offered suggestions which have been incorporated into the postings. Thanks for your time in helping us with that. We have also created for the website a "Frequently Asked Questions" guide. That too will be posted. Questions like "If a tree has fallen from the verge onto my property, what do I do?" This section will be expanded as the committee recommends to you it should be.

The financing of this effort has been the following:

There are budget lines for both 2019 and 2020 for street maintenance (\$5,000), parks (\$4,200) and community beautification (\$3,500 for 2019, that was reduced to \$1,500 for 2020). Imbedded within these budget codes are listed the costs for utilities, equipment replacement and the like. In short things have been and are very tight moving forward.

The Tree Committee has some very exciting ideas to enhance the village landscaping:

- Assessing each of the village parks and recommending ways to beautify them through plantings, trees, shrubs and theme gardens (ex. butterfly, children's garden, a zen garden; even adding contemplation benches, etc.)
- Generate a plan for maintaining the plantings the Thruway Authority will be completing this summer, and into fall, as the construction of those sites conclude. Thruway Authority

responsibility ends within 12-18 months of the actual plantings. There will be plant replenishment requirements, weeding, and nutrients needed to be added to keep these areas beautiful. How will we finance this?

- The largest effort needed to be undertaken is the replanting of all the lost trees over the last 10 years and filling the identified baron sites across the village that totals, if we refer to the Cornell Extension report, 261 trees. If you count in the 6 trees recommended to be removed that have yet to be removed. DPW advised us that a tree replacement can cost anywhere from \$1,000-\$3,000 on average. Do the math. That is a minimum cost of \$261,000. It climbs as the range of cost increases.
- The Tree Committee would like to prioritize the replanting sites of these trees but pause at this time to do that, without a funding source to purchase the trees.
- So what happened to the \$3,500 in the current budget? The committee offered it, in full, to the Franklin Street Park effort of improvements to get the perimeter fence installed along with the tennis court improvements and shade structure happening later this spring. So no new trees will be replanted this year, 2019.

This brings me finally to the fundraising portion of what the Tree Committee has been grappling with. We have for your consideration, and hopefully approval tonight, a series of steps, that have the potential to boost financing of the recommendations from the Tree Committee to the Village Board.

#### Financing Ideas:

- Establish a link to an existing not for profit fundraising group for the Tree Committee allowing for a “fund me” link to the committee’s work.
- Look closely within the village budget for additional revenue sources.
- While the parking consultant has not made a recommendation for its work, which includes paid parking on the streets of South Nyack, should that be the case, a percentage of that revenue could be directed toward the tree replanting. This is a long shot.
- Hiring a grant writer consultant to search and apply for grants through local county and state sources. We have the name of three possibilities.
- Private donations: We will need to take guidance from our Village Treasurer and Attorney in setting up steps to accept donations from private citizens. Possibilities include, but not limited to are:

- Donations for the full cost of an approved tree, to be made by the resident, with the understanding the DPW oversees all plantings on village property. Watering for the initial few months would be the responsibility of the resident.
- Donations be made without specification of planting site.
- Donation of the cost for a park bench with name plate added or not.
- Donation of the cost of benefactor paving stones.
- Creation of village postcards and a yearly calendar, using a local professional photographer, of magnificent seasonal trees to be sold as a fundraiser.
- We would encourage fundraising events in private homes. We already have a family living on Piermont Avenue willing to sponsor such an event.
- Fundraising by neighborhood for trees. These trees would be planted specifically in that neighborhood, using already scheduled and organized block parties.
- Jamming for a cause musical events using, as an example, the Billy Palooza house band charity event held in February, 2019.
- Donation tables, set up at events, organized by independent fundraising groups.

The Tree Committee wishes to thank the Mayor and Board for its ongoing support and the eagerness of community members to assist in the efforts moving forward.