

Frustrated tree committee chair announces resignation

By Robert Morton-Ranney

Tree committee chairwoman Edwina Cloherty announced her resignation from the committee at their June 19 monthly meeting. Cloherty said the meeting would be her last.

Cloherty said she was resigning because she is frustrated with the relationship between the Tree Committee and the Town Council and other officials.

Cloherty reported that Rhode Island DEM official Paul Dolan, who is responsible for dispersing the America The Beautiful Grant funds, made a presentation to Town Council a few weeks ago, but the Tree Committee had not been informed of his appearance. She con-

tacted Dolan and he said he would be happy to visit the committee in July, she said. All committee members agreed that better communication is needed between the committee and the Town Council.

Making his final report to the Tree Preservation and Protection Committee, outgoing Tree Warden David Nickerson reported that the company hired to remove invasive Norway Maples from the town forest cut down more than they should have without consulting him. New committee member John Collins said the tree warden should be "in the loop" regarding such matters. Nickerson noted that the master tree plan calls for a public works department employee to be a licensed

arborist and be named deputy tree warden, but this has not happened.

With respect to the structural soil demonstration using a tree near St. Matthew's Church, Nickerson said it took two persons about five hours. Three slabs of concrete were removed and soil replaced so that tree roots may grow down rather than horizontally, which lifts and cracks sidewalks. Nickerson said the new concrete should last 25 years. If new concrete had been laid without structural soil, roots would lift it within five years. Cloherty asked for an estimate on cost per tree, but Nickerson said it's difficult to estimate because each situation is different. He added that a less expensive alternative, tried in Newport, is to use "stone dust" on the surface rather than concrete, though the combination of structural soil and concrete remains best.

Discussion followed about whether the committee should try to be involved in upcoming plans to replace downtown sidewalks. Nickerson felt the best course was to stay in touch with DPW regarding their plans for any upcoming work, and Planning Commission Liaison Michael White suggested that the committee check on the progress of the Downtown Beautification Project.

Nickerson inquired about whether the package of "Tree City USA" materials that go with the grant had been received and learned they have not.

Committee Vice-Chairman Jim Rugh reported that the principal recommendation at the Municipal Tree Academy he recently attended was that the master tree plan should be for no more than five years. In addition, tree committees were encouraged to look beyond simply planting trees, to enhancing, protecting and preserving existing trees. For example, he pointed out, harmful insect populations currently active in the Midwest will eventually make their way to New England, and they can plan for their impact.

Cloherty reported that nothing is new on the tree inventory, and Rugh said that "Trees New England," was touted by persons he asked at the Tree Academy as a firm that will work with towns to stay within available budgets. He also suggested the possibility of hiring interns from the University of Rhode Island.

With respect to the question of mulching and caring for trees on public lands and rights-of-way, Cloherty said she and committee member Walter Boll had staked a number of trees in the town forest. She added that while it had not worked out for the teens to help this time around, leader Melissa Minto wants to meet to discuss other possibilities at a later date.

Cloherty said the committee needs to find out who was in on the creation of the town forest so that more persons can participate in its maintenance. She said she contacted School Committee Chairwoman Cathy Kaiser, who agreed to put in on their agenda. Collins will discuss it with the land trust. Rugh said he also needs to know its his-

tory so that he can complete the text he is preparing to put on display in three kiosks there. There will be information about the trees and "fun facts."

Committee member Anthony Antine reported that he recently visited trees planted by the town and most are not being cared for or even watered. Nickerson said property owners receiving a tree on a public right-of-way on their property sign a binder indicating they will care for it. After discussion, a motion was accepted giving Antine the authority to talk to DPW Director Steve Goslee about the state of watering and then, if he deems it appropriate, to engage a landscaper to weed and water these trees using money in the committee's budget.

Rugh reported that plans for the parking lot behind the new Town Hall have spaces for four trees. Rugh said these can be planted in connection with Jamestown's 350th Anniversary celebrations in August, and he searched for one type to represent England and one to represent America. A motion was adopted that two Carolina silverbell trees and two red obelisk beech trees be purchased for these spots.

Rugh also reported that "paulownia," an invasive tree is taking hold at the reservoir. He will email Conservation Commission Liaison Patrick Driscoll and ask him to take the issue to the commission.

Have cake for Jones' birthday

The Portsmouth Historical Society and the U.S. Navy will hold a birthday party in honor of John Paul Jones, who lived in Portsmouth in 1777.

The party is Sunday, July 8, from 2 to 4 p.m. at the John Paul Jones House and Gardens at the corner of Middle and State streets.

The "Songs of the Sea" concert by the Seacoast Wind Ensemble will begin at 3 pm. and cake and punch will be served.

The museum will also be open on Monday, July 9, at no charge from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.

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