

Burr Garden Committee Meeting Minutes

2/7/2011

In Attendance: Ellen Gould, Mike Jiehle, Ken Placko, Lisa Clair, Catherine Albin

Meeting Calendar: We agreed to meet on the second Wednesday of each month, excluding July and August. If we need to add other meetings, we will do so, but for the time being, these are our scheduled meeting dates:

March 9

April 13

May 11

June 8

Sept 14

Oct 12

Nov 9

Dec—open

First Topic of Discussion: Condition and maintenance of grounds and tent area immediately behind Burr Mansion.

Mike brought up the fact that it is a constant battle to keep the grounds in good condition behind Burr Mansion, as the catering and tent trucks cause ruts in the grass when driving to the back of the building, and visitors to events there often pull up onto the grass under the Copper Beech trees. There is a concern about possible damage to the Copper Beech roots, in addition to the grounds being ruined.

The committee discussed various solutions to the problem, and finally decided that the installation of a subsurface under the grassy area would help to protect the grounds there (for catering and tent trucks) and that the installation of granite posts with a pyramid top would be in keeping with the historic appearance of the garden and would block people from parking under the trees.

Ken said that Public Works can handle the installation and purchase of materials. (This will be dependent upon Board of Selectmen approval of funds.)

Ellen said that the proper procedure for approval is to first decide on the direction we want to proceed, and then submit an application to the HDC for approval.

There was discussion as to whether or not a black chain should connect the posts, or whether the posts should be placed no more than three feet apart so cars cannot enter between them.

Mike agreed to oversee the development of plans for posts and/or a grassy substructure, and report back to the committee on his recommended direction.

Second Topic of Discussion: The needs of the garden house.

Catherine suggested that after the improvements are made to the Burr House parking and vehicle access areas, the next area for improvement should be the garden house. She noted that the plantings are overgrown and beyond trimming. Their replacement, however, should not be an expensive proposition. The structure also needs painting or staining, and the roof needs cleaning.

It was agreed that work should ideally proceed from Burr Mansion back toward the exedra, and the garden house would be a good place to start.

Third Topic of Discussion: Potential for the garden to be a stop on the Discovery in the Garden (DIG) Tour, planned for Friday, June 3 and Saturday, June 4 this year.

Catherine has had a preliminary discussion with Stephanie Thompson, the DIG chairman. Stephanie would love to help us get exposure and offered to make the garden a stop on the tour this year. She also has someone in mind who may agree to sponsor and care for the pond on the grounds.

The tour will take place on Friday from 10-3, and on Saturday from 10-2. The tour will supply a garden captain and hostesses and handle publicity. Mike responded that he would need to have a representative of his own on site as well.

Possibly a local nursery can assist in beautifying the garden for the two day event by loaning plants and flowers.

Mike pointed out that the draw is the restoration, and suggested the preparation of a two fold or three fold brochure to detail plans and ask for community support.

We discussed having different supporter levels, and the need to develop a tasteful way to thank donors, whether through small plaques in the garden or through some other means.

Catherine suggested that perhaps the tour could move its tented luncheon and boutique to the grounds, instead of the Greenfield Hill Congregational Church.

Mike will check on the dates to see if the grounds are available. If so, Cathy will discuss the possibility with Stephanie.

Fourth Topic of Discussion: Whether or not a current irrigation system is in place.

Mike suggested that we would need to put an irrigation system in so we don't lose tender plantings in their first few years. Ken thinks there is a system in place, and he will check to see what condition it might be in.

Fifth Topic of Discussion: Defining an overall plan and applying costs to it.

Catherine will contact Scott Jamieson of Oliver's Nursery to see if he would be willing to reassess the plan he did in 1996, and bring it up to date, with new costs.

Catherine said at the next meeting we'll discuss getting garden clubs to volunteer to help with clean up and planting. She also asked Mike about the possibility of establishing a foundation for ongoing garden maintenance. He said that it was a possibility.

Ellen suggested that the garden clubs could hold their annual meetings on the grounds, as a way to bring them to the garden and get them interested in plans for its revival.

Action Items:

Mike:

- Will investigate options for stone piers and terra support systems with Laura from Engineering.
- Will check on June 3 and 4 dates for Burr Mansion to see if plans for DIG luncheon can proceed

Catherine:

- Will contact Scott Jamieson to begin discussion of new plans and working up costs for garden
- Will pursue idea of hosting DIG luncheon on Burr Mansion grounds

Ellen:

- Will investigate annual meeting dates for garden clubs
- May know of speakers who could provide a program for the garden during DIG

Ken:

- Will check on current status of irrigation system

Lisa:

- Will pursue the idea of having Westport Magazine do a story on historical garden revitalization as part of the DIG tour, and identify other media opportunities to build a community awareness strategy (ongoing)