

TOW Conservation Commission

Meeting Notes

Meeting of 01/23/06

Begin

7:35 pm

Attending

- Salvatore LaBruna
- Claude Braithwaite – Not attending
- Patricia Owen
- Jon Paul Heurich – Not attending
- Kevin Sumner – Not attending
- Mike Leary
- Kate Fox

Review of Previous Meeting Notes

- Minutes were handed out and read individually. Nominated for approval by Pat. Seconded by Sal.

Official Business

Mr. Lippert, Commission of Public Works and Superintend of Highways is attending the meeting to address some of the members concerns. Issues discussed with him included:

- Tree trimming along the side of the road. Spraying along the sides of the road.
 - Committee
 - What chemical(s) is(are) being sprayed?
 - Is the spraying destroying the wildflowers?
 - How does the spraying co-exist with the Master Plan's provision for "aesthetically appealing roadways".
 - Are homeowners informed when the spraying will occur? If not, then can a method be created to inform them?
 - Mr. Lippert
 - The spray is a selective herbicide (Roundup).
 - It breaks down (does not build up) in the soil.
 - The town uses a very dilute solution, 10% of full strength that can be found in the stores.
 - Town employees don't perform the spraying. The town hires NYS certified sprayers to ensure it is done correctly and to protect the health of town employees.
 - The spray doesn't affect the grass, therefore there are no brownouts.
 - By keeping the weeds under control by spraying, it helps to establish beneficial and attractive ground cover.

- If an individual knows of a particular area that they do not wish sprayed they can call the town and that area will not be sprayed.
 - Areas are sprayed 3 years in a row, but not on the 4th. Create species that are more hardy and limit erosion (i.e. Day Lillies, wild carrot, Myrtle, etc.).
 - The spray is applied with an angled boom (to control the spray area better) and is electrostatically applied (this is why we don't need to use full strength because the electrostatic treatment sticks to the plants better).
 - Councilman King adds that he uses diluted Roundup to knock down weeds before planting. Verifies that it does have zero residue. He uses a low boom to limit drift.
 - (back to Mr. Lippert) The town sprays 8-9 ft high to create a canopy effect that allows sunlight under the trees to help with the growth of the ground cover. The canopy effect also limits the retention of moisture along the sides of the roads that will deteriorate the sides road.
 - The town has responsibility for 25 ft on both sides of the center line (50 ft roadway).
 - The canopy effect also improves the visibility to old stone walls to help with the aesthetics of the town's roads. It can sometimes look bad at first when the vines and other non-desirables are first sprayed and are dying, but once the spraying pattern is established then it will improve the scenic beauty of the roads.
 - The town does not publish when they will be spraying because it would likely create a lot of phone calls that would make the spraying more difficult and limit its effectiveness. Public notification could be accomplished by publishing the spraying schedule on the website. Mr. King says we will come up for something before spraying in June.
 - The highway department's responsibility is to keep the road open for safe travel and the spraying and tree trimming is a critical part of making the roads safe. The trees must be trimmed and the weeds controlled for liability reasons. One problem several years ago cost the town \$4 million because of liability where the roads were not maintained.
 - The town only sprays and mows once a year. If an individual knows of an area that needs mowed more often to improve visibility then they can call the highway department and someone will be sent out to mow the area more often.
- Speed limits
 - Committee
 - Some roads seem to have speed limits that are too high for the local conditions. How can an individual get the speed limit changed if they feel it is inappropriate for conditions.
 - Mr. Lippert
 - The town is too small to be allowed to set our own speed limits. The state establishes speed limits for town roads.
 - The town attempted to lower the speed limit on Goshen turnpike, but the state certified it for 45 mph and insisted that it stay that way.
- Salting / sanding the roads in the winter
 - Committee

- How does salting the roads effect the environment? Has the town considered the effect of salt runoff on local streams and eventually on the Hudson.
 - Mr. Lippert
 - Sand is more of a problem than the salt because it creates silt.
 - The town has purchased a new sweeper machine to remove the sand from the roads in the spring.
- Storm water medallions for drains.
 - Committee
 - We have considered installing medallions on storm drains to alert people to the dangers of dumping hazardous materials into the drains. Does Mr. Lippert think this is a useful? Can the public works department be of any assistance?
 - Mr. Lippert
 - If we will identify locations and he will have employees of the highways guys assist with the installation.
 - Who will supply the medallions? (Kevin can supply some, but only a limited number of medallions).
 - Mr. Lippert also has contacts with the local scout troops and will contact them to see if they would like to participate.
- Historic tree on Brown Road.
 - Committee
 - Has it been finalized that the tree will be saved?
 - Is a plaque to commemorate it being procured?
 - Mr. Lippert
 - He doesn't know about the plan for the plaque. He suggests contacting Dottie Ingrasia.
 - The tree is actually too close to the road. State law says he (as the Superintendent of Highways) is personally responsible for the tree being too close to the road and therefore he could be fired / sued if someone is injured / killed due to a collision with the tree.
 - The town has passed a resolution to not remove the tree and he is respecting the town's desires. But, legally the state law overrides the town law.
- Rail trail.
 - Committee
 - What is the status of the rail trail?
 - Does the maintenance of it present any additional expenses / concerns for the town.
 - Mr. Lippert
 - The trail will run roughly from where 302 crosses 17 to the Bullville post office.
 - There will be a special parking area create near 17, but the primary access is expected to be the park in Circleville. The parking areas will be improved in the park.
 - The trail will primarily "natural" with some additional gravel added in especially muddy areas. Other than that most of the work will be clearing brush and widening to roughly 8 ft.

- There are some concerns of it being a potential crime problem because it will not be patrolled and it exposes the backs of some houses to the trail.
- Tree grants / law / current.
 - Mr. King provides some documentation from other town's on tree conservation.
 - One stressed concept is to plant more indigenous trees instead of foreign ornamental flowering trees.
 - Mr. Lippert checks a developer plans for street trees (if the development borders a town road). He ensures that the developer follows the town's specifications for trees, sidewalks, etc.
 - The town's specifications basically say that the trees should shade the sidewalk, but not the street. It also allows trees in the backslope on roads without faster traffic.
 - Louis Sebestaq, Urban Forester from the DEC Region 3.
 - Mr. Lippert can get him to come to a meeting and speak to us.
 - 845 831-8780 x316.
 - He can help us with a model tree ordinance.
 - Mr. Lippert wants a statement in the town's laws that says trees in developments must be "to the satisfaction of the Commission of Public Works".
- Curbs
 - Committee
 - Do we need 90 degree curbs?
 - Sloped curbs are better for reptiles attempting to cross the street / road.
 - Mr. Lippert
 - He is OK with the sloped curves and even thinks they are better than 90 degree curbs in for some situations.
 - It is easier on the plows. Better for emergency vehicles.
 - Can we supply him with data to show which angle is best? Yes, Karen Strong will provide when she comes to the meeting.
- GIS / GPS system
 - Committee
 - Does the town have a GIS / GPS system?
 - If so, can it be utilized by the committee to create overlays for the open space inventory and to help the planning board understand the effect of developments on the local area?
 - Mr. Lippert
 - Yes, they do have some GIS / SPS capability.
 - It was utilized some several years ago, but the accuracy of both the GIS / GPS and the current local maps were not accurate enough to allow the development of useful overlays.
 - If a more accurate system can be acquired then he is willing to lend his personnel to help with the mapping.
 - The planning department only has a part time engineer and no technicians so there isn't anybody there to help tie everything together.

Future Projects

- Tree cover – Mike will investigate / spearhead.
- Sidewalks – Sal will investigate / spearhead.
- Reduction of pollutants in storm water runoff

- Pace on-line course for land use. Everyone should complete.

Adjourned

Motion to adjourn by Mike. Seconded by Kate. 9:55.

Copies:

- Mike – 7 copies of 3 page meeting notes.
- Sal – 7 copies of 3 sheets of Agenda.
- Sal also made several copies of documents for town officials, but didn't have an exact count at this time.