

Minutes

Watertown Conservation Commission

Lower Hearing Room

Wednesday, April 2, 2008

7:30p.m.

Conservation Commission Members Present: Martin, Bering, Taverna, Fairbairn, Hammett, Rose

Staff Present: Hayward, Collins

Members of the Public Present: See Sign-In Form

1. Public Hearing Continuance – Amendment to the Order of Conditions (DEP 321-0130/WWO-07-12) on the Vegetation Management Plan along the Charles River for a vista pruning of the Saltonstall Monument, Charles River Road filed by the Department of Conservation and Recreation

Dan Driscoll, Planner with the DCR, informed that the DCR's attorney found that the state's jurisdiction in this matter supersedes the local ordinance jurisdiction. Pallotta McDermott instructed that jurisdictional issues would not be discussed. She noted that this proposed project is a public/private effort to preserve and memorialize the Saltonstall Monument.

Driscoll reported that the funding for the project has a June 30, 2008 expiration date. He indicated that the overgrown zelkova trees cover the monument and that a new planting scheme would open up the sight lines to the monument. The proposal will not take down the large Zelkova (22" dbh) as originally planned. However, DCR proposes to take down all the smaller growth saplings. In consultation with the DCR arborist, the area is in need of pruning. He noted that twenty years ago, the zelkovas were planted to replace the Elm trees. However, they did not meet the landscape plan expectations.

Driscoll commented that the one unique element at the site is the statue, not only for the Town but also the Charles River and the regional area. He explained that the DCR does not normally take down mature trees; however, the statue area does need to be opened up with aggressive pruning. He suggested that the 22" dbh will be left during the first phase of the project. He assured that he will plant as many trees as will be removed. He indicated that 25 extra trees will be planted along Charles River Road. Lindens will be selected because of their hardiness. But he commented that he will work with Peter DelTredici to select the best trees for the area which includes White Pines and Oaks.

Driscoll informed that the budget for the project is \$52,000. However the monument restoration cost has not been determined but expects it to be \$48,000. The balance of the monument restoration will be used for landscaping.

Pallotta McDermott explained that the monument was rededicated for the 300th anniversary of the Town. She appreciated the grant to open the monument to the public. She presented an alternative plan which would open the monument yet saves more trees (See attached). She agreed that the Pine oak and some zelkovas could come down.

Ruth Tomasian, Trees for Watertown, requested the statue and trees receive equal treatment. She did not want healthy trees to be taken down. She was concerned about the area not being maintained and the dead trees. She suggested that tree pruning and dead tree removal be done first and then determine what other tree action might be necessary. She felt there were alternative ways to attract people to the monument.

David Jay, 360 Charles River Road, is a landscape architect assisting the DCR and the Solomon Fund. He provided a sketch of the existing area. He stated that the monument was the best in the area. He felt the original setting was lost due to the overgrowth of the plant material. He felt the monument sat in a neglected landscape and no one knows it is there. He felt that it was important that the monument be seen and noticed. He said he does not remove trees lightly. He recommended that the zelkova, plums and pine oaks be removed. Pallotta McDermott agreed.

Roger Erickson, 48 Chester, reported that through a \$500 grant from the Mass Lottery a report was conducted which determined that \$50,000 was needed to restore the monument, and \$70,000 to move it. He recommended that the statue be moved and the trees remain.

Town Council Marilyn Devaney supported the restoration of the monument without delay.

Marilynn Roach, 41 Marshall Street, reported on the history of the statue. (See attached History of the Founders Monument).

Leslie Beck reported that she lived in Watertown for 40 years and did not know of the monument. She supported the removal of the trees to enhance the view of the monument. She felt the choice of Zelkovas was a poor choice, since their maximum growth height blocks the view of the monument.

Audrey Childs, a representative of the Watertown Historical Society, felt that the Founders Monument is the highlight of Watertown's history. She felt that the overgrown trees and poor condition of the monument was an embarrassment. She informed that the awarded grant had to be used by June 30, 2008. The grant cannot be declined because it will negatively affect future grant awards.

Jeffery Belzekian, resident on Adams Ave., supported the improvement of the monument.

Keith Carrigian supported improved pedestrian access to the monument.

Karl H. Neugebauer, 7 Bromfield Street, urged action on the project because of the grant deadlines. He recommended that the trees be pruned and the statue improved.

Herb Nolan, Solomon Fund, reported that the monument is the best work of public art in the area and in Massachusetts. However, because of the overgrown landscaping it is obscured. He felt that the plan presented by Pallotta McDermott could have more visual access. He explained that the Solomon Fund was providing \$17,000 to make improvements to the monument with the remainder coming from the DCR, who have the main responsibility for the project.

Libby Shaw, Trees for Watertown, felt that the shade provided by the trees attract the pedestrians to the area. She wanted to maintain the pine oak. She agreed that the plums be removed. She recommended that trees be maintained as Watertown loses many trees. She was concerned about the heavy equipment at the site when restoring the statue. She recommended that future planting not obscure the squirrel statue. She recommended that a three year maintenance plan be adopted.

Steve Rothstein, President of the Perkins School for the Blind, supports this project. He informed that the Perkins School will plant 5 trees on the Perkins campus to replace the trees that are taken down.

Beth Zwick, 14 Oak Street, representative of the Friends of the Watertown Riverfront, supports improvements at the site.

David Walker, 3 Laurel Street, a sculptor, urged that attention be taken in the restoration of the monument. He cautioned against the use of cement to affix the bas relief to the monument. According to Walker cement pushes the relief off the granite making it easy to remove and melted for the bronze. He also recommended that they not sandblast the monument.

Driscoll responded that Wendy Pearl at Mass Historic is working with DCR in developing a restoration plan. He indicated that he wants to remove both Zelkovas but as a compromise he is open to maintaining one. He requested that Hayward be appointed as the DCR's point of contact on this project regarding the final tree determinations.

Pallotta McDermott inquired if both Zelkovas could be saved. Driscoll noted that the site is so overgrown that it has been ignored by DCR. The area is so shaded that grass does not grow at the site. He indicated that over shadowing is a problem.

Joyce Munger noted that the last time the site and monument was cleaned was at the 325th anniversary of Watertown in 1980. She informed that the Fowle House would be dedicated on May 17th. She suggested that the statue be rededicated after it is restored.

Carol Smith Bernie, avid photographer, and walker, wants vista pruning at the site to see the monument.

David Russo, 115 Irving Street, explained that historic funding is infrequent. He inquired if there was lighting planned for the monument.

Yasianna Spector supported the restoration of the monument.

Michael Donham, Royal Street, supports the restoration of the monument. He requested that a three-year maintenance plan be developed. He suggested that the monument be fixed first and that tree removal be done last.

Driscoll noted that there will 25 extra trees planted along Charles River Road. All the grant money will be used for the restoration of the monument; only the remaining funds will be used for trees.

Nolan challenged the alternative plan presented by Pallotta McDermott – he agreed that the larger zelkova be maintained with a crown pruning, the original selected take-down trees are to be taken down, plus the trees that block the view. He felt that the diagonal was too narrow and it needed to be opened. He agreed to prune and then remove the trees.

Michael Donovan felt that the fewer trees removed was the best option

Rose recommended that all the catch basins have the appropriate run off controls during the project. Driscoll responded that the site will be contained.

Fairbairn stated that the first priority is the restoration of the statue. He informed that trees are a renewable resource. He informed that with the replacement of trees throughout the area, the proposed tree removal around the monument is more like rearranging furniture. He agreed that the Zelkovas were not appropriate for the site. He had no problem with the plan ecologically.

Bering noted that the lengthy legal advice from the Town attorney was not clear about the CC's jurisdiction. He felt that the CC was not the ultimate arbiter of this issue since it does not impact the wetlands protection act.

Hayward noted that the grant and the restoration of the monument is the top priority. He concluded that any tree action could be decided at a later date.

2. Executive Session*

Vote: Hammett moved that the CC go into Executive Session. Bering seconded the motion. The motion was unanimous by roll call vote.

Vote: Martin moved that the CC close the Executive Session. Bering seconded the motion. The motion was unanimous by roll call vote.

3. Old Business

Item	Update status
Whitney Hill Report	The deed was obtained noting the area as "protected parkland." Pallotta McDermott will call the TC president to get Whitney Hill on the May TC meeting.
Recycling Center/Filippello Park	No update. Mt. Auburn backed out of site offer. CC subcommittee (Hammett & Martin) to set meeting with the new Council subcommittee.
Storm Water Monitoring Results	Hammett will present information to Town staff and CC members of the new Storm Water Mgt. for low-impact development at the May meeting.
Water Conservation Program	Pallotta McDermott talked to Mee regarding water conservation program, i.e.: sprinkler system water conservation measures. No progress.
Gore Estate	TC discussed item in Executive Session in December 2006. No update. * See Executive Session
Ordinance	Final Ordinance forwarded to the Town Council Subcommittee. Bering requested final copy.
Pleasant Street Master Plan	Pallotta McDermott to contact Watson on status of Master Plan and to inquire about any changes to Pleasant Street.
Open Space Plan	Presented to Town Council.
Arc View	Hammett to apply for grant to purchase of Arc View.

4. Grant Funding

The CC agreed to write a letter to the Chairman of the Town Council to look into grant funds for the purchase of open space in Watertown.

5. **March Minutes** – approved.

6. **Saltonstall Monument**

The CC agreed to write an acknowledgement letter to DCR that they may proceed to restore the monument, that the storm drains must be protected, and that the proposed take-down trees be identified, and that they inform and obtain prior approval from the CC and Conservation Agent prior to removal.

The meeting adjourned at 10:35 pm