

Minutes of the Resilient Roadways Committee

December 3, 2019

Present: Jeff Cueto (Chair), Jean Vissering (Recording), Jennifer Boyer, Steve Justice, Paul Cate (Tree Warden), Mark Lane. Absent: Jack Pauly, Seth Gardner, Guthrie Perry. Carl Etnier, Selectboard, attended, and Joanne Garton, Dept. of Forests, Parks, and Recreation, attended the second half of the meeting.

Draft Ash Tree Management Plan Status: The October version of the draft Ash Tree Management Plan prepared by Ashley Andrews is now posted on the Town Website. Carl Etnier is reviewing the most recent draft. There is still additional information that will need to be added relative to the specific schedule, work items, and budget. A draft plan is acceptable for the grant application for the pilot project.

Public Education and Citizen Engagement:

Front Porch Forum: Jennifer Boyer posted information on Front Porch Forum on behalf of the Committee. She has received only one direct comment to date, that commenter inquiring as to disposition of the cut trees; there were several postings on the Forum related to ash tree susceptibility to pesticides. The Committee members agreed that we should continue with on-going posts with updates of our work. Jennifer will manage that effort. Jennifer will include a post related to identifying "historic" trees, and will ask if there are trees that people feel warrant treatment because of their presence and distinctiveness in the landscape.

Signpost: The committee will submit a brief summary of our activities for the Town Meeting issue of the Signpost. This will be due around February 1.

Selectboard reporting: Rather than meet with the Selectboard in the near future, we will write a brief report of our efforts for Selectboard review. This can be updated to serve as our committee report in the Town Report (due in January). We assume that some Selectboard members will attend our public hearing and public information event in January (see below).

Public Forum/Hearing: The Committee decided to hold a public forum and hearing on January 13, 2020 at 6:00pm at U-32, if available, or otherwise the Fire Department community room. We will begin with public information about Emerald Ash Borer followed by a hearing soliciting public comments on the trees that will be removed as part of the pilot project at U-32. Joanne will introduce the topic and discuss EAB. Committee members will discuss our inventory, our management planning process, and our pilot project at U-32. We will seek general public comments, but also hold a formal hearing after the public information part of the presentation. The Tree Warden will submit findings and a decision within two weeks after the hearing based on the comments heard. His decision can be appealed to the Selectboard. It is assumed that appeals should be submitted within 2 weeks although this is not specified in statute.

U-32 Pilot Project

Steve Justice is working on a grant application for this project. He has submitted a draft to committee members, which all should review. The grant would be for up to \$15,000 and must be submitted by January 17.

The ash trees along the roadside on U-32 property have been marked and tagged; about 16 are 6-inch dbh and larger from the inventory. GMP is actively cutting ash trees along the powerline on the opposite side of the road and may remove some of the ash trees on U-32 property at the northeast end. Bids for doing the work will be requested. Nate Ebert estimated that it may cost

around \$10,000. Some people have expressed interest in making the wood available to the public. It is assumed that tops will be chipped and the remaining wood left in a designated area in either log length or smaller pieces. This will need to be coordinated with the grounds personnel at U-32; the school is represented by David Hannigan, Director of Buildings and Grounds.

The committee would like to look into the possibility of treating rather than removing some of the larger ash trees that have been flagged on the property. On Thursday, the Committee will take a field trip to look at trees that have already been identified in the inventory as "historic" to be sure they are all trees that merit treatment. Treatment of historic trees may be included in the grant application.

There was also discussion of planting as part of the project. It was agreed that planting does not make sense within the roadside hedgerow, but that there may be places elsewhere such as in the islands between parking rows. Trees will probably need to be 2-2.5" caliper for landscape purposes such as this. For some other purposes such as riparian plantings they can be smaller. Steve Justice is looking into this. Maintenance of the trees will be important and we will need to discuss this with the U-32's buildings and grounds department. More work needs to be done to determine the details of removal, planting and maintenance.

There was a brief discussion of expanding the project along Wheeler and Schoolhouse Roads. The Committee felt this would be a good idea if the budget allows it. Alternatively just hazard trees in these areas might be removed.

Partnership with Montpelier in Treating Historic Ash Trees

This topic was not discussed due to lack of time.

Possible Town Tree Nursery

This topic was not discussed due to lack of time.

Other Business

Carl discussed the Town meeting held last night on the topic of creating a town conservation commission.

Jeff, noting that Carl technically is not a committee member, asked that Carl address this with the Selectboard to see if Seth wanted to be replaced.

Jeff mentioned the Ash Tree Viewer that ANR's IT folks had created and for which Joanne had provided us with a link. Although not available to the general public, it gives the Town access to our inventory data. He also mentioned that CVRPC is still adding the ash tree layer to the web map that is accessible on the Town's website.

Bruce Johnson inquired about the Committee's preferred name. Members liked, Resilient Roadways Committee, since it would allow us to address other roadside issues as time allows or circumstance directs.

Submitted by Jean Vissering 12/4/19