

COUNTRYSIDE PROPRIETARY
GROUNDS COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
May 17, 2023

1) CALL TO ORDER

- a) Meeting Called to Order via remote attendance at 7:04 PM.
- b) Attendees: Penny Francke (Chair), Diane Blunt (Welbourne), Terri Hess (Foxfield), James Krips (Rokeby), Pamela McGraw (Oakridge), Ron McNulty (Morven), Barbara O'Connor (Belmont), Jim White (PMP), Chris Codino (Advantage Landscape)
- c) Absent: Timothy Shamble
- d) Guests: John Geiger, Sara Mascara

2) COMMITTEE ADMINISTRATION

- a) Barb moved to approve the agenda as written; Terri seconded. Approved unanimously by those present.
- b) Pamela moved to approve the April 2023 Meeting Minutes included in the meeting packet; Barb seconded. Approved unanimously by those present.

3) RESIDENT & GUEST PARTICIPATION

- a) Resident Sarah Mascara expressed her concerns about April's herbicide treatment, telling the committee that her dog got sick after briefly walking close to where the treatments were being sprayed. Sarah urged the Committee to consider reducing the use of herbicides across CountrySide; she specifically requested (1) adequate notification, (2) spray less broadly, especially not at playgrounds and near school and more on medians, (3) spray as last resort, (4) more grass seed, (5) focus on soil health, treatments like liming, overseeding with clover, etc. Penny commented that the Committee had previously discussed the need for better notification and signage with Advantage. She also explained that the Committee and the Board had already authorized lime and aeration treatment; however, any additional seeding would have to be postponed until after one, or possibly multiple lime treatments, as the pH of our soil is so low that seeding would not be effective until the pH reaches a more suitable level. Pamela acknowledged Sarah's concerns and asked Chris if any of Advantage's clients used organic alternatives to the herbicides we're currently using. Chris responded that in general, organics are far less effective, and can cost 2.5 – 3 times the current product. Advantage did order new, larger signs to aid in communicating when treatment applications are scheduled. Barb mentioned that in the past when clover was allowed to proliferate, we received complaints from residents who feared that the bees attracted by the clover would cause issues with their children who were allergic to bee stings; she also mentioned that Grounds had received a lot of complaints when we cut back on herbicide treatments in the past. The Committee agreed to consider further investigation into alternative treatment plans but acknowledged that it's a balancing act across varying homeowner demands.

4) ADVANTAGE ITEMS

- a) The Advantage Monthly Report was reviewed. Spring flowers have been installed and will be watered under the contract. Trail maintenance is to start soon. Chris said he'd asked his team lead to confirm that all 27 culverts were being maintained.

b) Requested Proposals

Pamela moved to accept the Advantage proposal for a watering contract at a cost not to exceed \$9,000; Barb seconded. Discussion: Pamela requested that Advantage identify the specific areas to be watered; she asked Chris if any new trees, like the crape myrtle shrubs at the Rokeby tot lot, and the nandina in Foxfield, are under warranty with the watering contract; Chris confirmed that they were. Chris mentioned that the nandinas don't look great and got chewed up by something; may need to replant in the Fall. Contractor needs to control water in order to maintain the warranty. Advantage has been watering the new pond plantings at no charge. Pam and John Geiger have been monitoring and doing supplemental watering; we have been getting rain and lower temps. Advantage's water crew has been going out regularly to check root ball. Pam does not want them overwatered either, since they are native plants. Gator bags: may be able to remove some from existing trees and we bought 4-6 extra last year. Action: PMP to find existing stock of gator bags and determine current inventory and Chris to advise on the placement of gator bags

c) Aeration and Lime update

The Committee asked Chris to advise on when the aeration and liming treatment (previously approved) would take place, and to comment on when a second lime application might be necessary, since we need to understand the cost timing for our budget. Chris said the applications may need to wait so they can be coordinated with the herbicide applications, but he confirmed that we do NOT need aeration every time we do a lime treatment; he will revise the estimated cost of the second lime treatment (requested for budgeting purposes) to eliminate the aeration cost. Chris to discuss the treatment timings with Dave of Advantage and get back to us with a tentative schedule, as well as any additional projections on the subsequent lime treatments that may be required.

d) June herbicide treatment(s) update

The Committee stressed to Chris that the larger, more prominent signs must be used for future herbicide treatments, and more notice needs to be given to PMP before the applications, so we can better inform residents. Chris said the next application is planned to be pelletized, which has the advantage of allowing pedestrian and pet traffic to enter the area right away (no drying time). Chris said a dog would have to eat a large quantity of the pellets for it to be harmful. He did note that spray applications are generally more effective than pelletized, as the spray gives more uniform coverage, and he said that broadleaf treatments are almost always applied via spray. Residents with questions about any of the treatments are advised to contact PMP.

- e) CountrySide sign rendering looks nice, for entry on Algonkian before Foxfield. Chris requested a concept approval prior to preparing a proposal. Liriope already existing. The evergreen is a dwarf red holly, probably 4-5 ft and will be pruned to maintain shape and size. The slope is very severe and the larger holly on the low side will balance the smaller existing grass on the high side. Barb is concerned about deer eating the sedum. Penny asked Chris to work up some alternatives in the proposal. Pamela will look into alternatives to Sedum. Pamela thought the concept is on point.

5) POND ISSUES

- a) Pamela provided an update on the Earth Day/Pond Grant project, accompanied by pictures from the day's event. A total of 41 volunteers, including 18 students from Potomac Falls High School, participated in planting efforts at the pond. The Committee thanks Pamela and Barb, team leads on the project, as well as Diane and Terri, who worked half-day shifts. A special thanks to resident John Geiger, who organized the volunteer efforts, and continues to work with volunteers on watering efforts; John also posted the new tree locations on the Department of Forestry website, as required for the grant. Pamela will continue to work on the administrative steps required for grant close-out, including arranging a visit to the site from a DOF representative. The new fountain at the pond was turned on as part of the Earth Day/Pond Day celebrations.

6) PMP REPORT

- a) Monthly Financial, Major Projects, and Invoice Tracking reports were reviewed. At Penny's request, Jim W will be maintaining a spreadsheet tracking Expected Expenditures, so that we keep within our budget when considering additional proposed enhancements.
- b) Tree list: Jim W is carefully tracking storm damage versus tree removal for other reasons, so that we account for the costs against the appropriate budget line item.
- c) Jim W will work with the PMP crew and Advantage to clean up damaged plantings in the Algonkian Parkway median, and get a quote from Advantage on recommended replacements.

7) OLD BUSINESS

- a) NVM due to complete punch list items on 5/25/23.
Jim W is assembling quotes for the Neighborhood Signs Reserve project. The Reserve project funding is roughly \$13.5K, which will likely be insufficient to address the 13 signs targeted in the Reserve Study. Once bids are received and tabulated, a decision will need to be made on the scope of the project. GC members can see the bids received to date on the Google Drive under Grounds>Projects>Signs. Meanwhile, there have been several requests to repair one of the signs that's in bad condition. Several signs are in similarly bad condition, so to address the request in a manner equitable across all neighborhoods, the GC discussed doing interim repairs to a small subset of signs until the Reserve Project can be begun. Diane made a motion directing PMP to evaluate the condition of ALL neighborhood signs listed on the Google Drive spreadsheet, and to select the 4-8 signs in the worst condition that, in PMP's judgment, can benefit from interim repairs, and to have the PMP crew execute those repairs on the selected signs. Barb seconded the motion; the motion was approved unanimously by those present.

8) NEW BUSINESS

- a) 5 crape myrtle shrubs planted last fall at the Rokeby tot lot have disappeared, damaged by children climbing on them; the shrubs were replaced by slightly larger plants. Pamela suggests adding inexpensive trellises linked by chains to separate the shrubs and discourage climbing on the shrubs. PMP will install the trellises and chains.

HOA Native species: Pamela reported on the group of landscaping/grounds committees from various LoCo HOAs who are meeting to discuss issues of common interest, including encouraging the preferential planting of native species and ways to address invasive species. The group is proposing a joint appeal to the Loudoun County Board of Supervisors; Pamela will keep us posted as the initiative progresses.

9) INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

- a) None.

10) ADJOURN

- a) Ron moved to adjourn; Pamela seconded. Motion approved unanimously by all those present. Meeting adjourned at 8:44 PM.
- b) Next regular meeting is tentatively scheduled to be held remotely at **7:00 PM on Wednesday, June 21, 2023.**