

City of Geneva, NY Green Committee meeting Feb 20, 2024
Welcome Center, 5:30pm

Present: Richard Cox (Co-Chair), Anne Hoyt (Co-Chair),
Julia Hoyle, Rick Hoyt, Pat Keefe, Larry Campbell, Pat Wallace,
Special Guests Jill Byington (Horticulturist), Joe Venuti (DPW)

JV: Thank you for your committee work, maintenance work at the lakefront, banner/[poster](#) work (recently submitted by Anne and Jill), vegetation control, median, we struggle to keep up, DPW can do better, we had a union complaint regarding safety of workers in the Rts 5&20 medians, avoid grievance, NYS DOT involved, not safe especially for volunteers, want to be able to use chemicals to control weeds, contacted TruGreen (general groaning) who want to use a pre-emergent chemical treatment, combination of chemical treatments.

AH & JB met Friday and submitted [notes](#).

JV: the DRI contract is not closed out, there's still outstanding work/payment, therefore can't remove plantings to re-locate them elsewhere (as Jill suggested) or pave the median over with NYS funding involved. We mowed the weeds.

JB: weeding would decrease the need to mow.

JV: mowed April-Nov in 2023, busy year, too busy (to weed). There were several mulch fires in the medians, plants got run over by vehicles, Jill did a great job going through plantings (to evaluate them).

JH: how far in advance do chemical sprays get scheduled?

JV: spraying must be done only by licensed applicators.

AH: I know that Jim Engle is expensive but he's more knowledgeable than TruGreen.

JB: TruGreen will be a problem; they don't communicate with us.

JV: they're on a tight schedule with multiple clients.

AH: Jim would work well with Jill.

JB: the only proper place in the lakefront park to use pre-emergent chemicals is sidewalk cracks, which don't concern me.

JV: what about the rip rap?

JB: even worse to use any chemicals there because they would go right into the lake! (drinking water source for 100,000 people, including Geneva)

JV: JE would need to have an applicator's license.

Others: he does.

JB: JE is very knowledgeable about invasives

JV: I'll send the list of proposed work, appreciate the opportunity, it won't get easier over time.

JB: it will! The more mature the plantings, the easier to manage. Ask TruGreen if they know what (plants) they're dealing with. Did they list the specific plants they're targeting?

JV: no. we need to be cognizant of cost.

JB: if we (BID) give median responsibility to the City, okay, but the lakefront is another matter.

AH: thank you, Joe.

JV: I appreciate your interest.

LC: when/why cut down the tall grass?

JV: we let it stand over winter to benefit pollinators, beneficial insects.

LC: keep educating the public so they understand.

PW: agreed.

PK: would TruGreen come even if it's about to rain?

JV: there are regulations regarding wind maximums, rain.

JB: there are burn down chemicals which act within 24 hrs. pre-emergents are only for seeds in the soil, not grasses. The weeds in the median are barnyard grass (which went to seed last year), so pre-emergent is good for there. If they use burndowns, they'll kill good plants, too.

JR: we passed a regulation against synthetic chemical herbicides about 4 years ago as the goal, but with an exceptions clause.

JB: TruGreen would be bad for the lakefront due to their use of broadcast spraying.

JV: they propose using Final XL.

AH: TruGreen should be allowed to spray pre-emergents on the medians only.

JV: BID different from City staff. Will send lists, talk to JE and others, including TruGreen and at least one other commercial company from Rochester.

JB: I don't like lawn companies because of their sprays.

AH: the Resource Recovery Park operation on Doran Ave, this year operated by City, including vermiculture trenches, need heavy equipment but Nardozzi let it slide and it's not always open during the hours when it's supposed to be.

JV: Nardozzi operated under Closed Loop, had the contract, when that contract ended, didn't re-negotiate. The trenches look the way they do (empty) because they were harvested. There's no 2024 budget for this, so the City had to pay for this operation w/o vermiculture income. Heard from at least 2 different vermiculture companies interested in this venture. It's open Wednesdays and Saturdays but people leave off things in plastic bags Wednesdays that cost our staff time (\$) on Saturdays to pick out by hand.

RC: what two other companies?

JV: I'm not at liberty to say.

AH: it should cost less to operate the RRP than the fee for trash, so it should pay for itself.

JV: collection revenue must be greater than cost. It takes 6-8 months for the vermiculture trenches to produce their compost, but having no leaves at this time of year is a problem.

JB: I stock up leaves from the fall to use in winter.

JR: make it a full transfer station so it'll turn a profit: recycling, composting, little trash, less truck traffic.

JV: the cost wasn't in the 2024 budget. Big ticket items: compactors are \$56k each, do we rent or buy? The Town has two. We do have electricity and water. Our tipping fee is waived due to County agreement. We've had a couple of meetings over the last 2 months. The DPW budget is 12% less than last year but we want to do more.

AH: I want to go before the Council to express the GGC wishes.

LC: chipping?

JV: yes, including branches collected from HWS, \$15k to grind, but if the company that chips them takes the mulch, less. Up from \$4k 3 yrs ago. There is a mulch pile....

AH: what's the status of storm water diversion?

JV: agreed to work w NYS which will provide free technical support for [DWSP2](#) near drinking water supplies, help create plan, meet, learn to implement plan, signed up, got list of 30 requirement we must meet, creation of task force w City Manager.

AH: Mission Zero will include a rain barrel workshop this year. would you consider storm sewer rain gardens on the streets to divert Castle Creek (to decrease flooding)?

JV: Brook St to North St is under consideration.

AH: retention ponds?

JV: would consider rain swales in right-of-way. Byrne Dairy installed theirs themselves to our specifications.

AH: install on creek side of street. Would slow traffic (which would be a good thing). Remove the pipes which channel rain into creek and redirect rain into rain gardens in street bump outs.

RC: wasn't there supposed to be a new traffic light across from the hotel?

JV: NYS DOT determined that there was no need for one at the Elizabeth Blackwell corner.

There has been at least one fatality.

JV: "Traffic calming" is the lingo.

JR: thank you, Joe. ReUse report: progress! There's a grant! GGC members took a field trip to the ReUse center in Ithaca a few years ago – broken lamps are repaired for re-sale, clothing, deconstruction of buildings for materials to sell/reuse, keep out of landfill. Monday 2/26/24 there'll be an organizational meeting at the Community Center. Speakers include Diane Cohen (Ithaca's ReUse Center Director) and Mark Venuti (Town of Geneva Supervisor). Fix-It clinic every day! Employment, training, living wage. Need location. Have 12 posters to spread around Geneva. Will have TV coverage, was interviewed on local radio this morning, will be on Connections with Evan Dawson (WXXI, Rochester).

AH: regarding losing our liaison to the Council, Steve Valentine (Mayor) said that liaisons (previous to JR) didn't attend meetings so has now made that voluntary but no one on Council volunteered to be the GGC liaison so we're welcome to represent ourselves by attending Council meetings and speaking, so I will.

RC: no high school students came today. Rowan MaGee (Geneva High School Green Club President) emailed that the club can use their money for Mission Zero contest

prizes. Need to brainstorm for project ideas, specifics, e.g. a climate change challenge (poetry, art, song, etc.)

JV: Jim Norwalk is on the Shae Tree Committee, right?

RC: yes, and they're doing their sapling give-away at MZ again this year. Would you like to join us?

JV: I'll help with the Shade Tree Committee.

AH: I would like to remind Council about MZ, ask to change City Code to allow for rain gardens in front yards, Resource Recovery Park, Community Choice Aggregate electricity deadline missed, want to bring that back up. The Town of Geneva had invited the City to join them but Council delayed and missed the deadline. Maybe we could find another group with whom to join forces to make a big enough project.

RC: the more people in the negotiating block, the cheaper the electric rate.

AH: try to find out before the Council meeting (next week).

JH: what's the rate lock length of time?

RC: 2-3 yrs. Liaison possibilities? John Brennan is on Zoning Code Enforcement and the Shade Tree Committee.

LC: Jan was good, could argue for us, not just present.

JV: only get 3 minutes. Regarding plans for the corner of Castle St and Oak St, the owner is also a developer and proposed a 2-story building with commercial businesses on the ground floor and 10-12 rental units upstairs. We asked if he would rotate the building to have more of a Castle St presence. Working w Dan Long, local architect. City wants burned out building demolished. There's a new economic development director. The laundry mat is mostly intact. We will consider daylighting Castle Creek.

AH: Council member Whitfield said it would be nice if there were a small playground there. Several years ago we surveyed that neighborhood asking residents if they had access to a park. Many people said no.

JV: you can ask ahead of time to have more than 3 minutes.

PW: maybe deconstruct the buildings as opposed to demolish them, salvage materials for reuse?

JV: maybe.

PW showed a couple of rough preliminary ideas for GGC and MZ logos. Work in progress.

RC: meeting date for MZ planning? Next Tue? 5:30? Welcome Center? Probably.

JV: we just bought a new 60" zero-turn battery-powered commercial mower, could bring to MZ.