

Arlington Tree Committee Report to Town Meeting - May 16, 2011

The current Arlington Tree Committee was appointed by the Selectmen in June 2010 to promote the planting of Town trees and, working closely with the Town Tree Warden, to advise on all tree-related matters.

Committee Members:

Mary Ellen Aronow, Eliza Burden, Lisa Decker, Andrew Fischer, Patti Muldoon, Sally Naish (Chair), Walter Phillips, Ed Trembly, Greg Watt, Corinna Vanderspek
with Jim Dodge and Clarissa Rowe

Activities To Date:

• Developed a Mission Statement and Objectives:

Mission Statement: To promote the protection, planting, and care of trees in Arlington.

Current Objectives:

- Increase the number of site-appropriate public trees
- Promote community awareness of trees and their benefits
- Provide a website about trees and related Town services.
- Provide training in tree selection, planting, and care
- Develop a list of recommended trees
- Raise funds to support the Tree Committee's mission
- Explore the feasibility of a town-wide tree inventory.

• Established a presence at community events, such as Town Day and EcoFest. These events afforded the opportunity for Committee members to introduce themselves and their objectives to the general community. They will continue to participate in such events to raise awareness of the Committee's efforts and the need for more trees in Arlington.

• Re-developed the original Tree Committee website into a resource for a broad range of tree-related information. Included is information specific to Arlington's trees, as well as that pertaining to trees in general, such as their planting, care and maintenance. There are also links to urban tree resources and information about the Trees Please account. The Committee is grateful for the support of Dan Foskett,

who developed the website for the earlier Tree Committee, and to Alan Jones for his help in switching to the current format.

“ Supported the Town’s efforts to halt NSTAR’s deforming damage to Town trees. NSTAR has been trimming both Town- and privately-owned trees in ways that are both unsightly and potentially damaging to the health of the trees. Brookline, Watertown and Arlington have all banned NSTAR from further tree trimming in their towns until mutually-agreed criteria can be negotiated. As of this date, this ban remains in effect in Arlington and any violations by NSTAR or their contractors should be reported to the police. The Committee considered the possibility that NSTAR’s hiring practices may exacerbate the situation: NSTAR currently pays their contracted arborists “by the mile”, i.e. the faster they work, the more money they make. In a majority vote the Committee supported a bill requiring NSTAR to hire on a “prevailing wage” basis. The bill was filed in January 2011; Ken Donnelly served as sponsor.

“ Organized a pilot program for volunteer-based planting of Town trees, with the support of the DPW’s Tree Division. Given the absence of funds in the Town budget to cover the cost of planting street trees this year, the Committee organized the purchase of 40 trees using funds from the Trees Please account. This fund was established to enable the public to contribute specifically to the purchase of street trees for the Town. Monies raised are supplemented with funds from the DPW budget, when available, and fees paid as compensation for the removal of a healthy street tree. Under this year’s pilot program, about 40% of the trees were planted by the homeowners who had requested them; some had also contributed to the cost of the tree, thereby helping to replenish the Trees Please account. The remaining trees were planted by volunteers. Included in this group were members of Cub Scout Troop 306 and Boy Scout Troop 313, and Peter Lundstrom and the Workplace Program at Arlington High School.

Tree planting day (April 30) started at 8:00 am with a demonstration by John Deutschmann of the Tree Division of how to plant a bare root tree. About 40 homeowners and volunteers attended the demonstration, after which the volunteers dispersed to their assigned locations to await the delivery of a tree to their site. Members of the Tree Division went from site to site digging holes with a back hoe and delivering the trees.

The Committee is encouraged by the success of this year’s tree planting program and would like to thank Jim Dodge, Tree Warden, and his staff and Selectman Rowe for their support and guidance. For future years, the Tree Committee is considering the development of a network of precinct-based subcommittees that would work with the Tree Committee to coordinate tree planting each year in their own precinct.

There are a variety of ways in which community members can help the Committee enhance Arlington's streetscape:

1. Suggest locations where trees are needed (using the Town website Request/Answer Center).
2. Volunteer to buy, plant and/or care for a street tree.
3. Make a donation to the Trees Please account. Donations may be made in person at either the Treasurer's office in the Town Hall or the DPW office at 51 Grove Street, or in the form of a check made payable to Trees Please - Town of Arlington and mailed to Trees Please Fund, c/o Teresa DiBenedictis, Department of Public Works, 51 Grove Street, Arlington, MA 02476

This report and a variety of other tree-related information can be found at the Tree Committee's website: www.ArlingtonTrees.org