

BELMONT HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
PLEASANT STREET PLANTING SUBCOMMITTEE

Meeting [6-7p.m.] on 5/7/08, Belmont Town Hall

Present: Mike Smith, BHDC co-chair; Paul Bell (Pleasant St. resident,) Peter and Peggy Guinness (Pleasant St. residents), Laura Simmons (Belmont Tree Committee) and Arleyn Levee (BHDC).

The purpose of this subcommittee is to address plantings in the various spaces created along the sidewalk areas within the Historic District. In some places, from the Women's Club to #593 Pleasant Street no sidewalks were laid, resulting in spaces of variable widths and terrain between the historic stone walls and the granite curb. In other areas, narrower strips varying in width were retained between the wall and the concrete sidewalk. For preservation purposes, the BHDC had requested that the sidewalk concrete not be attached to the historic material of the stone walls and that special care be taken in re-grading in the spaces abutting the walls to ensure wall stability.

The Mass Highway project for Pleasant Street calls for hydro-seeding the unpaved areas and tree planting in selected locations. At the time of this meeting, the exact dates for this installation were unknown. [The hydro-seeding was done mid May.]

Laura Simmons noted the various experiences of the Belmont Tree Planting committee in terms of financial arrangements, maintenance practices, species selection, etc. With the current difficult financial conditions, there is not enough municipal funding for the various public plantings. She observed that the Belmont Garden Club (Janet Demers, current president) has a subcommittee (Joy Bittner, chair) that deals with planting/maintaining the various islands, 'deltas', which provide attractive accents at several road intersections throughout the town. Much of this is funded through the Garden Club with some maintenance help from the Town.

Laura discussed plant material, primarily perennials, which would be hardy for the difficult conditions along the heavily trafficked route and which would not interfere with pedestrian travel. She noted certain daylilies, among other materials, which would survive and meet the needed conditions.

We discussed the need to develop a consistent plant palette which could be recommended to the homeowners affected by these spaces so that within the Historic District there could be an effective decorative treatment to define and enhance this special area, while at the same time being very easy to maintain (since these areas are the responsibility of the homeowner). Additionally, we discussed possible funding through some kind of fundraising venture and developing a community/neighborhood group to install the plantings.

It was left that we would try to make some sketches on the Town's base map for the reconstructed Pleasant St. to reflect our ideas and would develop a list of the appropriate plant materials.