Meeting Minutes 9.19.24

In Attendance: Patty Friday, Phil Fraley, Ryan Ehrlich, Brian Crooks, Megan Gold, Deborah Ormay, Phyllis J. Anderson

Megan:
A couple of years ago as we looked at the plan to address invasive species, the Japanese Knotweed was the most important priority as a seasonal project. In year two, we continued with the treatment of injecting knotweed. Garlic Mustard is a long-term project. Stilt grass is a low priority and August through October is the season.

Plan of attack is to move towards the Commons. On the second page of Megan's Report, it refers to garlic mustard and experts suggest that it is pulled out before it flowers. You can just leave it on the ground after it is pulled. It prevents natives from establishing. Fencing for replanting may be needed and an area has been identified to replant where the knotweed has been removed and remediated.

Brian and Megan walked the woods and determined that 25-50 trees don't need fencing. This area is up at the top near the railroad. 50 trees is equal to 97 linear feet, and we would plant this amount because all trees will not survive. The goal is to explode the area with fast growing trees. Fencing is expensive and tubes will be better for this project.

NEXT STEP: Plant 50 trees for about $2000 for the site. Spring is best because the herbicides were used and still are in the ground. The tubes that the Street Department have aren't appropriate. Diverse trees would be a good mix. Allegheny Land Trust (ALT) doesn't water the sites they plant. Churchill has a large fenced in site. No plans for more pawpaws. Just to be clear, the meadows is where the leaf and brick pile is located. Drew Richards of the Commons is interested in assisting with the pollinator garden. He agreed to be our contact in the Commons. Megan's plan is to keep attacking the knotweed.

Brian:
Aspen trees are unofficially ordered. They are moved in 15-gallon containers. Two people can carry them. They are fast growing and in a grove, they are very attractive. We need to match a site with the conditions to plant them. A suggestion would be to put them in the meadow area or facing the Fairways. Brian will confirm the order in the next week or two. The containers can be planted early in the fall. Brian is busy from November to December. He is willing to loan the tools. He should be available in late October. Allegheny Arborscapes is used for site preparation. They dig holes for planting trees. They use an auger, and they will be in Oakmont for the OBP soon.

John is concerned about planting in the meadow, and he does not want any more trees in the meadow.

Brian said Aspens like sun. we should plant them in clumps. They have a seed source to create colonial roots, popping up shoots. The main stems change over time. The trees will replace the knotweed. Shade also helps keep the knotweed down. Open space is good. Don't over plant the meadows. Brian informed that we cannot hire Ephraim as he is an employee of WPC. He does have a space in DHW that is in his work territory and perhaps we can use his services as part of the Natural Heritage Program. In regard to the report that he gave the borough, we are able to use information from the report to distribute to the public. Levi Cannon of DCNR's focus is on urban forests, we will be able to utilize his services to train volunteers. Ephram maintains a plot in DHW as part of the Natural Heritage Program, and we are able to quote from Ephram's preliminary report.

There is an area by the Fairways that is flat and is ready for a fence as natural restoration is already occurring there. The area is located at the Pennsylvania Avenue entrance and to the left. There are a lot of red and white oaks dropping acorns and saplings are growing now. We need the fence before the deer come to eat them in the winter to protect the area. This year the red oak acorns are very large. Getting materials to that location is very easy as it is right by the entrance. If we plant about an acre, it would be super visible. Signage should be used to educate why the fence is there. This is why the DHW Directors are doing what we are doing. We need strong gauge fencing, volunteers used to maintain invasives. Also, Oak Forest is prime for fencing. Fencing won't be this year because building is extensive. A RFP for Allegheny Arbor Scape is suggested to see how much they will charge to build the fence. Brian will ask WPC for a budget to build a fence.

Next Step: prepare for next year's budget. Budget money was asked to council to carry over any unused funds to next year 2025. We can move the fence. We need to set realistic goals for council.

Deborah says: be a registered speaker at council meeting. $50,000 is approximately the amount of a one-acre fence.

Phil:
Phil suggested Allegheny Fence . Fence a portion now and stretch it more later. Phil will help with the Aspen planting and coordinate with Brian to get the guards that can be used for the Aspens. Megan, Brian, Ryan and Phil will position the trees. Site prep costs a lot of money. We can only water at the meadows. Penn State Extension gave stilt grass, pollinator garden, master water stories where we can pick native and deer resistant plants from the Audubon Society. Tree Pittsburgh and others have plant sales. Now we need to determine what plants and develop a plan for spring and fall plantings. We need at least 6 months to get the herbicides out of the ground. Brian suggested a procedure for removal and planting. Put up educational signs.

Phil has work books to share regarding planting community forests. He mentioned Bridge #1 needs rebuilt and work with the DHW committee to get bridge work and riparian buffer work at the same time. The goats in the woods is a great public relations tool, but they will not be useful for our cause.

Ryan: More coordinated efforts are needed. We can use google maps for public relations of where projects will occur. We can use a computer model. Phyllis suggested using EPD to create an electronic map with a grid that will overlay the already created map. Ryan will research to see how to create an electronic map. Are the trail names correct? Trail signage would be very useful. Trail names should be consistent, in the event of an emergency, someone could call for help and direct first responders to their location. Brian suggested a color-coded trail system. All agreed this should be easy to do.

NEXT STEPS: Identify trail names. How to handle trails in the future. The Parks Department has a water buffalo. The bridge is the only project in the woods. The bench project is paused, but John said there are 4 benches at the park to be placed at the meadow. The Lion's Club put benches in DHW. A couple of benches are located in the meadow. When the group goes into the woods, they can look for places to put the benches.

Review:
Megan to order 50 trees for spring plantings
John to do a DHW Park Walk Through, tell us a list of safety equipment needed for the spring.
We need safety equipment. Mike Huber does know how to use a chain saw. If John does take care of something, he should list it on the exit report. He is to share insight and perspectives of the woods. As of right now, 7 employees can meet the needs of the woods, as the woods evolve. John said trees are falling, trees on trails is a condition, and he will give the results of his assessment.