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CITY OF SALEM, MASSACHUSETTS

ROBERT K. MCCARTHY

ACTING MAYOR

Salem Beautification Committee:

Chair: Henry Gulergun

Vice Chair: Ariana Lema-Driscoll

Secretary: Kim Parkinson

City Liaison: Janelle Rolke

3/14/23 – Zoom Meeting due to weather

**Present:** Sandi Power, Mary Ellen Halliwell, Sam Fiore, Zachary Schaad, Ariana Lema-Driscoll, Henry Gulergun, Kim Parkinson, Jason Lang, Janelle Rolke (City Liaison)

**Guests:** Charlene Bailey, Joanne Kowalski

**Agenda:**

* Mission Statement
* Approval of February 2023 Minutes
* Old Business:
  + Bottle Bill (Janelle Update)
  + Traffic Island Mapping Update
* Lady of Salem Updates
* Traffic Island Updates
* Traffic Island Sponsorships
* Sub-Committee Breakout Discussions
* New Business

**Mission Statement:** The mission of the Salem Beautification Committee is to assist the City in

developing and pursuing initiatives that promote the beautification of the City. The goal of the

Committee is to create civic pride and to motivate the City's diverse population to participate in

the beautification process. The Committee will identify areas in need of improvement, will create

programs, recruit volunteers and will secure the funding resources to achieve its goals.

**Minutes Approved from February Meeting unanimously**

**Old business:**

* Bottle Bill Updates (Janelle)
  + Janelle and Henry participated in a call to get background around the bottle bill. Currently in the embryo stage, has not been assigned to any committee yet. They can send the house version dockets (2 of them) for review. Committee meetings have not been scheduled yet but it will be assigned to the TeleCom Utilities and Energy Committee.
  + We were asked to ask legislatures to add names to the bill – currently less than 20 co-sponsors. People should submit letters and raise awareness of the bottle bills. Scheduled for July 31, 2024 so no updates at this time besides it is coming.
  + Manny Cruz has written to Henry saying he supports it but has not co-sponsored yet.
  + Need to contact our state Senator Lovely to understand stance – in the past, she has been supportive of similar bills.
  + The bills a proposing increasing the deposit fee for what already has a deposit and will add a deposit for the smaller items that don’t currently have a deposit. Not banning nips
  + Has been very well received in MA so far.
* Traffic Island Mapping:
  + No updates since the last meeting. Sandi and Brooke to connect and finalize.
* BComm Website:
  + Henry is still working on it, should be complete soon.
  + Should have a name and email form included for volunteers.
* BComm Facebook page:
  + Henry and Janelle are waiting to hear back from Lisa, not having any luck.
  + Ariana to reach out to Facebook to see what can be done.

**Ladies of Salem Update** –

* Scheduled DPW install will be Wed, May 24th.
* Another new lady has been sponsored by the Salem Historical Tours – 4 new ladies, 29 in total.
* All new of the 4 artists have figureheads and backboards.
* Working with Brooke to get the mapping done and QR codes, has been delayed.
* Would like to get information added to the website that is in progress, Mary Ellen to send info to Henry and Ariana.

**Traffic Island Updates**

* Met with Nancy Morgan, who has fostered a “Butterfly Garden” using native plants out of concern for climate change. She gave them thousands of seeds to help with this so they’re going to try and plant some of those and spread the word. Encouraging people to do what they can to bring back the butterflies in their yards.
* Need to confirm what beautification is - Concerned that the beautiful traffic islands are not doing well against weeds and trash in the streets/curbs/etc. Would like to have a better partnership with the city.
  + We need to get the website up and running to get volunteers that we can reach out to but we also need to recruit the city. Katie from DPW gave us hope last month.
    - DPW was out cleaning Temperance Park last week which gives hope as well.

**Traffic Island Sponsorships**

* Janelle has compiled a list of all sponsored and unsponsored islands and sent contracts to all of them. Will be reaching out to the Chamber of Commerce and Main Streets to encourage them to sponsor some of our islands. Washington Street/Mill Hill is one we’re hoping to get sponsored (maybe Katie?). Waiting on the MOUs to come back to see where we’re at.
* A few spots on Lafayette St and Washington St are available and we’re hoping to have businesses sponsor it as they will pay more.
* As of today, we’ve received 7 yes’ for renewals. This time last year the letters weren’t even sent out yet so it’s great progress!
* There are 9 islands that are confirmed that we don’t have sponsors for in 2023.
  + There are a few islands that have been asphalted over – may not be 9, Sandi to double check.
* Janelle sent Sandi and Charlene a letter that was used a few years ago that can be directed to new businesses. Once Janelle has that and tidies it up, she can send it out to Salem Main Streets, Rotary, Chamber, etc.
  + Anyone on the committee could also use this template to send it to new businesses they have connections with.
  + We should add a column to the existing spreadsheet of all of the islands to show if anyone sends a personalized letter to a connection they have in the community.
* Need to get the signs ordered for new clients as soon as possible.
* We reserve the ones downtown for businesses as they are higher cost and we take care of. Neighborhood ones are lower cost and up to them to manage. We should focus on the downtown ones to make sure those are paid for and looking good.
* All of the signs still say Kim Driscoll – just stickers that need to be taken off. The committee will need to help peel them off, Janelle to reach out to DPW to make sure they’re ready in May. Once the new mayor is elected, we can address if they will want their name to be put on or not.

**Sub Committees:**

* Traffic Island – Sandi
  + Sandi needs volunteers – will get more when we set up the website but we need to give them dates/times to plan for.
  + Generally Tues through Thurs but this is decided on Sundays. If Sandi can let the group know when each Sunday, we can send out an email to the volunteer list and let people know.
* Grant Writing – Jason
  + The grant is to allocate funds to communities that are able to identify areas that could have pollinator friendly gardens planted.
  + In 2021 Janelle partnered with the Salem Community Gardens because they had just finished the Palmer Cove area and they identified a great space that had amazing opportunity, so Janelle helped write the grant and they received it!
  + This year, Janelle is unable to write the grant so Janelle is leaning on the BComm to see if there is a good spot to sponsor and Jason can help write it.
  + There is a lot of writing that will go into it but we need to tell the story behind the why. What will take the most effort is identifying where. Need somewhere where it can run free without chemicals and without getting in the way of traffic.
    - Nancy Morgan suggested along the bicycle path along Canal St.
      * This area is typically littered with trash, may want to think about this in the grant. Do we need more bins?
    - Temperance Park, Lafayette Park, Bewitched Plaza, the Common, Bike path at Lafayette/Loring – other ideas
  + If anyone is interested in helping, contact Jason directly.
* Great Salem Cleanup – Janelle/Kim
  + Janelle created the registration link on Facebook and Instagram – still need to email the volunteers (will send this week)
  + 12 responses so far.
  + Janelle walked us through the form, need to look at splitting up MBTA/YMCA.
  + Need to get the word out to the community to get people signed up!
  + In the beginning of April we will review the groups and how many people are signed up to ensure there are enough supplies.
  + We want to do a volunteer appreciation after the event – like a pizza party at the common or Derby square. Could we raffle off anything that would be green and on brand? Have done things at Notch in the past too. Zach will be leading this effort.
  + Want to do a 3 min video to let people know what to expect and how to handle things like needles, homeless encampments, etc. Do’s and don’ts, when we’re meeting afterwards.

**Traffic Island Committee Report –** Full update from Sandi Powers

**Promotion of Native Plants on our traffic islands and throughout Salem:**

The T.I. Program volunteers met in February with Nancy Morgan, a South Salem resident who has created and fostered a “Butterfly Garden” over many years, using native plants such as the various milkweeds to nurture their young and others to attract and feed the adults.  Out of concern about Climate Change, we are using this as a springboard for BCom’s promotion of native plants throughout Salem, as well as in our traffic islands.  Climate Change is displacing birds and insects, among others, and combating it is well within our ability to locally wage battle.

**Interactive Traffic Island Computer Map:**  Charlene and I met in February with Brooke and discussed ways to work out a map, based on Google Maps, that would allow anyone to visually travel around Salem to locate our sponsored traffic islands.  Brooke has not been available since that time so no report yet on its progress.

**Unsponsored Traffic Island**:  Janelle has compiled a list of sponsored and unsponsored islands and has sent out the contracts (MOU) to last year’s sponsors, awaiting their return of the signed contracts to see whether there will be additional unsponsored islands to add to the list.  There have already been a few returns.

     A letter has been devised that Janelle, our City Liaison, will forward to the City’s business associations: i.e., the Chamber of Commerce, Main Streets, and the Rotary, reminding them of our Traffic Island Program and urging them to encourage their membership to take part in the beautification of Salem by sponsoring an island.   The Rotary itself at one time sponsored the plaza area on Riley Plaza, and it is hoped they might again sponsor an island.

**Other Beautification Possibilities**:  There is a saying that beauty is In the eye of the beholder.  We should talk about the many physical things in a community that detract from what otherwise might be lovely, that obscure the beauty that exists there.  Examples are well-planted traffic islands surrounded by weedy curbs and sidewalks, trees and telephone poles surrounded by crabgrass and litter, intersections with raised cobblestone islands inundated with weeds and crabgrass.  There are surely others.

This has led us to wonder whether it is time for the members of BCom to take time out for a session to discuss beautification-as-a-whole, where they are seeing the ugliness, and what we as a committee can do to help the City to see it and fix it, to increase the City’s support of methods to combat the anti-beautification around us.  Katie Nieman of the DPW last week offered some hope.

**Going Forward:**  Our Traffic Island volunteer group will be out there the next warm day in March getting the islands in shape to do their thing.