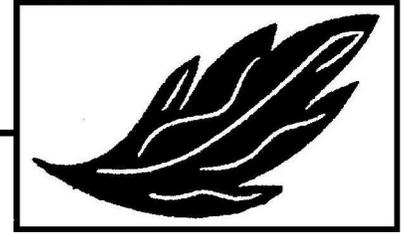


West Street Greenspace Preservation Coalition

P.O. Box 84, Naperville, IL 60566-0084 Phone: 630-637-9283 Fx:630-717-0785



Newsletter

WSGSPC Meeting June 9th, 7:30 P.M.

The regularly scheduled June meeting of the Coalition will take place on Wednesday June 9th at 7:30 P.M. at the Naperville Township Building, 135 Water St. on Naperville's beautiful Riverwalk. All board members have been notified in advance of this newsletter, and as always all members are invited. If you have any suggestions regarding the best methods for pursuing our mission, please bring them to the meeting or contact a member of the board.

Time to Renew Your Membership! (if you haven't done so already)

Our membership year runs from May 1st to April 30th. If you haven't already renewed your membership for the 5/1/04 – 4/30/05 membership year, please renew today. Dues for one year are \$10 or a different amount (lower or higher) of your choosing. Multi-year renewals are available for \$10 per year. We have enclosed the attached "invoice" format because many members have found that to be convenient. Renew by sending the \$ to WSGSPC, PO Box 84, Naperville, IL 60566-0084. With that, please tell us about any changes in your contact information (address, phone # etc.) , Or, give it to any board member.

Your membership is important to our mission in many, many ways, far beyond that of just dues. Be counted, keep our working core group motivated, and keep a healthy coalition in place for ongoing vigilance, and with the engine running, ready to make the necessary for the quick shift into high gear when a major threat presents itself. **Please renew today!!**

Park District News- Executive Director Removed

By now most Coalition members likely know that Park District leadership has been in turmoil since last fall. Although there are plenty of reasons for residents and tax-payers to be outraged about, the WSGSPC has not taken a public position on these allegations because the Coalition has a specific mission focused on the protection of the West St. properties. However, during the final week of May, the Board of Directors formally removed embattled Executive Director Ken Brissa.

Acting Executive Director Judie Caribeaux, who had previously resigned from the district, has said she is not interested assuming the job permanently. This means the Board, who themselves have been accused of lax oversight and indulgent spending at trade conferences, must now conduct a search to replace Ken Brissa. Although none of this has an immediate impact upon the Coalition's mission, the WSGSPC finds these developments potentially worrisome in the long term. The following will explain why this is so.

Ken Brissa joined the Park District during the tenure of Joe Schultz, and quickly ascended to the position of Associate Director. Brissa, new to the situation, could hardly be blamed for the actions of Schultz, whose 1999 attempt to build a poorly defined multipurpose recreation center resulted in the defeat of an unpopular referendum by more than 80% of the vote. Likewise Brissa's championing of Schultz's recommendation to build a concrete skating facility on the garden plots can be simply construed as the duty of a loyal employee. The attempt to build on the garden plots, an action approved by the board against the recommendation of District staff, resulted in the eventual defeat of the project in early 2000 by a 5-4 City Council vote. Those who had come together to obtain this result begin to call themselves the West St. Greenspace Preservation Coalition, and Park District Executive Director Joe Schultz, left for California shortly after his defeat. Ken Brissa assumed temporary leadership of the district, and following a six month long nationwide search, he became Executive Director of the District in early 2001.

Ken Brissa's tenure as Executive Director has coincided with a far more stable period for the properties that the WSGSPC strides to protect. Brissa, despite his many flaws as reported by Colt Foutz in the "Naperville Sun", said more than once, both publicly at meetings and privately in conversation with WSGSPC leadership, that he did NOT intend to propose any new "major changes" to the garden plots. His expressed rationale, acquired, very likely as a result of his experience as an associate to Joe Schultz, was that "the District will not build on the garden plots because the City Council told us we could not". This was as logical as it was pragmatic, since it allowed for his prosperous coexistence with many of Schulz's former adversaries. It also lay to rest the possibility that the Park District would sue the City over the conflict, and it began a period of cooperation that

would see the still growing Park District make many legitimate accomplishments.

Under Ken Brissa the district really did a great deal of significance. The Naperville Park District not only realized a significant increase in the amount of grants received by employing a grant writer, they also reopened Sportsman's Park, developed Frontier and Commissioners Park in accordance with residents demands, realized the renovation of Centennial Beach which re-opened Memorial Day weekend, ironed out misunderstandings between users and volunteers at its seniors center, opened a second skate board park, and generally had far fewer angry residents protest at meetings than it did under Brissa's predecessor. Brissa may likely have become complacent because of these and other successes, a complacency with unfortunate results well documented by the press that will hopefully give birth to much needed reforms by this Board or the Board that will follow. **Full disclosure by the board is needed.**

From the WSGSPC's standpoint the only true friction with Brissa's leadership developed in early 2002, when a plan for the significant alteration of the garden plots was drafted by Park District staff. The plan, conceived and created by Ron Ory, was quickly condemned in public by the City Council at the request of the WSGSPC, and never formally proposed by the district or Brissa. In fact, it is likely that Brissa may not have even known the jarring details of the plan at the time it surfaced and became public. The plan involved significant new building, including roads and infrastructure, and was completely unacceptable from the Coalition's standpoint.

In summary, the WSGSPC has enjoyed a period of cooperation and understanding with Ken Brissa and the District that he led for more than 3 years. Flawed as he may have been, he always maintained an outward respect for what our group stands for. The Coalition has drafted and will send a statement to acting Executive Director Judie Caribeaux, and it is the responsibility of the Coalition and its members to educate the District's new leadership, when found, concerning the events which made it necessary for us to come together in the first place. In addition we must not take our past accomplishments for granted, but instead find a new enthusiasm and vigor which will allow us to demonstrate the value of the West St. properties, and the value greenspace in the heart of Naperville gives each and every day to all Napervilleans.

Written by George Bennett, President and one of the Founding Members.

Garden Plots bustle with activity

The third wettest May in the recorded history of the Chicago area has not prevented hundreds of dedicated gardeners from completing their annual return to the fertile soil of the Naperville Community Garden Plots. The Coalition has two plots with beets, carrots, beans,

peppers, pumpkins, eggplants, and lots of tomatoes germinating ahead of schedule. Additionally the "Plant a Row for the Hungry" booth has emerged from winter hibernation and is once again located at the garden plots. Hope runs very high.

With the Park District's pursuit of corporate sponsorship under Ken Brissa, the garden plots have a bit of a new look this year, with a bulletin board and landscaping found for the first time at the grasslands which divide the north and the south plots. This new landscaping, easily seen from West St., sits in front of our booth some 40 yards, and is rather attractive actually. Still, if we interpret our mission statement strictly, this is a reduction in the greenspace at the location, and the Coalition has drafted and will send a letter stating that any additional landscaping of this sort is not compatible with the current land use. It is of extreme importance that infrastructure "improvements" are NOT made at the garden plots. Such initiatives will make future development less costly and therefore increase its likelihood. We must stand against any major infrastructure changes.

Bolingbrook to create a "Living Farm"

Naperville has been very fortunate to have a living farm managed by the Conservation Foundation located near the DuPage River on Knoch Knolls Rd. Now Bolingbrook, Naperville's much younger neighbor that was almost entirely farmland 40 years ago has agreed to maintain a small amount of its past for the benefit of future generations. Instead of becoming a strip mall, land on Essington Rd. near the new Bolingbrook golf course will be forever preserved as a living farm, offering visitors a peek at the way past generations lived in what is now a Chicago suburb. Last year the village moved an historic house from the Northwest I-55 Frontage Rd. to a new foundation on the living farm site. The two-story farmhouse, built in the 1840's, will be an integral part of the new farm. There are also plans to reassemble an historic round barn re-located from elsewhere in Bolingbrook. Paul Steinbrecher, the farm's designing architect said, "There's something very different. It's much more poetic to have this area that was a farm being brought back to a certain level...and being given life...It's a unique opportunity because there's so much development around it."

Completion of Bolingbrook's yet to be named living farm is still a couple of years away, but only a few miles away from the center of Naperville, so remember to give it a visit when it opens.

Credit- Janet Lundquist, "Naperville Sun", May 2004.

Plant a Row for the Hungry launches for the summer

This year the Morton Arboretum and the "Daily Herald" are teaming up to make the 2004 Plant a Row for the Hungry program more of a success than ever before. On Mother's Day weekend gardening experts conducted workshops at the Arboretum designed to encourage "big plans for small spaces".

"All too often frustrated gardeners say 'I just don't have any space,'" said Jan Little of the Arboretum. "All they need is a pot." Jan Little hopes more people will get involved with the Plant a Row campaign this year. This is the sixth year that the Daily Herald has worked with Northern Illinois Food Bank to sponsor the program in five metropolitan area counties. In the past five years people in Cook, Lake, Kane, DuPage, and McHenry counties have donated just shy of 200,000 pounds of fresh garden produce to neighbors in need of assistance. The demand for food from area pantries has skyrocketed recently, and in 2003 the amount of food provided by the Northern Illinois Food Bank increased 27%.

In 1993 60,000 pounds was received through the Plant a Row program, with more than 10,000 coming from the Naperville Community garden Plots where the West St Greenspace Preservation Coalition sponsors a donation booth.

Credit- Catherine Edman, "Daily Herald", April, 2004, adapted by George Bennett

Greenspace Coalition Information

Mission Statement *The West Street Green Space Preservation Coalition resolves to defend the existing green space west of and adjoining West Street against incompatible development and encourage and promote programs and amenities that foster conservation, honor historical tradition, and preserve the area for passive use.*

More on Our Mission Our focus is to not lose any greenspace the 4 properties on west side of West Street. (Garden Plots, Sportsman's Park, Von-Oven Scout Camp, Soccer Fields/Forest on Oswego.) Support current uses that keep it green, and advocate no more construction, lights, pavement or new high intensity uses. No reduction in trees, and additional uses should utilize the green or natural values of the properties.

Contact Information

See info in letterhead
Our web site is: www.greenspace.koolhost.com

Board of Directors

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Special Consultant: Teresa Ryan

Webmaster: Elaine Fisher

Membership

Membership is open to all individuals, families and organizations who would like to support our mission (see mission statement). Dues are \$10 or your choice of a different amount (lower or higher) A membership application is available to facilitate joining. *The WSGSC is always careful to note that its viewpoints on individual topics do not necessarily reflect those of individual members and member organizations.*