

West Street Greenspace Preservation Coalition

P.O. Box 84, Naperville, Il 60566-0084 Phone: 630-637-9283 WSGC@FyrFox.com



Newsletter April 16th, 2006

Next Coalition meeting-July 20, 7:30 PM, Naperville Township Building

The board of the West St. Greenspace Preservation Coalition met on the evening of April 6th at the Naperville Township building. We agreed on an agenda for this summer as well as scheduling our next meeting for Thursday July 20 at 7:30 PM at the Township. Please remember that our meetings are open to the public, and all members in good standing (with dues paid at your choice of \$10 or another amount) are eligible to vote on all action items. Everyone on the board, from the President on down are elected to two-year terms, but because we have not staggered terms (this was a non-election year), no elections were held. We will again elect officers in April of 2007. Please contact any board member if you are interested. We need you to be involved!

2006- 7th Annual Earth Day at the Garden Plots- April 22nd 9:00 AM – Noon

To those of us who have been members from the start, and this is still a majority of members, it may seem impossible that we are now entering our 7th year as a Coalition. In fact, it was shortly after our big City Hall victory in early 2000 that the West St. Greenspace Preservation Coalition created a display for Naperville's large Earth Day event in April of 2000. Since that was a one time only effort made by the city in honor of Earth Day's 30th anniversary, our annual event moved to the Community Garden Plots in 2001. Our activities have expanded to include our springtime Adopt-a-Highway cleanup of the Garden Plots and the West St. Parkway with the cooperation of the Naperville Department of Public Works. Light refreshments, as always, will be served, and the community is invited. There is always good conversation to be had, and almost always, excellent weather. With the Garden Plots opening this year on Easter Sunday April 16th, we can expect to contact a number of gardeners April 22nd. Stop by for a few minutes or a few hours, and enjoy a pleasant morning with friends, neighbors, and fellow members.

Time to Renew your membership

Our membership year runs from May 1st through April 30th. Single year renewals are \$10 or a different amount (lower or higher) of your choosing.

Your membership is important support of our efforts in many many ways. Please renew today.

Please send your renewal \$ to the address in the letterhead, or give it to any board member. Also please update us on your contact info (new emails etc.)

You can also renew for multiple years at once. Multi-year renewals are \$10 per year (or a higher amount if you choose) and do not have the "or lower" option. So, you can renew for 1 year for a penny, but you can't renew for 1,000 years for \$10.

Plan Commission meeting on the Clark/ Soper property rescheduled to April 26th.

The January 2005 newsletter offered a detailed explanation regarding the WSGSPC opposition to the re-zoning of the Clark/ Soper property (now known as the Hobson West Ponds). At our most recent meeting April 6th, your directors reaffirmed our stance that the 5.56 acres on the west side of West St. near Naperville-Plainfield Road should be ideally maintained as a park, because that is the "best possible land use". Our mission is to maintain open areas for wildlife, greenspace, and current activities on the west side of West St. The Clark/ Soper property fits into that definition. If the city determines that the land can not be retained as a park, than the developer should comply with the current single family zoning requirements. As already stated, the public hearing before the Plan Commission has been re-scheduled to April 26th at 7 PM in the City Council Chambers at City Hall. We need you to come out and state you opposition to the Crestview Builders town house development. Numerous mature trees will be destroyed and the environmental integrity of the ponds on the north and south sides of the proposed development may be in jeopardy if the 23-unit development goes forward. Please call George Bennett, President, at 630-319-0289 if you can help with this effort, or contact any WSGSPC board member.

Below is some information you can use if you write a letter to the Plan Commission. If the development is approved by the Plan Commission, the WSGSPC will ask all of you to write a dedicated letter to each and every member of the City Council. The City Council, where the WSGSPC has a number of long time friends, has the ultimate decision on the re-zoning of the "Hobson West Ponds". We would like to maintain the lowest density possible, with preference to the Canadian geese who would certainly prefer a park.

Our mission, included in every newsletter is very straightforward. It defines our efforts to protect greenspace on West St. as the four properties on the West site of West St. (Garden Plots, Sportsman's Park, Von -Oven Scout Camp, and the Soccer Fields/forest on Oswego). Our mission has been limited because these are the contiguous public properties owned by Naperville and leased to the Park District. It is true however that the corridor of greenspace on the west side of West St. stretches nearly uninterrupted to the junction of West and Naperville-Plainfield RD. This situation is likely to change in the spring of '06 as the former Clark farmhouse, most recently owned by the Sopers, has been sold to Crestview Builders for \$5.4. The 5.56 acres is surrounded on the north and south by Park District land, which will remain undeveloped, but may be placed in jeopardy from an environmental standpoint by the current proposal.

The property formally farmed by the Clarks included essentially the area now called Hobson West. Midamerica Structures was the first purchaser, and plans were soon drawn for multiple high rise condominium buildings. Due to citizen outcry these buildings were never built and the land was then purchased by Mid-American Properties which begin selling to individual owners with the attached single family zoning of R1-A. In 1977 the Clark homestead itself was incorporated into the City of Naperville, also zoned as single family.

Early in 2004 Crestview Builders requested that zoning of the property be changed from the long accepted R1-A. In the summer of 2004 a proposal for a 27-unit town home development reached the Plan Commission. Because of the small size of the land, this proposal created a density of at least 5.9 units per acre, higher than the adjacent density of the Fields (5.1 per acre) and not even close to Green Acres density, which stands at less than 1 per acre. The current request for 23 town homes does not significantly reduce density nor save additional mature trees at the site. If the land can not be preserved as a park, at the very least single family (R1-A) zoning should be preserved.

The board of the WSGSPC hopes to see all of you on the 26th at City Hall. If you have a comment, but can not attend, please relay it to George Bennett by phone or at bennettgeorge@hotmail.com. It will be placed into public record.

Garden Plots for Rent

The Park District will continue to offer Garden Plot Rental through the end of May. Good locations are still available, and the cost of each spacious plot is a most reasonable \$25 for residents of the district. Renting is easy; call the Park District at 848-5000, visit their Web Site at www.napervilleparks.org, or go directly to the administration building located at 320 West Jackson in downtown Naperville.

Coalition Phone Number changed to 630-637-9236. You may also call 630-357-0289. Additional contact information is on the letterhead.

Park District Workshop on Knoch Park

The Park District invited us as an organization to a workshop regarding possible modifications to Knoch Park. So far the handling of this has been several levels better than the Park District has done in the past. First, they seem to be seeking input early in the process to actually guide it, vs. just to "get something though" that they already decided in the back rooms. They also made a point of inviting organizations which they felt might be interested or involved.

Warren Gill and I were there. As this meeting was (it appears) genuinely early in the process, there is no plan yet, but it appears that the general idea is rearrangement and upgrading to serve the current uses. Being on the East side of West Street, and property that is already 100% developed as mowed grass / ball fields, our core mission (and most emphatic statements) were to make sure that development does not bleed over to the West side of West street. And in work on Knoch park, to think green (trees, grass, plants) not concrete, metal and asphalt.

Arbor Day Tree Sale (8AM-Noon) The Dept. of Public Works April 29th

The WSGSPC has long enjoyed a solid relationship with Naperville's Department of Public Works Chief Arborist Patti Saunry. Now Ms. Saunry would like you to know that hundreds of beautiful trees will be on sale at the annual Arbor Day tree sale, Sat. April 29th from 8AM-Noon at the Public Works Building, 414 E. 5th Ave. (Loomis at 5th). Ms. Saunry recently acquired a number of Dutch Elm resistant trees from the Morton Arboretum that were made available free of charge early in March to members of the WSGSPC via e-mail. If you were not contacted regarding this opportunity, please send us your new e-mail. Many e-mail addresses that you once gave us are no longer valid. It seems our members switch e-mail addresses far quicker than United States Post Office addresses, so PLEASE send us your new e-mail address! We want you to be included when issues arise that should involve you as a member of the WSGSPC. Please send us your e-mail address when you renew.

Park historian and friend of WSGSPC leaving Naperville Park District

The WSGSPC will lose a friend when Dawn Banks, a 24-year employee of the NPD is leaving for greener pastures in Streamwood. Banks has watched the district grow from around 60 parks in the early '80's to more than 130 now. During Bank's tenure, she learned to

drive a tractor, use a chain saw, and oversee the Riverwalk and Centennial Beach. She helped guide the district through various floods and festivals. Banks has always been passionate about her job, and looks forward to greater influence at her new position in Streamwood. She will be missed in Naperville. She will be missed by the WSGSPC.

---Credit Amy Boerema of "Daily Herald", adapted by George Bennett

Spring is Springing

After winter melts slowly away, I often relish the sight of spring flowers. They give me hope of a gardening season to come. Their beautiful colors are a welcome relief to gray days and drab landscape.

The first fall I spent in my house I planted all sorts of spring bulbs. My landscaping in general was quite sparse. I knew that planting some of the early bloomers would be a good way to inspire me for the busy season ahead.

In the area of spring flowers, I certainly have my favorites. Crocuses seem to defy the elements and bloom very early, unconcerned when a little snow dusts them. Daffodils, with their cheerful yellow blooms, follow the crocuses. They also have an added bonus of being undesirable by hungry animals, thereby emerging from most fall plantings undamaged.

Tulips typically bloom next and have the greatest offerings of color and shape. Other bulbs, such as alliums and camasias, bloom even later and can be seen flowering as late as June. Alliums sport round spheres for flowers, and as members of the garlic family, are left undisturbed by animals.

All spring bulbs must be planted in the fall. They need a "chilling period" before they can bloom.

---Credit Pam Westfall of the Naperville Community Gardeners in an essay titled "Spring Flowers"

Spring has Sprung

Special high-brow spring poem passed along to you by Fred Turek

Spring has sprung

The grass has riz

Where oh where

The flowers is?

When I become the USA's poet laureate, this newsletter will be a collector's item from my "early years."

Spring Brook Creek to Take New Course (or resume an old one).

We have often reported on changes at the Spring Book Prairie forest preserve since this is by far the largest

natural area impacting animal habitat near the West St. properties. If you see a deer running through your yard on Mobile Ct. in Hobson West it is pretty likely that the animal spent the winter across 75th at the more than 1800 acre forest preserve fed by Spring Brook. It wasn't that long ago that there was an attempt (opposed by conservation minded individuals) to turn Spring Brook into "Dragon Lake", flooding much of what we can hike through today. The current effort is total departure from the old notion, and now includes the concept of re-directing Spring Brook to approximate the way it used to flow prior to 19th century settlement by farmers. About a mile and a half of the stream will be redirected to mimic the portion not straightened by farmers. DuPage County project engineer Ross Hill said, "the Spring Brook Stream is perhaps the highest quality body of water in the county.... It's probably going to take a full year of construction, but when finished (the stream will meander more naturally)". Animal and aquatic diversity is expected to increase notably.

---Credit Ann Hanson quoting Ross Hill in, "The Naperville Sun", March 28, 2006.

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

Website: www.FyrFox.com/WSGSC

(WSGSC must be caps)

Board of Directors

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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.*