



ALL ABOUT OUR TREES | JANUARY 26, 2010

On Tuesday, Jan. 26, 2010, 32 people (18 members and 14 non-members) gathered at a Brookdale Park Conservancy meeting to hear two arborists, Steve Schuckman and Paul Jordan. Since Chairperson Howard Falk is recuperating from a painful operation, Co-chairperson Paul Cote moderated. He observed the good turn-out and thanked (in absentia) Pat Gilleran, chair of the Marketing Committee, for the excellent publicity. He asked how many had seen an article in the local press or on-line. An impressive number of hands went up. Paul repeated his praise of Pat's work.

Steve began by reminding us of the beauty and diversity of the incredible collection of trees in Brookdale Park e.g. copper beeches, lindens, cucumber magnolia, Norway maples, oaks. The major problem regarding the trees is that they are old and have not had the benefit of preventative maintenance. There are a few dead trees, many with decayed bases and even more with dead limbs. Several of these problems are in high traffic areas and overhang both roadways and walkways. He stated that the situation is much the same in the other county parks and municipalities. He showed photographs of trees decaying alarmingly at the bottom and/or with many dead branches at the top. He emphasized the danger in the park from trees falling on pedestrians, cars, and children playing. He said that tree maintenance has been dangerously delayed and estimated that about a half a million dollars is needed for a five-year program that will preserve the life of trees by trimming them and possibly preserve life and limb of people by removing dangerous branches and trees.

Paul Jordan spoke about the census of trees being conducted by the Verona Park Conservancy in partnership with the county. Paul has volunteered his expertise and is using software, which is available for free at itools.com. They are collecting information that includes the name of the tree, GPS location, age, size, and maintenance priority. They hope in the future to also maintain information about the maintenance history of specific trees. They are also keeping an inventory of vacant planting sites for new trees. He said that well-trained volunteers working under the supervision of an arborist could expedite the work if the BPC would like to undertake such a project.

There was a long, animated, and congenial discussion following the talks. Much concern was expressed about financing the removal of dangerous trees and branches. Both Steve and Paul agreed that the county budget would not be sufficient to cover the cost and that additional funds would need to be raised. Deborah Jacobson of the VPC said that Katie Hartwyk at the county office at Kips Castle was helpful with information about potential grants. Steve mentioned that the Community Forestry Management Act (from the Whitman Administration) offers \$30,000 to \$100,000 through its Community Stewardship Incentive Program which requires matching funds. He reported that at the last meeting of conservancies in the county there was discussion about unified grant applications.

George Prell said that results had been achieved in NYC park safety by a lawyer's warning letter. "You have to be nice," Paul said, and repeated several times, "You have to be nice with these people," apparently meaning the county leaders. He added that there are parts of Brookdale Park where he won't walk his dog. Pat Kenschaft asked "Would you be willing to share with us where they are?" The group laughed. After a pause, he said the southern part of the park, where there have already been several tree falls. He then admonished us to "focus" our efforts with the County. "Old trees require maintenance," he said. We discussed at length the possibility of obtaining grants for tree maintenance. Steve emphasized the truth of this. "You have a lot of needy trees. Planting is down the road. You need to save what you have." "I wouldn't be discouraged" added Paul.

The program concluded with everyone introducing themselves. The next meeting on Feb. 23 will feature Kathy Salisbury, Essex County Horticulturalist. The March 23 meeting will include elections of new officers and board members. The deadline for having membership paid in order to participate as a candidate and/or to vote has been postponed until February 10.

Respectfully Submitted by
Paul Cote, Pat Kenschaft and Toni Spiotta