

Conservation Advisory Commission
Minutes of the September 19, 2013 Meeting

Present: Curt Pueschel, Linda Green, Michael Restuccia, Cole Moore, Steve Appel, Cynthia Stephens-Westerman

Excused: Victor Lamoureux, Shep Bennett

Minutes of the August 15 meeting had been approved by e-mail. The next regular meeting of the CAC will be on October 17, 2013.

The August 24 CAC tour of Barlow Park, Ethel Park, and Twin Orchards Park was discussed. Curt also visited Stratford Park the same day. Twin Orchards Park has a playground and is mostly covered by lawn. From a conservancy perspective, the most valuable feature of the park is the presence of very large hickory trees on the eastern side of the park. The west side of the park is lined by a young forest with hickory, cherry, and poison ivy. Several standing dead cherry trees behind the baseball backstop could pose a hazard from falling branches, but otherwise there were no issues of conservation management. No conservation concerns were noted at Ethel or Stratford, which had few trees within the parks.

In contrast to the abovementioned parks, Barlow Park will be significantly affected by the emerald ash borer. Barlow has two distinct components: (1) a flat grassy area bordered by Main Street and containing a pavilion and (2) the untended forested slopes that continue down to the banks of Choconut Creek and spread behind the two houses that flank the grassy area. The trees in the grassy area are mostly ashes. There is also a boxelder, an elm, a few maples, and a small cherry. The lawn area will be altered considerably by the eventual loss of the ashes, especially the large individual next to the pavilion because this tree provides a centerpiece to the park. The large ash could be labeled to serve as an example for ash identification. Replacement of the small ashes with other tree species could be a first step.

The top of the forested slope is separated from the lawn by a wooden fence. A broad path leads from the northwest corner of the lawn, behind the nearby house, along part of the base of the slope, and down to the stream bank. The forest contains some large ashes, cherry, maples, walnut/butternut, basswood, elm, sycamore, hickory, and locust. There is an abundance of non-native shrubs, especially honeysuckles, and a patch of periwinkle. Native herbaceous plants were not noteworthy but a revisit in spring would be appropriate. Piles of trash are present in at least two places on the forested slope. The death of the largest ashes highest up on the slopes may require some attention, but the main focus needs to be on the lawn area.

Memorial Pool and ballfields were discussed and it was decided on the basis of the aerial photo that there were no issues of concern to us.

Discussion returned to the Willow Point Park, which is listed as being owned by the Vestal Central School District, though Steve learned that it is not mowed by the District. The parcel map shows only half of the grassy area that one would think of as the park as being within the boundary of the land owned by the school district.

We hope to achieve our goal of visiting several more small neighborhood parks by the end of September. It was agreed that on Sunday, September 29, members will meet at Richards Avenue Park at 1:00. After viewing this park, we will go to Vestal Center Park, then David Avenue Park, and finally Ross Corners Park.