

## **Presentation to the Board Re: Proposal to Contract with a Landscape Design Firm**

Thank you for the opportunity to present responses to the proposal to use a landscape designer to develop a plan for the Parkfairfax landscape and to supervise staff during the time of the contract.

Members of the Green Spaces Committee reviewed the original and revised proposal and provided comments by email to the Chair to present to the Board. The following members commented: Judy Bazier, Jan Schrader, Sally Burmeister, Bernie and Rosemary Cook, Susan Crawford, Kim Stenlund, Maria Wildes, Claire Eberwein, and Scott Knudsen.

### **Comments**

The Committee has begun an assessment of needed landscape maintenance in the common element around residences to assist management in implementing the Parkfairfax landscape management plan as tasked in the Committee's charter approved by the Board. Members and other volunteers accepted responsibility and have started doing assessments around 80 percent of our buildings. The needs are being emailed to the acting Landscape Director who will add them to a spreadsheet he will use to schedule work. Within the month he and the Committee will be able to report the work completed or underway. Committee members believe that before contracting with a landscape consulting firm, the Board should review the initial reports of this effort.

Members are knowledgeable about the landscape maintenance requirements and are using an expanded version of a form that the former landscape director developed for his staff to note other needs in the course of doing assigned tasks. Members are also familiar with the requirements of the landscape maintenance contract and are providing emails of needs to the acting landscape director for his use in weekly discussions with the contractor representative.

The members believe this approach will be useful immediately and recommend that it will provide valuable information for the landscape management plan at no additional cost to the Association. Two members questioned the fiscal responsibility of the Board in considering the consultant approach while the Committee was surveying and reporting need at no cost to the Association

Members familiar with the work of the former landscape director know that he worked full time, 40+ hours each week on the needed improvements. They doubt that a designer, unfamiliar with Parkfairfax and developing a plan and manual will be able to do the job in half the time. This is a demanding landscape, including the steeply sloped wooded areas, that requires the director to focus on immediate needs, not visions.

The Chair is concerned about the qualifications of a consultant in attempting to do the landscape maintenance responsibilities. Our former director was an arborist who was able to identify specific pruning needs without relying on a contractor. If the consultant lacks those qualifications, it is likely we would either need to pay more to a tree pruning company to identify need as well as do the pruning or the consultant's design firm would subcontract the task, increasing the cost of the study.

**Summary:** The members, with the exception of member Eberwein, recommend that we proceed with the needs assessment process, hire a skilled landscape director, task her or him to review the current landscape management plan and continue to initiate critical tasks, such as erosion control on our steeply wooded slopes. In evenings, the new director could review the original Jacobson-Wallace landscaping design study, and then recommend to the Board small area design actions to further improve the look of the Parkfairfax landscape.

The revised proposal simply adds another product, a position description, for use in hiring the new director after the consultant has reported her or his recommendations. We can do a position description in ten minutes. In fact we did. Neither of the original products are worth \$150,000 Parkfairfax has a landscape management plan (see attached summary outline with notes. We are not sure who will use the proposed manual since I am sure management will recommend and the Board will hire a well-qualified and experienced person to manage our landscape. (The draft position description and summary landscape management plan are attached.)

Final Comment: The Board should task management to recruit for a new landscape manager immediately and should not expend Association funds to purchase products that are not needed.