

Recommendation To the New Lebanon Town Board Regarding Shatford Park Trees for Tribes Plantings - for Town Board May 2025 meeting

In 2021, the Trees for Tribes (T4T) project in Shatford Park was undertaken primarily to stem erosion of the stream in the park. Planting a variety of plants at stream's edge, or leaving plants at stream's edge, is the best way to prevent erosion and greatly helps reduce flooding. You can clearly see this when you stand in the park at stream's edge (where the stream meanders in the park parallel to Rte 22) and see 0 erosion where original plants have remained at each end of the stream compared to the almost total erosion where the stream was nearly stripped of all plants

There are myriad other benefits of planting trees and shrubs in the park, from increasing much needed shade to helping with flood control to providing food and habitat to animals.

Starting on the first day of planting in 2021 and continuing over the past four years, a number of concerns have been expressed about the T4T plantings. Adjustments to how plants were placed were made on day 1 due to concerns of limiting access to the stream, and about ¼ of the plants were never planted. Due to these concerns, the planting density was not able to stem erosion as desired and further mitigation of erosion will be needed.

While many residents enjoy the plantings and understand the benefits of the plantings, the growth-allowing tubes have caused the most distress. Many also do not like the plant's arrangements.

At the behest of Councilmember Joanne Amlaw, a bid has been received from Joe Dwileski, a licensed and insured arborist, to address some of those concerns. The purpose of the bid is to make improvements to change the placement of many of the trees and shrubs in better ecological and aesthetic locations.

The Conservation Advisory Council (CAC) generally supports this new project but with some notes and cautions:

- We have not budgeted for this work and we would like to know the maximum cost involved (which looks like it would be: $\$160 + \$2750 + \$408 (\$68 \times 6?) = \$3318$)
- Joe recommends staking the plants and removing the tubes - we do not have the labor or the budget to undertake this and do not have final numbers yet
- We would like to see a rough idea of how the rearrangements will look before they are moved
- If done this summer, many more volunteers will be needed to help water, weed, and maintain the plants. There has been minimal need to water in the past couple of years due to maturation of the plant's roots
- There is great concern about weed whacking around the plants with no tubes on them since the string of the weed whacker breaks the bark and eventually kills the plants
- Note that since 2021 many volunteers have spent hundreds of hours making sure the plants stay alive. From our experience, for example, the watering of these plants is doable but challenging, requiring a lot of physical labor, as does mulching and weeding. Currently there are hundreds of feet of hose that need to be brought out and put back each time plants are watered.
- The CAC is no longer able to do all of the needed work, and we are happy to be part of a volunteer corps

One big question is - could this wait until Fall in order to make the watering and maintenance much easier on volunteers?

The CAC applauds Joanne for initiating a park volunteer team. Our recommendation would be that volunteers have responsibility for watering and maintaining specific plants in their care. This would be a boon to the park, help people feel part of it, and lessen the workload all around. And people can come and water when they can.