

**Subject: Fw: ECC NEWSLETTER July 2004 (2)**

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## **ECC NEWSLETTER**

**July 2004**

### **YES, WE WILL MEET THIS MONTH**

**JULY 15TH IN PARSONS, CONFERENCE ROOM C, 7:30**

Yes, it is summer and we need a vacation! Boy do I know that feeling too! However, we still need members to step forward and get your Freedom Lawn and Storm Drain brochures to give to your neighbors. We are in the process of calling you all to help. I am happy to report that many of those who have been called, have responded well and are out there now going door-to-door. It would be helpful if you would call us: 878-0910, but I know this is a busy time with planning vacations and time off from the rigors of our world. I can assure you it will take only a couple of hours of your time and the good part is, you may make a new friend or two and/or renew an old acquaintance in the process. We will deliver the brochures to your door with a map, for your convenience. Just call.

Landscaping seems to be on my mind – two reasons: we will be photographing the Freedom Lawn Contest entrants (deadline is July 15) and secondly, our attention soon will be on the new plan for Eisenhower Park. There will surely be much discussion. The Committee has reduced the contenders vying to design it, down to five.

Just recently there was an article in the New York Times Magazine on parks. It can twist your brain right around as to what a park can be. I would like to give some quotes from leading landscape architects, some modern-day and some from the past. Peter LATZ, recently said, “Landscape is not the opposite of the town, Landscape is Culture”. (He’s considered anti-Olmsted.) Jacques WIRTS & Sons “golden rule” is his insistence on preserving the spirit of a place, rather than putting his stamp on it.” Andy GOLDSWORTHY, a sculptor, “is revered as a figure of Thoreau-like purity.” “He’s turning the very idea of landscape inside out.” When asked to define the word “landscape”, “he replied a bit cryptically: “A landscape does not have to involve land. Time is a landscape.” “Time gives”, Goldsworthy insisted cheerfully, sitting down for a break. “Time gives growth, it gives continuity and it gives change. And in the case of some sculptures, time gives a patina to them.” Jen JENSEN, landscape architect, with a naturalist style and in his theory of design said. “NO CLIPPED HEDGES!” The author wrote of Jensen, “Mystically inclined, he took the notion of a “clearing,” of walking through a dark wood and encountering an open sun-washed meadow, as his governing metaphor.” He wished to offer a kind of redemption through gardening. Nothing else could alleviate the “insanity, crime and immorality” that came when cities dispensed with nature.”

Going back to Latz’s definition, “landscape is culture” conjures up for me some aspects that are very foreboding, such as the ATVs and the cigarette boats, better known as wasters, and the jet skis. The good news is that the new jet skis are much quieter and cleaner when they have 4-stroke engines. But what do we do about the other speeding mechanical menaces? Recently, I received several complaints about a cigarette boat that spent several hours, while moored in Milford Harbor, just revving its motor and making a great deal of noise, that could be heard as far away as the Green. To report violations, get their numbers, not the name, and report it to the Police Department. For now, that is the best we can do. However, we can for the future consider what Nantucket has done, to ban cigarette boats from entering their Harbor. If there were enough opposition, that could be an option for Milford. However, the ATV’s are another matter that will need to be addressed, as there are too many around to just casually dismiss. Seriously, we do need to be putting on our thinking caps. This is all about landscape... how we see it, how we hear it,

how we smell it, how we use it, how we play in it and how we live in it.

In Jane Jacobs' essay (N.Y. Times Magazine), she talks about how landscape designs have changed, going from the very formal French geometric designs, to the English breaking away to naturalism, but it then "dropped any pretense of nature as guide and mankind as steward."

However, she is saying that the new landscape designers are "picking up the revolutionary view of nature that dissipated more than two centuries ago, but this time around they are viewing mankind and nature as partners, with nature as the senior partner and human beings the apprentices." Jacobs talks about how the trend was for corporations to vacate the city for a corporate campus in the country, but in contrast she is seeing the new trend in Canada of bringing the countryside back into the city with the example of Vancouver's Central Library's green roof, which is reducing smog and conserving energy.

Green roofs are sprouting from Long Island City to Portland, OR and new experiments with vertical planting beds for cafés' in-house supply for their own fresh herbs and vegetables. She credits, "this quiet revolution of the landscape architects and ecologists to the environmental movement and its influence." She notes there are more lawns that have been converted to meadows, changing ordinances to allow those green carpets to make way for the "uncouth, messy and the sign of the loss of disciplined civilization." She notes, "Unlike plantations, ecosystems are never monocultures." She believes we still need to define what nature is in relation to nature and to city living. "Indeed, in its need for variety and acceptance of randomness, a flourishing natural ecosystem is more like a city than like a plantation. Perhaps it will be the city that reawakens our understanding and appreciation of nature, in all its teeming unpredictable complexity."

Jacobs' new book, just published, is "*Dark Age Ahead*."

**Ian L. McHarg wrote "Design With Nature".** It means just that, by using nature – letting it tell us what is

appropriate and where we should plant our crops and build our homes. By following the terrain, respecting the wetlands, the hillsides, the flow of the land and letting it talk to us. By doing this we would not incur nature's wrath, that is when the floods come we would be out of harms way, when the earth opens up we would be secure in our homes, when the fires come, we would be protected from the flames and by not denuding the hillsides, we would not be overcome by mud slides. If our arrogance continues, nature will have its way, climate change or no, but it will prevail. However, by respecting nature, it will give back ten-fold.

When we begin to look at the new design for Eisenhower Park, nature must be respected. But, I am about to suggest that also new open-mindedness to our needs can be respected and coexist in this new park plan. We have other open spaces that can fill our needs for serenity and observing nature as we still fantasize about it. Eisenhower may not be able to encompass all of our fantasies of what we call a natural nature. I am not suggesting that I have the answers, only that we all need to rethink, twist our brains and envision OUR PARK NEEDS and what THE PARK'S NEEDS ARE too. Mark Lofthouse, who is on the Eisenhower Committee told me, "The committee will be considering a variety of ideas with low impact and will weigh in on all the interests of the 52,000 Milford citizens, but more importantly, they will be considering, the best interests for the park's physical environment."

Many of the parks that have been described in the New York Times Magazine article on parks have described how parks have been built on recycled properties of old industrial sites and brownfields. These landscape architects have chosen to keep old structures and equipment as part of the landscape and use where possible, planting greenery in-between. The philosophy is that cities, like nature, are in constant flux and we need to adapt to this change, recycle what we can, and incorporate the shapes as sculpture. We are not facing brownfields in Eisenhower Park, but we may be facing the high electric towers, certainly a manmade invention. Mark said, "There are creative ways to mask these towers with low plantings and lower growing trees and/or staggering the arrangement of the towers locations." So design, as shown in other parks, can resolve even the towers' presence. Our city's mission is how to best use the park and meet the needs of the community. We will be anxiously waiting to see this new plan.

Diane Vasseur has been noticing there has been a shortage of bumble bees in her yard, and she has more than enough plants to attract them. She is concerned we are losing out pollinating bees. This is an inquiry to see if any of you have noticed this too?

Some Good News this month: President Bush passed legislation to protect the Manatee. An Ohio power plant has agreed to spend \$1.1 billion on upgrading their coal-burning

power plant to cut emissions. This agreement is “delaying the opening of the penalty phase of a lawsuit by federal agencies and three states, including Connecticut, a source involved in the case told the Associated Press.” This will reduce emissions by 90% by 2010. The First Energy Corp is the first among 51 plants to be sued. But, we are not home free, as this has to be approved by the EPA, the federal prosecutor and go to a 30-day public comment period. It would appear that the tests for trichloroethylene (TCE) have come up negative for the residents on Home Acres. And, Mary Ludwig has given us this notice, which comes from the DEP on access for Long Island Sound. It is the new Connecticut Coastal Access Guide-Web site. <http://www.dep.state.ct.us/coastalaccess>.

I learned a very valuable, embarrassing and humbling lesson over the 4th and it had nothing to do with the celebration. It had to do with pesticides and a very dear friend. It was a mixture of misunderstandings all around. I knew my friends were organic gardeners but when I saw the yellow flag on their lawn in front of their house, I was shocked. In the beginning, they couldn't really explain the yellow flag to me, as their landscaper had put it there. After many e-mails of hurt feelings and apologies, I finally called John Westerman, our pesticide expert and the laws governing them. He told me that you have to put up a yellow flag even if you spray lemon juice on the grass or garden, as it is considered an organic pesticide, because it kills. My friends have a very responsible landscaper. It must be said, though lemon juice may kill the grass, it doesn't kill the organisms under the soil as do the products that contain chemicals like 2,4-D (linked to non-Hodgkin's lymphoma) and MCP (associated with soft tissue cancers). My friends finally explained to me that they had so many worms that the birds were having a heyday on their lawn. So it turns out, it was I who needed to be informed and educated, not my friends.

We need some good ideas for the Oyster Festival, Saturday, August 21, and how to promote our ideas for Freedom Lawn, the non-use of chemicals in our yards, keeping the storm drains clean (Glen from Engineering told me he saw a man sweeping the remains of the 4th's fireworks down the storm drain the other day) and volunteers for spending a couple of hours at our table during the festival. It would be good to have 3 people for each two-hour spell... that means we will need 12 people to call in to help. It is a great way to meet people, get new members and educate the public. There are over 50,000 people that attend the festival so we cannot pass up this opportunity. You may also pick up your brochures during our ECC meeting. *We plan to cancel our August ECC meeting and newsletter to put our energies into the festival.*

Ann Berman, Chair

Environmental Concerns Coalition