

Village of Westfield Tree Planting Continues

Last fall, as part of its tree-planting program, the Village replaced nine of the aged and dying callery pear trees on the north side of Main Street between North Portage and Elm Streets. On March 18 Village crews began removing the 16 remaining callery pears in the Main Street Business District in preparation for Gingko tree replacements due to arrive the week of March 22. In addition to removal of the old trees, the crews will prep the planter boxes by removing the old soil and refilling them with a special mixture of stone and soil formulated to supply new trees with adequate nutrients and moisture to help them thrive in what is an unnatural environment, one of concrete sidewalks and blacktop.

The project is a result of the Village Board recently focusing on the fact that Westfield had been losing its trees due to age and other causes, and that although a great job of removing them as needed had been done, replacement was lagging. While the Village had done some planting over the years, it was not according to an organized, planned program and not always with species that could replace the canopy trees lost. Recognizing this, Westfield began a tree-planting program based on a tree management plan created in conjunction with forestry consultant, Bruce E. Robinson, Inc. In order to achieve a sustainable balance between removals and planting, the program called for planting 20 to 25 trees along Village streets every spring and fall.

The callery pear trees on Main Street, planted in 2006, had survived as well as could be expected given the urban-type environment. After fourteen years, however, several were in decline and it was clear others would follow. Recognizing this and the need for replacements throughout the community, in 2018 the Village applied for and received a \$50,000 Urban and Community Forestry Grant from the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation.

To assist in meeting the conditions of the grant, the Village Board approved the creation of a Village Tree Board and tasked it with coordinating and advising the Village on tree-related matters. The Board's first job was selection of the Main Street replacement trees. Gingkos, also referred to as a Maidenhair tree, were selected. Especially suited as street trees in urban-type settings, they are tolerant of salt, heat, and air pollution, have a distinctly unique leaf and furnish beautiful yellow fall foliage. Once established they are capable of two feet of growth each year and will provide Main Street with an attractive approximate 25 foot canopy in a few years.

To date, utilizing both the grant program and Village tree program, approximately 145 trees have been planted, about 80 prior to the grant award and 74 using the grant funds. The grant will enable the planting another 200 plus trees. The recently established Tree Board will

be overseeing planting efforts during 2021 to take advantage of the grant funding while meeting its requirements.

To help implement the grant program, the Tree Board has been meeting regularly to study and discuss the issues and has been providing recommendations for planting sites, tree types and species. The Board hopes to further assist the village in developing a dynamic inventory system to account for tree deaths and removals, replacement planting, pruning practices and other components of a tree program aimed at helping to maintain and enhance an important component of the vitality and sustainability of the quality of life in Westfield.

Tree-related questions or issues may be addressed to the Village Tree Board at Treeboard@villageofwestfield.org.