

# **Statement from Meg Crawford**

## **Longest standing, original member and Chair of the Rhinebeck Tree Commission**

### **November, 2019**

*To offer information for the CSC filing re: the Rhinebeck Tree Commission's activities and tree selection as it relates to climate change.*

*I offer the following as the only continuous member since its inception:*

#### **Log of Tree Planting Counts:**

2019: Spring = 21 / Fall = 12

2018: Spring = 19 / Fall = 27

2017: Spring = 13 / Fall = 18

Total from last three years: 110

Rhinebeck Village is certified as a Tree City USA.

#### **Species: Appropriateness and Maximal Variety**

The Tree Commission as one of its primary goals has sought to introduce as wide a variety of trees as we can that are suitable in terms of their hardiness, disease resistance, availability from New York State nurseries and that are site appropriate. We plant large shade trees where the streetscape allows and smaller species where overhead wires, tight setbacks, narrow medians, or visibility require shorter trees or trees with a narrow profile. Since an inventory that was done in 2010 showed the majority of our tree population to be Norway maples, we no longer plant this species.

#### **Working with the Community**

##### **BROW:**

We have also introduced and the Village Board passed an ordinance allowing us to plant on residents' properties Beyond the Right Of Way (BROW ordinance) to increase the number of large shade trees. With a larger lawn space these trees have a greater chance of achieving their optimal size.

##### **Community Involvement:**

This Spring in addition to our two planting days (one Arbor day and a second in the Fall), we are going to recruit and train a volunteer pruning corps to train our newly planted trees. A watering corps and mulching corps in the Parks is another goal.

The most recent tree plantings have been made up of an increasing number of students from the High School and we will encourage this more. We have had a very high rate of viability with our tree planting program and all the time are looking to get more people involved.

The Tree Commission creates visual flyers and posts these at 15-20 commercial public locations throughout the Village and into Red Hook. Outreach to the public with these fliers also happens via the mayor's newsletter, a Village informational notice and the Village website, in the Community section of the Northern Dutchess Newspaper, as well as specific outreach to groups, such as the Rhinebeck Community Garden, the high school's Environmental Club and the Interact Club. Students, for instance, can use this volunteer work as Community service hours.

## **Climate Change Considerations**

Large healthy trees deliver the greatest environmental impact. They provide the most carbon sequestration; absorb more rain water during the ever more frequent flooding events; and provide greater shade and thus cooling effect.

This diversity in our tree population guards against the decimation of the community forest resulting from the demise of a single species due to the introduction of a pest or disease like the emerald ash borer which is killing all our ash trees. Other trees like the Sugar Maple and white and blue spruces are in decline because of our warming winters and summers where insufficient snow cover exposes their shallow root systems to deeper soil freezing and thawing activity.

Drought resistant species are part of our mix too, and the practice of covering roots with village mulch (made by composting leaves and downed branches picked up by the highway department) helps to retain moisture during dry periods.

We are starting to introduce tree species in zones formerly 1 zone warmer than ours because of the warmer temperatures in both summer and winter. We are planting fewer of the more northern species that are struggling, like Sugar Maples.

Trees provide the most efficient form of carbon sequestration and method of returning carbon back into the soil there is. Its benefits in mitigating other problems of climate change like excessive heat and more extreme weather events like excessive rainfall should not be understated.