

Hickory Ridge CARES Committee Meeting Minutes

20 Nov 2025

Attendees:

Deborah Wessner
Bill Richardson
Jerry Lioi
Leah Donovan
Vanessa Mims
Donna Warner

Meeting commenced at 7PM (via Zoom)

Old Business

1) Website

- Jerry reviewed and offered new layout for website. The new site would offer dropdown menus for organizing content. He asked folks to let him know if they thought we should add (or delete) categories and for thoughts on what content would go in the categories. The categories suggested are:
 - Read Articles
 - Activities and Projects
 - Other Stewardship Programs
 - More Resources
- The team should contact Jerry if they would like to add additional categories.

ACTION:

- Jerry to meet with Laura and Emily to see if they can recreate his template on the current (wordpress) HRV pages.

2) Logo

- Deb requested that the current logo be updated to include the word "CARES" instead of "WAC". We are waiting to see whether it can be changed.

3) Articles in the Log

- Deborah would like articles previously provided by WAC to be attributed to CARES. Additionally, she suggested that we regularly publish articles in the log. Potential future article suggestions included:
 - cleaning gutters;
 - Keeping storm drains clear
 - leaving tall grasses with seed heads on for wildlife
 - When to prune shrubs
 - Standing water and mosquitos
 - Invasive weeds - what they look like and when to pull them.
 - Presentations/Seminars hosted by other groups
- Vanessa suggested using the Columbia CARE newsletter for inspiration. Other sources to use include: Calvin Ball's Newsletter and Office of Sustainability website.

- Ideally these articles can also be posted to the new website.
- On a side note, Vanessa attended a seminar where she received pamphlets on environmentally friendly ways to take care of your lawn. She wondered whether we could provide this sort of info at the office.

ACTION:

- Vanessa to help draft articles for new topics starting with tall grasses
- Deborah to ask Laura when submissions to the newsletter are due. With that info we can plan to schedule articles

2) Budget Priorities

- CARES agreed priorities (transition to battery powered landscape equipment and gas buy back program) were included in letters to CA and HoCo respectively. Should we request feedback? Team agreed it would be good to know whether the requests made it into the budget

ACTION

- Deborah to ask Laura (manager) if she can get us feedback

3) Tree give-away

- Deborah reached out to CA about providing bushes next year in addition to trees. We have approval to offer both at next years give away.

4) Proposed Seminars

- Landscaping - Leah is organizing the landscaping seminar. She confirmed that the plan is to host it in March/April timeframe. She asked the group if the preference was for an overarching talk or for something more specific with tangible things folks can do at home. Folks agreed that the more specific chat would be preferable.
- Deborah suggested offering free soil testing. The group agreed to offering free soil tests at the seminar (these could potentially be paid for out of our sustainability funds)
- Recycling - Scheduled for 14 Jan (7-9PM) at HRV center. Last time, we had 'recycling practice' where folks had to decide whether items could be recycled. The team agreed to use that approach again.

ACTION:

- Leah to contact speaker and schedule seminar
- Leah agreed to find out how many folks took advantage of soil testing last time it was offered

5) Landscaping at Hawthorn Center (Hawthorn green)

Deb requested native plants be used and CA was happy to oblige

6) Sustainability Projects (HRV \$50-\$60K which CA is holding for us)

- We agreed to move forward with pollinator garden and path repair at last meeting. Next steps is to reach out to Laura re getting this on the HRV Board's agenda (next meeting is 8 Dec) for approval
- During the meeting folks discussed additional ways to use the money. These include
 - Soil Tests
 - Additional trees/shrubs for the give-away
 - Funds to replant area recently cleared by weed warriors
- Vanessa suggested we do a community building event - a CARES Fair - where people could learn about what we're doing

ACTION

- Put 2 planned projects forward + one for replanting areas (Deborah to draft) for inclusion in the Dec meeting.
((**Question:** should we put soil tests and additional trees in as well?))
- Vanessa to reach out to Emily to find about what events are planned whether we could host something and when.

NEW ITEMS

- 1- RAC requirements - the RAC is preparing to update current guidelines,
 - Current document is pretty comprehensive (and very long). Bill suggested adding links regarding sustainability to share the info without making the document longer. Vanessa pointed out a lack of language regarding use of pesticides. Perhaps point them to an article from MD.
 - Discussion revolved around some outdated programs (ie CA Cost-sharing program) and why certain things still require an application (rain barrels); downspouts (discharging to grass vice concrete); and exterior lighting (light pollution)
 - Changes to RAC guidelines will be submitted to Tanya for consideration when the guidelines are updated in the fall. Perhaps get suggestion to Tanya by Jan?

ACTION

Team to provide any additional suggestions to Bill for review at our January meeting.

2- Emily suggested we add a "Ask CARES" section to the newsletter. We need to determine whether we can support this. We assume that some questions will need research or be out of our area of expertise. We also assume that the questions will be sent to the office and forwarded to the team. We decided to support the idea so we can see what sort of questions we receive.

ACTION

Deborah to let Emily know that we will support.

3-ClickIt FixIt (was TellHoCo)

Deborah asked whether we thought it was reasonable to look through the tickets submitted by our neighbors and see where they are, how many have been resolved and how long it took. Then perhaps send out thank you's to residents.

4-identifying weedy areas in the village

We have some new weed warriors in the area. Perhaps we should start asking folks to let us know if they see areas that need attention. Since it's winter, it's not the best time to start. Suggestion was made that we start with an article id'ing a weed and asking folks to let us know if they see it. This would be timed with the best time find/pull that week.

5-New members

Should we try to expand the group, In general yes, If we plan to ask folks to help id weeds, it seems wise to start with weed warriors.

Meeting concluded at 8:20PM.