

Report of from the ECAB Beautification Committee

1. Planned volunteer work on the traffic islands is nearly completed for this season, except for the Little Broad islands. Weeding and edging and mulching around the trees, to protect them from the mowers, has been accomplished. We are still trying to get the weeds until control in the new plantings of the “Little Broad islands.” The next planned work session will be Monday evening, July 23rd, at 6:30 PM, at which time we will likely do more work on those islands.

We are also tentatively planning a “mulch day” for the Little Broad Islands on October, Saturday the 6th, from 1-3 PM. The city is willing to provide mulch if we can provide the volunteers to help. While we may be able to get some high school students volunteering to fulfill their community volunteer duties, it will be important to have many neighbors there to bring their wheelbarrows and other tools, and to help with the work and supervision.

2. On Wednesday, June 20th, Andrew Mitchell, Brad Colegate and Travis Damicone had a productive meeting with Tina Mohn, Natural Resource and Property Manager for Columbus Recreation and Parks Department, and two of her colleagues, to discuss matters related to the Eastmoor traffic islands. Here is a summary of the responses and information we received:

Q. What does the city do to care for the traffic islands?

A. The city is mowing the islands as of this year, instead of hiring private subcontractors as has been done in the past. Weather and equipment allows for an expected 12-14 day rotation. The rotation is the same on all of our islands and all other city islands. This is less often than they (and our residents) would prefer, but there are factors, which in addition to the weather,

hinder a more frequent rotation. Chief among these is a short supply of seasonal/temporary workers. (The rotation for any given week or weeks may be shorter than 12-14 days if weather and manpower allow.)

Q. Can ECA hire a landscaping company to do additional mowings between the city mowings?

A. Yes, perhaps (and in the context of an MOU, see below) but that would be very difficult to coordinate, as weather, worker absences, etc. make the mowing dates hard to predict. (ECA members also note that this would be a very expensive option which may not fit the budget.) Residents are prohibited from mowing the islands themselves, or using other power equipment on the islands.

Q. Does the city apply broadleaf weed control/herbicides to the islands?

A. The city will not be providing any application of herbicides to the islands (beyond what has already taken place at the Little Broad islands when they were first established). City policy prohibits residents from applying chemicals themselves. Any application of herbicides/pesticides, etc., requires a license from the ODA, and also any third party landscaper who is contracted to do such work must be registered with the city. So chemicals are not totally forbidden but must be applied by qualified persons; also the city is not particularly encouraging use of such chemicals and is attempting to move away from, or minimize, their use. The city is currently researching alternatives and doing trial applications of them to reduce the use of chemicals (for environmental concerns) within city parks; no set policy is in place yet.

Q. Is fertilization of the islands (which ECA contracts out) advisable?

A. The city does not encourage fertilization, as it makes the grass grow faster, making it hard to keep up with the mowing. (Fertilization of the islands was done by ECA more for the benefit of the young trees than the grass, and has already been done this year, but discontinuation of this practice for next year will be considered, as the trees are now well-established. An alternate plan would be to do fall fertilization in 2019 to strengthen the grass as the weeds are starting to die back.)

Q. Are residents allowed to plant flowers and vegetables on the islands?

A. Private gardens on the islands, which are city property, are prohibited, and interfere with mowing and maintenance of the islands.

Q. Is the mulching and weeding around the trees we are currently doing permissible? Will the city help with mulching?

A. Yes, the mulching and weeding are permissible but should be performed within the context of a MOU (Memorandum of Understanding), a formal agreement with the city outlining what things ECA intends to do/is permitted to do to care for the islands, and what the city will do. An MOU will be drafted by the ECAB Board to present to the city for their approval.

The city, as mentioned above, also is willing to provide bulk mulch for volunteer events once yearly, if arrangements are made early in the year, as supplies are limited.

Q. If people are unhappy with the island maintenance, what is the most effective way to register their complaint?

A. Call the 311 Columbus city help center at (614) 645-3111.

Respectfully submitted,
Brad Colegate and Andrew Mitchell,
Co-chairs of Beautification Committee for ECAB

