



NOTES FROM LAUREL STREET SITE VISIT OF JULY 25, 2022

- Jerry Friedman and Penny Antonoglou from Cambridge DPW had an informal site meeting with Laurel Street residents who had additional questions based on the two previous "formal" virtual community meetings of November 18, 2020 and October 27, 2021.
- DPW recapped the need to bring sidewalks into accessibility compliance as part of the work, and some of the tools we have to deal with narrow sidewalks (i.e., bump-outs around obstructions on the "parking" side of the street) and the need to sometimes apply to the Massachusetts Architectural Access Board for a variance if we can't make both sides accessible.
- DPW recapped what we had presented in October 2021:
 - Proposal to switch parking to "odd" side of street
 - Opportunity for one or two new trees on odd side in conjunction with the parking switch
- DPW explained that the above recommendation which was presented in October 2021 was based on City's concern that existing sidewalk at #10 is actually on private property. DPW had initially assumed that we would have to bump sidewalk out at #10, resulting in loss of 4 parking spaces if parking were to be kept on the "even" side. We didn't believe neighbors would be in favor of this much parking loss. **That was the main reason the October 2021 recommendation was to switch parking.**
 - **Subsequent internal DPW discussions, however,** led to conclusion that we would **not** need to bump out the sidewalk at #10, as long as the owners at #10 had no objection to maintaining the status quo (i.e., sidewalk is actually on their property).
- The conclusion from the above clarification about the sidewalk at #10, is that parking can remain on the even side, or switch to the odd side, with the result being about the same number of parking spaces in each case. (See attached letter and plan for more details on the parking count for each scheme.)
- The group discussed pros and cons of switching the parking:
 - Switching the parking would change the route which "parkers" would take going to and from Laurel St. Parkers would need to approach from Pleasant and depart towards River if the parking were switched to odd side.
 - We discussed whether it would be easier or harder for trucks to use the APA driveway, depending on which side parking was on.
 - Switching parking to odd side allows for one or two new trees on the street. Keeping parking on even side might allow for one new tree.
 - It was pointed out that several young children live and play on the "even" sidewalk; and there was a concern expressed that switching parking might increase danger to children, since moving vehicles would be adjacent to the "even" sidewalk.

- The best opportunities for adding trees appears to be on the odd side of street (where there are no overhead wires), towards the Pleasant St end, and this requires switching of parking.
- DPW was asked if the existing fire hydrant near #14 could be moved to River Street corner or eliminated entirely.
 - DPW explained that Cambridge Fire Dept has final say on hydrant location changes, and we will consult them about this request.
 - A clear majority of residents at the meeting were in favor of keeping the hydrant at or near its present location for fire protection purposes.
- DPW was asked if Laurel Street could be made one-way, heading "away" from River Street. There is a sense that there is a lot of cut-through traffic directed by Waze/Google Maps, possibly from the Putnam/Waverly area, northbound on Laurel towards River Street.
 - Changes of street directions would need to be discussed with Traffic Dept., and typically require a clear consensus from impacted abutters (and would not have to negatively impact other streets).
 - There did not appear to be a consensus on the one-way street idea from the neighbors in attendance.
 - It should be noted that the final design/construction of the street will not preclude one-way traffic if a consensus of neighbors desire this, and if the Traffic Dept. agrees.
- The group reviewed the odd-side section of sidewalk from Pleasant Street to the north side of the APA property. Community members have planted a narrow garden between the back of sidewalk and the chain link fence.
 - DPW explained how there was not the required 48-inch clear width of sidewalk in this location, partly due to the plants overhanging the sidewalk, and possibly due to the actual width of the concrete sidewalk (it is hard to measure at the bottom of the plants due to the garden plant growth and spillover of soil from the garden).
 - This area will need to be disturbed by sidewalk construction, and the sidewalk might need to be slightly widened, in order for the sidewalk and the plantings to co-exist. More will become apparent once construction starts.
 - DPW will work with neighbors on determining, and providing, replacement plantings as part of the project. Plants will need to be something which do not tend to overhang and obstruct the sidewalk.
- The group discussed addition of trees. The majority of the group was in favor of trying to add trees, but was concerned about loss of parking if the sidewalk were bumped out solely to accommodate new trees.
 - DPW agreed to take another look to see if there are some "half parking" spaces where perhaps a tree or two could fit without parking loss.
 - DPW will look at the River Street end of the block, where the sidewalk is already planned to be bumped out, and maybe a tree could fit.
 - DPW mentioned the City's "Back of Sidewalk" tree planting program, which plants trees on private properties of interested abutters (tree must be within 20 feet of the sidewalk so that it will provide public benefit). **Abutters interested in this program should contact Abby Bentley at abentley@cambridgema.gov.**