

- WHEREAS: Cambridge's tree canopy has shrunk by nearly 20% over the last decade; and
- WHEREAS: Amendments made to the Tree Protection Ordinance (TPO) last year which restrict the removal of "significant trees" on private property will expire on March 11, 2020 if no action is taken; and
- WHEREAS: On November 12, 2019, the city and consultants presented a thorough and impressive report to the Health & Environment Committee on a long term approach to reversing the canopy decline, rooted in recommendations from the Urban Forest Master Plan Task Force which met 13 times between June 2018 and April 2019; and
- WHEREAS: The report, which contains numerous recommendations on lasting changes that should be made to the TPO, was originally scheduled to be released in June 2019 but was delayed; and
- WHEREAS: The report is excellent and deserves careful deliberation and discussion by the city council, and it would be a great disservice to rush this conversation in an attempt to overhaul the ordinance ahead of the March 11, 2020 expiration date; and
- WHEREAS: At the same time, it would be a travesty to let the temporary amendments to the TPO expire without any new language, as doing so would almost certainly result in a massive citywide cutting spree, worsening our canopy decline and erasing any positive impact the temporary amendments might have had; now therefore be it

ORDERED: That section 8.66.055 of the municipal ordinances of the City of Cambridge, entitled “Procedure for Other Significant Tree Removals” be amend by substitution to read as follows:

“For any significant tree removal not subject to 8.66.050, a permit will be required from the City Arborist. In all cases, the City Arborist shall keep a record of the type and size of tree removed, the reason for the removal, photographs of the tree documenting the reason for removal, the date, the contractor(s) involved, and the name and address of the property owner. No such permits will be issued until December 31, 2020 or sooner by further amendment to this section, except for emergency circumstances, significant utility infrastructure projects undertaken pursuant to State or Federal regulations or programs, for City park projects, or where a tree poses significant negative impact to an adjacent existing structure, or for dead or dangerous trees, or where a lot is of such density with existing trees that the removal of certain significant trees is considered beneficial to the health of the tree canopy. Any tree removed in violation of this section, prior to December 31, 2020, shall require a payment into the tree replacement fund as per section 8.66.070 according to a schedule as follows: 10% of the replacement value for property owners who qualify for the City of Cambridge residential real property tax exemption, no fee for property owners that receive established forms of financial assistance, and the full replacement cost in all other circumstances. The value to be paid into the tree replacement fund shall be equivalent to the cost of purchasing, planting, watering and maintaining said Replacement Trees for a period of not less than five years.”

RESOLVED: That the City Council go on record expressing a clear intent to pass comprehensive amendments to the TPO, based off the recommendations of the task force, well ahead the new proposed deadline of December 2020.