

Meeting Date: February 9, 2022

Meeting Notes by: Cynthia Smith and Sophia Emperador

Virtual meeting held via Zoom

Committee Member Attendees: Maggie Booz, Cindy Carpenter, Sara Cohen, Paula Cortes, Chantal Eide, Sophia Emperador, Sandra Fairbank, Maria Hottelet, Joan Krizack, Ahron Lerman, Ruth Loetterle, Tracy Orr, Cynthia Smith.

Staff Attendees: Abby Bentley, Kevin Beuttell, Ellen Coppinger, Dave Lefcourt, Andrew Putnam, Kate Riley, Erik Thorkildsen

A. Eric Thorkildsen (CDD), Planning Board Agenda Items

1. Jefferson Park Update (Feb. 15 Planning Board Meeting)

Updates to the Jefferson Park Plan according to Erik:

- Refinement to street and block pattern.
- Refinement to park and courtyard areas
- Additional trees along Rindge Avenue
- Refinement to allée along Main Street in project.
- Refinement to Species list
- Refinement to design of perimeter multi-use path along property line at rail corridor.

Committee Comments requiring possible follow-up letter to CHA and/or follow-up by DPW City Arborist staff:

- CPP Committee requested that plans be forwarded to committee (it may also be on web site.)
- The majority of tree species proposed by Brown and Rowe as shown on the plan are primarily non-native except a few e. g. Hackberry. Recommend planting of additional native tree species as part of the plan.
- In particular, plan proposes a high quantity of non-native Gingko Trees proposed (+/- 40) was noted and these are small to begin with and take a long time to be established.
- Requested confirmation of tree planting along Multi—use Trail
- Committee to review initial comments made to design team when they presented previously and cross-reference with current plan to confirm whether any of CPP comments were incorporated into their design.

2. Other Projects Going before Planning Board next Month:

a. Alewife Park (PB-387) (Gensler) at 62 Whittemore Avenue summary

- Renovation of 2 buildings; one tear down; 3 new Bio-tech Building and new Parking Garage
- Abuts football and soccer fields at Danehy Park
- 4 Vehicular Gates proposed will restrict cut through traffic.
- No CPP comments

b. 62 Whittemore Avenue CPP Comments

- Site Plan configurations—It was noted that the Garage seems to have the best view into the site and blocks views from the proposed building.
- Card controlled system for vehicles.
- Bike and pedestrian routes through site exists for use by building users and neighborhood.
- Project could benefit from the addition of pedestrian and bicycle oriented way-finding for public users.
- Question asked about pedestrian oriented and vehicular street lighting proposed.
- 4 ac of natural habitat was commended.
- Concern expressed about impacts to ground nesting bird species and the need to fence off certain areas.
- CPP needs to get the design plans and will formulate a letter summarizing our concerns.

3. Alewife Overlay Petition

- There is a petition circulating that calls for a moratorium on all lab construction at Alewife.
- CPP –no action.

B. City Council Discussion of Golf Course Site-Update - summary

- There was a Policy Order and Special Meeting regarding the city Golf Course site and whether it could be a future site for housing.
- A meeting was held and many people came out to speak out against idea of siting housing at the golf course site.
- It was clarified that the Golf Course is a buffer to the Fresh Pond Reservation as an important aquifer buffer making all or most of the site not feasible for housing or any form of development.
- City staff will review feasibility of housing accommodation at intersection of Blanchard Road and Concord Avenue.

C. Discussion of upcoming City Manager Search

- The Current city manager is leaving in June 2022.
- The search process for a new City Manager is well underway and Randy Frank has been hired to head up the search Committee. It's a 5 month process.
- It will be critical to weigh in on development, zoning and urban forest canopy issues.
- Important to make sure city manager is pro urban open space / urban forest and not just pro-development
- Action Item: the CPP should write a letter to the Search Committee and request a meeting to share our thoughts.
- Town Hall is on Feb. 16

D. Ongoing City Zoning Discussion

- Erik T. said the city and its staff have been looking at and discussing ways to make zoning more flexible so that more housing can be accommodated that will be for the middle class.

- Discussions include relaxing single family zoning. For instance if approved it might allow two residences on a lot instead of one.
- Discussions are ongoing and nothing has been decided yet.

E. Memorial Drive (DCR) Improvement Project Update

- At the last DCR meeting with the community, there were many concerns expressed about the proposed design of the road diet, expanded multi-use path and open space improvements.
- CPP and many others including the Cambridge Historic Commission wrote letters of comment.
- Mass Historic Commission was not consulted by the DCR and design team about the project.
- MEPA (Commonwealth Massachusetts Environmental Protection Agency asked the DCR to do more studies and a more extensive public process regarding environmental impacts including impacts to the mature iconic London Plane (Sycamore) trees.
- MEPA will require an Environmental Impact Review of the project.
- In light of all the concerns that were expressed, the DCR will be meeting with additional city advocates and committees to review their concerns at a more granular level before moving ahead on the construction documents.

F. City Policy of Property Owner Input on street trees in front of their property:

- Dave Lefcourt explained the city's policy which is to allow Homeowners to have input on the tree species selection and whether a tree is planted in front of their house.
- Typically a Homeowner is engaged in a dialogue before a tree is planted. The city tries to convince them to allow the planting of a tree in appropriate locations. Large Shade Trees are favored over smaller ornamental trees wherever possible.
- More education of homeowners is needed and the policy may need to be updated.
- Sometime Homeowners complain directly to the City Manager about street trees planted in front of their house.
- We need to find ways to support our Urban Forestry staff on these issues and the residents could benefit from greater education on the subject.
- The City is surveying areas where additional trees can be planted.
- One example of a neighborhood that has seen the benefit of street trees is East Cambridge. Historically many residents were not in favor of tree plantings but this has changed.
- A strategy that can work is to have neighbors go door to door to advocate for street tree planting. (Peer pressure works!)

G. Updated Tree Well Data from Arborist team:

- Question originated from CPP on feasibility and quantification of tree pit expansion throughout the City
- Time period: Improvement Spring 2019 – Fall 2021 for ROW (Right of Way) trees, or trees planted in planting strips or along streets
- Data: 612 No (did not require new pit/expansion of well), 518 Yes (new or expanded tree wells), 335 (blank/no data) = Sub-total 1465
- Some new areas can be identified as part of a new project such as a Chapter 90 project

- More task types were added to the database to help keep track of new and expanded wells for future planting seasons.

H. Upcoming Meeting in March/April:

- Sophia said that she would like to have Sub-Committee Updates
- Arborist Staff will provide CPP an update in April on the Urban Forest Master Plan Recommendations.
- CPP would like to have a discussion about how we can use the information from the CPP Master Plan to help guide our committee and city staff work and to ensure it is a living document.
- Andrew Putnam reported that the city DPW will be commissioning soil studies for certain sites along the Charles River to get more information about the soil here. He plans on doing a city presentation in April to pertinent groups in city.
- Project Update on Tobin School

I. Other Miscellaneous Items for Future discussion :

- Sophia E. will get outstanding meeting notes out for approval prior to next month's meeting.
- Meeting Notes Template
- Thoughts on City Manager search as it relates to Urban Forest concerns
- Follow-up discussion on IQHQ Jerry's Pond (rules & regs reL having an extra meeting on this)