

City of Cambridge Committee on Public Planting

Meeting Minutes – December 13, 2023 - 5:30-7:00 pm

Hybrid Meeting via Zoom & at DPW - 147 Hampshire St.

Attendance (* indicates virtual attendance)

CPP Members: Ahron Lerman*, Amira Valliani*, Archana Venkataraman*, Cindy Carpenter*, Chantal Eide, Ray Fahrner, Robb Johnson, Gretchen Friesinger; Sandra Fairbank*, Sara Cohen, Sophia Emperador, Tracey Orr*, Cynthia Smith*, Uriel Bulow*, Vinita Bhaskar *

Members not in attendance: Maggie Booz; Angela Zhong, Ruth Loetterle

DPW/City of Cambridge: Abby Bentley, Ellen Coppinger, Kevin Beuttell, Andrew Putnam, Kristen Kelleher*

Guests & members of the public: Lisa Mosczynski, Jeb Mays; Charles Teague; Heather Hoffman

Meeting notes submitted by: Robb Johnson

Agenda Items:

Meeting called to order at 5:35 pm.

- **Review previous meeting minutes and minutes of Linear Park Site Visit edits/// motions/// votes**

Based on discussion, minutes of Site Walk will be revised for review at January meeting. No vote was taken on them.

Amira moved and Sara seconded a motion to approve the November minutes. Discussion: Robb Johnson was absent, not present. All present voted to accept the minutes, subject to that correction on the attendance.

- **Committee priorities for 2024**

- **Review of brainstorming session (Nov mtg) and summary of topics that were brought up by the committee.**

Sophia and Cindy reviewed the results (shared onscreen via Google Doc) of the CPP Brainstorming Session 2023, held at the November meeting.

CPP Comments:

Suggestions were made to add a few items and to move or edit others. Sophia captured these edits in real time in the Google doc.

Action Items:

Sophia will edit the document to further clarify some items and capture comments of those in attendance. Part of that will be to further refine the grouping of ideas under the subcommittees that should further evaluate them.

- **Introduction of the subcommittees and opportunities to sign up for the different working groups.**

Sophia reviewed the goal of getting subcommittees up and running early in the new year, and that subcommittees would be charged with meeting to review brainstormed

ideas and then report back to the full CPP re: what they feel priority activities in their area should be. Subcommittees can meet outside on their own time. As long as no more than seven (7) CPP members are present, it is not necessary to provide public notice. Goal is for each committee to meet before February meeting in order to provide a report on a proposed short-list of near-term priorities for the Committee.

CPP Comments:

There was some discussion about refining the number, scope and focus of the committees, with a decision to add one tentatively called “Implementation/Enforcement”.

For future/further discussion:

When Committees report on the short-list of possible priorities in February, staff and other committee members may be able to inform the prioritization process by sharing relevant history and context about actions already underway, proposed, or previously attempted.

Action Items:

Sophia and Cindy will clean up the list of brainstormed ideas and which committee should consider them. Sophia will send out Committee list, ask CPP members to sign up for one or more committees. At the meeting, the members indicated below volunteered to join (or lead) the indicated committees:

Implementation/Enforcement: Chantal Eide (lead), Robb Johnson, Ray Fahrer

Policy development: Cynthia Smith (lead for first meeting) Sandra Fairbank, Archana Venkataraman. Based on prior interest, Maggie Booz was also nominated for this committee.

Outreach: Cindy Carpenter (lead); Tracy Orr. Based on prior participation, Ruth Loetterle, was also proposed to continue on this committee.

CPP Governance: Sara Cohen (lead), Sophia Emperador, Chantal Eide.

Leads need to organize committee meetings before the February CPP meeting, and Committee updates will again be a part of future CPP meetings.

- **Updates from City Arborist**

- The Cambridge Urban Forest Friends newsletter signup is now live on the Cambridge.gov website. See the blue button halfway down this page: [Help Cambridge Trees - City of Cambridge, MA \(cambridgema.gov\)](https://www.cambridgema.gov/cambridge-trees)
- Abby reports that tree-planting is slowing down for the season. The contractor (Leahy) is all done with ball and burlap trees. In-house crews are still planting some bare-root trees. The end total of trees planted for the fall season is projected to meet the goal of 550. The total FY24 goal (fall and spring) is approximately 1175 – increasing to 1250 by FY25. The fiscal year starts July 1.
- CPP Comments:
What are the implications of the state’s new 2030 Climate Action Plan on Cambridge’s Urban Forest?

Staff comment: Appears to dovetail fairly well with current plans... don't see a huge impact.

CPP Comments:

Governor's Forests as Climate Solutions report expected as soon as Friday. Will have recommendations for more state investment – and possibly grant funding for tree planting -- but may not otherwise have a lot of direct ramifications for Cambridge. Robb will forward link when out.

- **DCR 2023 Tree Stewards Training - quick recap and review of resources by Cindy Carpenter**

Cindy shared about resources available through the DCR Urban and Community Forestry program. She encourages members to check out for available resources, fact sheets, recordings and upcoming trainings. Has some helpful insights into legal constraints etc. on tree protection.

- **Other Business/Closing**

- **Reminder: complete the State Ethics Training ASAP**

- Sophia reminded folks to complete the training by end of the year. (See email from Diane LeBlanc 10/26/23 – Sophia can resend link if you need it.)

- **IQHQ development:**

- Sophia shared that Ruth asked if we could have a meeting with IQHQ about their development plans adjacent to the linear path. They already have approvals for Main Campus. Upcoming Conservation Commission meeting relates to their plans for Jerry's Pond. Sophia noted that IQHQ came before the CPP very early on, when it was unclear how CPP comments might be taken into account. Staff will reach out to Ruth to clarify what would be most helpful at this point. Sandra is interested to know more and get an update. Part of interest is how public access paths may take pressure off of the linear path. Both Jerry's Pond and Main Campus have public access components. Main Campus is all approved.

- **Cambridge Cemetery:**

- Sandra asked about whether Cambridge Cemetery is working on a master plan. Staff reported that it is nearly wrapped up, and some of those present worked on it. Kevin is managing the master plan process. Sophia is on advisory committee. One idea involves planting more trees and earning Arboretum status. Tree preservation is needed in the meantime. Different levels of arboretum certification. Already qualifies for lowest level – but can get to level 2 with some effort. Other goals include raising awareness that it's open to public – draw more users, more awareness. Cynthia commented that she was involved in the past. She thinks it might be good to get a presentation from them --- what are their plans, what could we comment on – where are there opportunities to do more with Cambridge's tree issues – on land under City's ownership. They could benefit from hearing from Committee. Planning process is basically done – Kevin is happy to arrange a report to the CPP on status and implementation ideas.

- **Major projects anticipated in coming year.**

- Kevin reported that Raymond Park and Rafferty Park will be major projects in coming year. Also Danahy/New Street Connector Path; Cemetery Master Plan will also have some low-hanging-fruit implementation – if not next year, the year after. Question

about focus on native vs. exotics in terms of meeting Arbortem status. Kevin noted Arboretum status doesn't need to drive everything. Level 2 requires 100 kinds of woody plants. In response to a question, Kevin noted that yes, the City recently purchased a former BBN playing field across from Fresh Pond. The City is leaving options open for the long-term use of that property, but installed a cricket pitch for now. They want to consider this property in conjunction with a City-wide look at which City-owned parcels are best for open space vs. Housing, etc. Another recent acquisition is a long-narrow parking lot on Sherman Street. It could be a future park after some drainage work. Pat's Towing was also bought by City recently. Design work on the Grand Junction Path is also expected to advance.

- **Public Comment**

None.

- **The meeting adjourned at 6:47 pm.**

Next meeting: Our next Zoom meeting will be held on January 10, 2024, at 5:30pm and will be advertised to the public in advance.