

Committee on PUBLIC PLANTING

MINUTES OF MEETING March 13, 2019

PRESENT: Seanna Berry; Chantal Eide; Nancy Phillips; Sophia Emperador; Ann MacAdam; MaryAnn Doiran; Nancy Jordalen; Norrie Werkal; Florrie Wescoat; Cynthia Smith.

MEETING NOTES BY: Cynthia Smith

STAFF PRESENT: Erik Thorkildsen, CDD; John Nardone, DPW; Dave Lefcourt, DPW; Andrew Putnam, DPW.

AGENDA ITEMS

1. February Minutes: Approved with minor corrections.
2. VASSAR STREET STREET TREE IMPROVEMENT PROJECT—PPT Presentation by Todd Robinson, MIT Office of Campus Planning. (Confirm if city has PPT for records)
 - Todd explained that for Vassar Street, MIT is following the International Standards for Arboriculture in planting and evaluating trees. (ISA).
 - Their criteria for health includes: evaluation of the vigor of branches, foliage indicators, and trunk evaluation and other associated signs of health.
 - In general for the Phase One Street Trees on Vassar Street: the Chinese Elms are not doing well and the ginkgos are also not doing well.
 - West Vassar Street had project contractor work and irrigation work was undertaken in 2014 as a follow-up to the initial installation. From 2016-present, the trees have done better.
 - Existing soil in the treeways were evaluated by UMASS Amherst Extension. The results showed a low Cat Ion (ability to uptake minerals).
 - For Evaluation of Phase One Vassar Street: Pine and Swallow, Bartlett Tree, and Corbett Irrigation (MIT's irrigation contractor for all projects) were involved in the evaluation. A bubbler irrigation design was used. SBSS (Sand-based structural soil was installed--+/ - 875 cubic feet per tree. ((1,000 cu ft. is considered more optimal); 45,000 cu ft. total.
 - Vassar Street is owned by city of Cambridge. There is an MOU with the city & MIT--MIT has agreed to take care of Vassar Street for the next 75 years.
 - Five (5) trees were removed for evaluation in the Infrastructure study that MIT undertook to determine health of trees and associated root causes.
 - Re: Contractor installation "history": For East Vassar Street, Modern Continental did the installation and for some reason the LA's were not involved in any construction administration. It is not clear whether the Pine and Swallow spec for SBSS was followed. There was No LA involved and no soil scientist involved in construction administration.
 - For West Vassar Street, Phase 2, Brightview (formerly ValleyCrest) did the installation and these trees have fared much better.
 - One major Problem on the Phase 1 (E. Vassar St.) according to Todd was mostly likely that the Irrigation has been turned off at the source for a long period of time and therefore, no water was getting to the trees.

- The trees evaluated in the study tested positive for Phytophthora (aka root rot-a common sign of stressed out trees.)
- The trees were also found to have been planted 6"-12" too low in most cases.
- For Phase Two and for future tree planting installations, MIT and their consultants are committed to monitoring the health of the trees and the watering systems, etc. MIT has instituted better relations between MIT Planning and Construction entities for these kinds of projects to insure a more seamless and quality result. They also see the value in undertaking and carrying out an annual maintenance plan and having ongoing dialogue with their consultants on a variety of tree related issues.
- Micro-climatic considerations for Vassar Street include the differing sun orientation of the two sides of the street: The South side (north facing) is extremely shady while the north side (south facing) is extremely sunny. In general the street is considered to be a fairly harsh environment for trees.
- For the evaluation of tree replacements for the dead street trees on East Vassar Street, they used 5 tree species references including tree recommendations from Morton Arboretum in Illinois, the U Conn Data Base criteria, the Cambridge Tree List, and the NYC list to name a few of the references reviewed. They have also reviewed Dirr, Bassuk, and Harrison Flint references.
- After reviewing the references and evaluating their criteria, MIT initially came up with a short list of 20 trees for consideration. Some of the initial tree selections have been since eliminated from consideration: Hackberry is no longer on the list; Quercus palustris (Pin Oak) was added back in because it does so well on Campus even though it is over-planted in Cambridge(genus is 9% of canopy). Maple is also over-planted as are other species. Plane Trees were considered too big and were not considered for the list.
- MIT has come up with a short list of 4-5 recommended trees for consideration for Vassar Street that will be planted with some kind of positive rhythm or clustering for maximum effect. (An exact plan showing the clustering was not included as part of the presentation.)
- Other things MIT is focusing on for positive benefit to the existing and replacement trees include: focusing on drainage issues; employing the use of compost tea for use in the tree zones; and reducing the amount of salt used in the winter snow removal process.
- The tree replacement installations are planned for before Spring 2020.
- The size of the replacement trees are thought to be 2 ½"-3" caliper at time of planting. There will be an attempt to educate and communicate to the campus and public through the use of Blue Signs at time of installation that say something like, " I'm a young tree, please take care of me." The overall spacing ranges between 20' to 30'-0" on center spacing with a staggered arrangement between rows.
- The Committee asked about why there were not more "Native" street tree species on the list. Todd did not have an explanation for why.
- The Committee requested that Todd send his ppt show to the city. For any follow up, Todd can be reached at toddrobi@mit.edu.

3. SUPT. OF URBAN FOREST AND LANDSCAPES, ANDREW PUTNAM: Review of Urban Forestry Budget (See attached document.)
 - 1st week of June, the budget will be further adjusted by the city manager. (By June, the budget will be set.)
 - For Last Year's budget, see 2017 budget for 2018. In some cases, money that is not spent will rollover into the next year.
 - Questions included: How does maintenance budget get impacted? Answer: The tree watering contract is over a 3 year period.
 - Compost Tea is a separate fund.
 - The city estimates \$1,800 for each tree including watering over a 3 year period, bio-char, and opening up and/or enlarging tree pits.
 - Forestry crews plow as well as doing tree-related work so plowing is included in the budget.
 - The city is currently responsible for planting 400-600 tree per year.
 - Urban Forestry master plan has identified an immediate need of 2,500 trees to be planted per year. (This means that only 20-30% of the need is being met yearly.)
 - Budget amounts include: operating budget, capital budget, participatory tree fund, etc.
4. CITY ARBORIST, DAVE LEFCOURT: Tree Planting Update.
 - For this year, Dave Lefcourt tagged 400 tree in 6 hours. He tagged the trees at Tuckahoe Nursery in Tuckahoe, NJ and tagged mostly 2 ½" to 3" cal. trees. +/-25 different types were selected.
 - The city has a goal of planting +/- 450 trees this Spring 2019. They will start in Mid-late April for tree planting and be done by the end of May. These trees will all be B&B with metal baskets. The DPW can arrange a field trip for the Committee to see their planting operation if there is interest. They typically plant 7 am to 3 pm.
 - Dave and Andrew are working with Ellen Coppinger, city horticulturalist, to identify additional locations for planting trees in parks and other city properties.
 - The city will also be planting a few conifers this year.
 - Arbor week is the last week of April and there are a number of programs in conjunction with schools including Graham & Parks on Linnaean Street.
 - Tree Removals from Private property now involve a Tree Removal Permit. The city had issued 10 permits so far as of March 13 (date of meeting.) There is additional administrative time that goes into administering this new program that includes the use of a new Form and help to those filling out the form on how to Upload a form, etc. The Criteria for tree removals include: if the tree is dead or diseased; if it is dangerous or uprooted. Residents are required to have a certified arborist sign off on why the trees need to be removed based on the criteria and must receive approval from the city arborists.
5. CDD REP ERIK THORKILDSEN-UPDATES
 - Regarding upcoming Planning Board agenda items involving Landscape related review: 325 Main Street (Kendall Square), a Boston Properties development.
6. OTHER BUSINESS: Recap of February Tree Task Force meeting:

- The presentation was 90 slides. It was very thoughtful. Google Drive access has been created for CPP Documents.
- NEXT MEETING of Urban Forestry MP: The last Thursday of the Month, March 28 at CRLS Media Café.

7. ATTACHMENTS: See Draft Forestry Budget Review for 2020.

The End.