

Cambridge Committee on Public Planting

Meeting Minutes – November 13, 2019

Members present: Joan Krizack; Cynthia Smith; Seanna Berry; Ann MacAdam; Chantal Eide; Florrie Westcoat (co-chair); Sophia Emperador; David Lefcourt (City Arborist/ Tree Warden, DPW); Jerry Friedman (Supervising Engineer, DPW); Owen O’Riordan (Commissioner, DPW); Andrew Putnam (Superintendent of Urban Forest, DPW); Ellen Coppinger (PDW); Erik Thorkildsen (Urban Designer, CDD)

Guests: Alex Levening (CRA); Andrew Sell (Sasaki); Steve Engler (Sasaki);

Meeting notes submitted by: Sophia Emperador

Agenda Items

1. Review of October meeting minutes

- *Requested amendments*
 - Typo - Cambridgepark Drive (name is one word)
 - Minutes approved with minor correction noted above.
- Seanna will upload all prior meeting minutes to the CPP Google Drive

2. Updates from Owen O’Riordan, Commissioner

- *Tree removal from 76 6th Street*
 - A large oak tree (39”) was 2’ away from the building on the property and affecting the foundation. An engineering report confirmed ongoing damage to the sidewalk and the building due to the proximity of the tree. On Nov 1, the foundation wall next to the oak shifted inwards, and bricks fell off, most likely due to the windstorm from the previous night. The gas, water, and electricity were turned off to the building as a result of this damage. Although the tree was deemed healthy, a third party arborist corroborated that the tree (or energy transferred from the tree during the storm) contributed to the damage to the foundation. A meeting was held with inspectional services, and it was determined that the use of an air spade was no longer an option due to the condition of the building. An independent structural engineer determined that the building was an endangerment to the public, and therefore the tree was removed. [Side note: the trunk was saved to be used at a future date potentially.]
 - Having undergone this lengthy process, it would be a good idea to review the tree assessment/removal process and determine how best to address this type of situation in the future, for this type of scenario is most likely to happen again.
- *Salting procedures for winter*

- A new initiative for salt treatment is in place with the application of a salt brine (23% salt solution) 72 hours before a storm to pretreat the major routes in the City and the linear path (works best in high traffic areas). Four large brine tanks are being set up near St Peters field as part of the City's brine-making facility and capacity to build upon this effort in the future.
- All snow-workers have been trained in terms of calibrating equipment when using salt and brine (8hrs training) to reduce salt use and best practices for the brine application. Spray bars have also been installed to apply the brine best.
- Calcium Magnesium (CMA) will not be used this year. A pallet was bought last year, and it was unsuccessful and expensive. The product does not work below 20 degrees, and it leaves surfaces that are still somewhat slippery.
- A letter sent out last year to large property owners about salt use, a reminder will be sent to do a better job to reduce over-salting and to clean up the over-salted areas as well. Trees have been lost throughout the City because of salt use. Creating consciousness about the issue and improving the application within the parks department can also help with the issue.
- See Click Fix is the best way to report any issue during snow events, including over-salting.
- *Urban Forest Master Plan*
 - The plan needs to build on success; right now, it is quite ambitious. It is not possible to plant and take care of an additional 1000 trees and manage planting on private property.

3. Updates from David Lefcourt, City Arborist

- *Fall planting*
 - Planting is underway. All replacement trees have been installed. Approximately 200 trees will be planted (170 bare root) in parks, the traffic island on Aberdeen St, and the golf course.
 - B&B trees are sourced from Tuckahoe Nurseries (NJ), and bare-root trees from Schichtel's Nursery (NY).
- *Tree removal on 88 Mass Ave.*
 - David was contacted by the property owner, 50% of the central leader was gone on a red maple and will be removed. The remaining two ash trees on the property will be pruned.

4. Presentation (re-review) for the Binney/Broadway/Galilei project

- Alex Levening from the CRA
 - The project focuses on the streetscape and intersection redesign in the Kendall Square area. The collaborative design process has a goal to provide 25% design and

guidelines for the area and integrate with other city plans, including multimodal infrastructure. Guidelines are available on the CRA website.

- Boston Properties and Sasaki are undertaking the design of the corner of Broadway and Galileo.
- Steve Engler and Andrew Sell from Sasaki
 - The project at 145 Broadway (Spring 2020). Plans have been submitted and are awaiting final comments.
 - The team took a naturalist and horticultural approach to the selection of plant species for the streetscape (increase functionality and biodiversity) and urban tolerant species. Additionally, the root zone was expanded 2' underneath the cycle track with structural soil to provide more area for the surrounding street trees and plantings.
 - Tree hearing held in 2017 to remove the trees (small crabapples) in the median strips.
 - Seanna B. - What green infrastructure components will be introduced to deal with stormwater, and will the water be diverted towards the trees (more specifically). Stormwater design (CRA has identified some green infrastructure) is mostly underground filtration structures (sized to certain year event) specifically for the removal of phosphates.
 - Cynthia S. - This project should have been introduced earlier on, seems a bit too late when the project is already at CD, commanded for understory planting, approach and, questioned the reasoning behind the asymmetry of the tree planting.
 - Ellen C. - There are quite a few existing trees in the project area, the city requested an assortment of trees. (Original presentation in 2017)
 - Chantal E.- Why are there no plantings on the 2 ft strip on the edge of the cycle track?
 - Engler - The edge of the track was left as concrete due to maintenance issues, minimal soil volume, proximity to the road, and to stay consistent with the larger design.
 - Engler - New surveys rule out areas for additional trees due to underground utilities and space for green infrastructure. Maybe the cycle track could be moved in some areas to allow for shrub and other species with shallow root vegetation.
 - Florrie W - Highly suggested to add more understory vegetation in the areas where the trees can't be installed.
 - Cynthia S. - medians could be planted; it has been done in other areas of the city.
 - Engler: Maintenance in these areas is difficult (lanes would have to be closed- down to 2 lanes now).
 - The CPP recommends to not use Honey Locust as part of the planting scheme (per the recommendation of the Urban Forest Master Plan), they should focus on other species that are not over-used in the city.

5. Updates from Erik Thorkildsen, CDD

- The person who should be consulted on the roundabouts (presentation from prior month) is Patrick Baxter (Traffic, Parking & Transportation Department) at 617-349-4715 or pbaxter@cambridgema.gov.

6. There was no public comment.