

**Cambridge Committee on Public Planting**  
**Meeting Minutes – December 9, 2020 - 5:30-7pm**  
Virtual Meeting via Zoom

**Attendance:**

CPP Members - Maggie Booz (Chair), Chantal Eide, Sophia Emperador, Nancy Jordalen, Joan Krizack, Ann MacAdam, Cynthia Smith.

DPW/City of Cambridge - Abby Bentley (Assistant City Arborist), David Lefcourt (City Arborist/Tree Warden), Owen O’Riordan (Commissioner of Public Works), Andrew Putnam (Superintendent of Urban Forest), Kate Riley, Erik Thorkildsen (CDD).

Others in Attendance - Francesca Holinko

Meeting notes submitted by: Sophia Emperador

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**Agenda Items:**

**1. Review of Minutes from February**

- Requested amendment: Remove the first sentence of the fourth paragraph of “Reactions”, as stated by Cynthia Smith.
- Joan Krizack moved, and Sophia Emperador seconded the motion to approve the November 2020 minutes with said amendments. The vote was unanimous in favor of the motion.

**2. Review of the Tree Protection Ordinance - reaction from Committee members**

- Owen O’Riordan presented a summary of the Tree Protection Ordinance proposals and how they would work. The four different proposed strategies are summarized as:
  1. Remove a tree / replace a tree (tree of any size, regardless of lot size) & no fee or pay full value based on DBH (\$1,000/DBH-inch).
  2. Replace equivalent of DBH removed from the property to mitigate loss, or pay full mitigation cost (similar to current standards to large development projects).
  3. Remove 20”+ and mitigate (fee) 50% of loss based on DBH (for residential property owners).
  4. Remove 10”+ and replace with a 2” tree and pay 50% of mitigation cost into Tree Replacement Fund (Councilor Zondervan’s proposal).
- Committee member reactions and questions:
  - MB- citizens have to hire arborists; why are they required to hire an outside opinion?
    - Owen- it is primarily a liability issue with the City. Otherwise, there would be an inundation with less than serious cases.
    - MB - sees trepidation by City Council because it could scare citizens because of its high upfront cost to inspect a tree (\$300-500); could they appeal to the City Tree Fund?
    - OO - Using the tree fund money more broadly is a good suggestion (with a demonstration of financial need); providing replacement trees from the Tree Fund could be possible moving forward.
  - CS - Are all these options suggestions from the UFMP?
    - OO-no last one (#4) came from Councilor Zondervan
  - DL - Not every 20” tree will have a good canopy. This should be considered when choosing replacements; it’s not always apples to apples.
  - Francesca Holinko - will Homeowners get tree suggestions for replacements?
    - OO - The UFMP does include recommended species
    - CS - Could a set of suggested criteria be created for homeowners?
    - OO - Yes, suggested canopy trees species - these are the types of comments you should submit as a letter to the City Council; these would help delineate goals for the City.
  - CS- The UFMP is a big document. As a private property ordinance, you should state the reason and goals for tree replacement to help people understand why it’s being requested. You don’t want something so

punitive that everyone is up in arms; you want something equitable, refer back to something, and include some context on why it's being done.

- M-we should use the document in a letter as part of our response to DPW.
- CS - there are many additional costs to removing a large tree that a homeowner might not be aware of (such as stump removal/cost, loss of canopy coverage, shade, etc.).
- Preliminary preferences: Maggie - options 2 or 3; AMA - Prefers the 4th approach, seems like the most practical approach of the ones provided; OO, CS - prefer option 3, appears to be the most palatable for City Council and large property developer-friendly.

### **3. Green Roofs Ordinance (update by Joan Krizack)**

The Green Roof Ordinance was presented at the City Council last week; Joan sent a letter to them on behalf of the CPP. She also gave testimony at the meeting in favor of the ordinance, which passed and moved to the Ordinance Committee. City Councilor Patty Nolan responded in agreement to the CPP memo and seemed enthusiastic about the proposal.

### **4. Updates from Abby Bentley, Assistant City Arborist**

- Fall planting is now complete. All trees planted this season were bareroot. Most dead trees were replaced; however, some species replacements will have to wait until spring.
- CS - are any specific species that are always ordered as bareroot. Abby specified that all the trees ordered for next spring would be bareroot. Some species, such as the Nyssa, are more sensitive (will try to order B&B for the fall), and some of the oaks don't transplant as well. This year they are trying Quercus coccinea as a bareroot to see how it responds.
- CS - suggested it would be fun to see a bare-root installation next season, everyone agreed. Abby will set this up next season for the group.

### **5. Upcoming projects from CDD Rep Erik Thorkildsen**

- Special Permit - Cambridge Side Galleria (Planning Board - Dec. 22)
  - PUD with limited design, minor and generic improvements to Canal Park. No landscape plan has been submitted yet.
- Northpoint Cambridge Crossing (January)
  - No plans to show yet, but they will be adding a dog park.
- Thomas Graves Landing (TBD)
  - No plans have been submitted yet, but they have indicated changes to the street front and parking lot entrance, which will affect the existing street trees.
- Vassar St/MIT (TBD)
  - New graduate student dorm planned, opposite Washington Park. There is a planned gap between buildings, CDD is encouraging to maximize the connection of this gap with the park.
- Volpe (TBD)
  - Reviewing draft for the final development plan, no landscape plan has been submitted yet (building massing, arrangement, etc.). CDD has asked that they preserve the perimeter trees. Plans include a huge underground parking garage, so they don't expect to see too many large trees in the plans.
  - CE and MB - were both under the impression that the open space in this plan had been reduced from 2 acres to 1.
  - There is a park proposed at the corner of the site but it is still very early in the planning process.
- Walden St/Mass Ave
  - Very tight site and complicated area. A small roof terrace was proposed. Project has been presented at the planning board, and they seem to like it.

## 6. Follow-up on school planting opportunities

Owen did not have any updates on school plantings, however there is a meeting scheduled for January and he should have news to share by the following meeting.

## 7. Other business

- *CPP membership* - David will see if there are any new applications and report back at the next meeting.
- *General Comments/Questions*
  - Ann MacAdam will be moving from Cambridge and will be leaving the committee. Sad to see her go, and we thank her for her contributions.
  - Francesca Holinko- Introduced herself as a landscape designer and arborist, completed the NY botanical Garden professional horticulture program, and Mass arborist certification design and small installation.
  - CS- Does anyone know if Mt. Auburn Cemetery has sold a property to BB&N or will be developing more open space? MB-the property will be developed into playing fields. The City is in negotiations with BB&N and is considering purchasing the existing playing field on Fresh Pond Parkway.
  - SE - FYI for the group - She inquired and confirmed that any letter of support/opinion sent to the Planning Board must be submitted the Thursday (2pm) before the Planning Board meeting (typically held on Tuesdays).
  - Participatory Budgeting (PB)
    - Francesca Holinko - Mentioned that a “tree committee” was one of the proposals presented and that they also seem to be looking for money to allow for more trees.
    - Andrew shared that they receive many questions from the PB group and his dept. They help with the feasibility and budgeting of the projects, and the identification of practical solutions for the ideas.
    - David - the micro forest idea could mirror the dense cluster planted on a section of little Mass Ave, similar to Stoss’ project (Triangle).
  - The plantings in the Mass Ave median strip will be taken over by Ellen and filled in with ground covers and perennials.
  - MB- North Mass Ave is quite treeless and bleak. Owen mentioned a study done a while back in the Porter Sq area by outside consultants; however, not much has happened in the area since. SE noted how meek the trees look and how the newer plantings all have stunted growth. David mentioned that it might be due to the soils in this area, which have a high clay content. The soil in the tree pits in this area might require a second look to figure out why the trees are doing so poorly.