

Cambridge Committee on Public Planting

Meeting Minutes – September 30, 2019 - 5:30-7pm

Virtual Meeting via Zoom

Attendance: CPP Members - Maggie Booz (co-chair), Paula Cortes, Chantal Eide, Sophia Emperador (co-chair), Michael Hanlon, Joan Krizack, Ann MacAdam, Nancy Philips, Cynthia Smith; Abby Bentley (Assistant City Arborist, DPW), Sara Fontanez (City of Cambridge), David Lefcourt (City Arborist/Tree Warden, DPW), John Nardone (Deputy Public Works Commissioner, DPW), Andrew Putnam (Superintendent of Urban Forest, DPW), Kate Riley (City of Cambridge), Erik Thorkildsen (CDD).

Meeting notes submitted by: Sophia Emperador

Agenda Items

1. Review of February meeting minutes

- Minutes approved.

2. Updates from Abby Bentley (Assistant City Arborist)

- Spring plantings were reduced and delayed due to COVID-19 pandemic. Total numbers for the season are as follows:
 - 181 trees (161 street trees)
 - 81 street trees planted in new tree wells [Participatory Budget (PB)]
 - 65 trees planted in existing wells; no expansion was needed
 - 14 tree wells were expanded
 - 12 trees were planted in the back of sidewalk
 - All trees were planted with biochar, and it will also be added to the fall plantings.
- *Fall plantings*
 - 13 trees planned for the back of sidewalk (shade species were requested)
 - 400(approx.) bare-root trees were ordered, no delivery date, expected in late Oct/early Nov
 - 88 street tree sites selected (56 in east Cambridge for PB trees)
 - 32 new wells cut this fall
 - 32 in existing wells
 - 24 expanded wells (20 sqft)
 - 200-250 planned to be installed in a park setting: Aberdeen Ave, Comeau Field, Dana Park, Hastings Square, Fountain Terrace, Lower Mass Ave, Raymond Park, Library/ Joan Lorentz Park (20 trees), Magazine Beach (maintenance/watering by the Magazine Beach Partners) and the Linear Park (40 trees, native mix).
- The redwoods in Raymond Park are scheduled to be transplanted this fall.
- *Use of staking.*
 - Trees in park settings will be staked unless in groves. Additional protection/staking was requested for the bare root trees on streetscapes.
 - An alternative design was proposed using a tripod staking design vs. the conventional (2) 2x4'. This design could be used in park settings but is challenging to implement in street wells due to the lack of space, proximity to cars, and potential use as bike racks. A modified version of this design could be developed for street trees.
- *Use of biochar*
 - Updates were requested concerning the health of the trees planted with biochar. Although it's too early to see any results/effects an inspection survey can be created to record any changes or improvements over time.

3. Updates from Andrew Putnam (Superintendent of Urban Forest, DPW)

- No new park construction updates.
- *Urban Forest Master Plan.*
 - The final document was delivered. An easy to read, user-friendly summary is being developed (50p), available online.
 - Based on the Master Plan, the following projects will be implemented: new fall plantings, a gravel bed nursery, community outreach efforts with Reed Hilderbrand, signage to promote the adopt-a-tree program, as well as more extensive soil testing that will hopefully start this fall, followed by a soil mitigation plan.
- *Tree cutting moratorium.*
 - The Health and Environment Committee (a subset of the City Council) will meet (October 13) to discuss updates from the Master Plan, long-term tree protection, and general feedback from the public with a recommendation for the moratorium to be moved to the Ordinance Committee.

4. Updates from Erik Thorkildsen, CDD

- *Special Permit - Cambridge Side Galleria (October 6, 2020)*
 - PUD Zone 8 petition was approved Dec/Jan 2019/2020. The hearing will present the overall development scheme for the area, specifically the overall bulk of the buildings and their architectural design (1 of 2 hearings). The proposal includes adding more buildings to the existing site, replacing these with higher story buildings (5-10 floors), while core footprints will remain the same on First Street and Land Blvd.
 - The project proposed in 2 phases: the initial phase consists of building on the existing Sears structure and the landscaping of the Canal Park and Thorndike Way. Phase 2 includes the development of two proposed pocket parks on First St.
 - The landscape plan consists mostly of surface changes (reduce pavement) and new plantings (filling landscape gaps and missing trees). Additionally, the developer will provide \$1million to the city replacement tree fund.
- Members comments:
 - (CS) The committee hadn't seen the original plans or comments for this project, however, more importance should be given to the connection between the parks and access to the river. Perhaps CDD can exert some additional pressure (new housing & retail but missing connections). The landscape proposal shows very timid improvements to the existing Canal Park. Can the developer give more back, they aren't adding much. Can connections be made with the surrounding DCR land?
 - (MB) Similar issues have come forth within the Fresh Pond/Alewife area. There should be an effort to make more demands during the approval process to increase public amenities (public fund by developers to improve overall neighborhood), or green/open spaces.
 - (MB) It's suggested that this discussion become a subcommittee to further develop these thoughts and comments requesting that the Planning Board require that development projects be pushed further when it comes to the surrounding landscape.
 - A letter summarizing these comments will be sent to the Planning Board/CDD on behalf of the committee.

5. Other business:

- *Membership*
 - Nancy Philips will be retiring from the Committee. She will be missed, and her feedback and contributions have been much appreciated while she was a member!
 - The Committee needs new members! Please encourage others to apply.

- *Leadership*
 - Florrie Wescoat has stepped down from the co-chair position and Maggie has nominated Sophia Emperador to be the next co-chair. The new leadership transition will be worked out in the next few months.
- *Cambridge Common 19th Amendment memorial*
 - The memorial to the 19th Amendment (100th anniversary of white women's right to vote) has been in the pipeline for the last few years.
 - (MB) The Cambridge Historical Commission (under the guise to preserve the Common as a town green) has to approve the memorial's siting, and this has not happened yet. Adding more monuments does not follow the preservation guidelines. No one knew about it; it was not brought to City groups, etc. She knows of many citizens who object to the siting of this memorial.
 - (CS) The existing Common is 1/3 of the original green space (based on placards on the Common). It should have a Master Plan and agree to no more monuments. There is an argument for the carrying capacity of the Common for monuments. Boston Common has a policy but has acquiesced to new monuments (3 in the last 30y).
 - (JK) The Cambridge Historical Society will have a meeting to discuss the Monuments in Cambridge, 12-1 pm October 5.
 - (PC) - CPP too often hears about things at the last minute, not a good way to operate. This is a chance to advocate to implement a policy to minimize what happens on the Common.
 - Maggie has volunteered to draft a second letter (the original letter will be shared via email), suggesting that CPP should be consulted on public planting changes of this nature. Additionally, the letter will request a new policy that no new memorials be planned for the Common.

6. There was no public comment.