

## **Cambridge Committee on Public Planting Meeting Minutes – April 14, 2021 - 5:30-7pm**

Virtual Meeting via Zoom

### **Attendance:**

CPP Members: Vinita Bhaskar, Maggie Booz, Cindy Carpenter, Sara Cohen, Paula Cortes, Jill Costello, Chantal Eide, Sophia Emperador, Sandra Fairbank, Maria Hotellet, Joan Krizack, Ahron Lerman, Ruth Loetterle, Tracy Orr, Cynthia Smith.

DPW/City of Cambridge: Abby Bentley, Kara Falise, David Lefcourt, Owen O’Riordan, Andrew Putnam, Kate Riley, Erik Thorkildsen (CDD).

Guests & members of the public: Ethan Bryson( Natural Urban Forests), Ed Le Flore (CSL Consulting), Joe Barr (Traffic, Parking and Transportation Dept, City of Cambridge), Kyle Langlois (VHB), Maya Dutta, Paula Philipps, Jules, Aleigh Lewis, Melissa Ludtke, Mike Nakagawa, Tania Roa and Sue Butler.

Meeting notes submitted by: Sophia Emperador

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### **Agenda Items:**

#### **1. Review of Minutes from March**

- There are no changes; the committee approves the Minutes.

#### **2. Guest speaker: Presentation by Ethan Bryson on Miyawaki Forests**

- Ethan Bryson with Natural Urban Forests has partnered with SUGi to plant dense forests using the Miyawaki method. This re-wilding method is used to bring back native plants and habitat at an accelerated pace. Legacy projects can be found in Tokyo (Meji Jingu forest).
- The methodology is biologically based and self-sustaining after a handful of years. Although it has a higher installation cost and initial maintenance, it also has a higher overall term success rate. 3-4 locations have been identified in Cambridge.
- Seven step process: 1. soil sampling (compaction, moisture, bacterial to microorganism composition); 2. species survey - shrub, understory and canopy layer, species are chosen accordingly, diversity is key; 3. soil engineering; 4. dense plantation (18” on center); 5. maintain forest; 6. self-sustaining forest (2 years), no maintenance after 3 years; 7. In 10y forest is equivalent to 100y forest, producing a full dense forest that eventually thins out over time.
- Comments/Questions:
  - Cynthia S. - When and where is the pilot project? Are there possibilities for public engagement/volunteerism? What support does SUGi provide? Time frame to execute? Interpretation opportunity for education and communication? - Andrew- Danahey Park has been chosen as a final contender and will be planted in the fall with help from volunteers.
  - Jill C.- Soil and root treatments. Have you seen any changes with the soil amendments? Ethan- amendments are a key part of the method and are reflected in healthy growth.
  - Erik T.-cost and fungal/bacterial % What can you do, and how applicable are some of these methods towards street trees? - Ethan- costs range around \$16,00/2000sqft est, based on the availability of materials. Elaine Ingham has published a bit on fungal load importance and its ability to help species' longevity in areas of drought.

- Ahron L.- great method, agree with the concept of the re-wilding but put off by the lingo around the complicated biology and the drama of the claims (no watering, low maintenance, etc.). Skeptical of the method branding.

### 3. **Project presentation by Ed Le Flore (CSL Consulting) and Kyle Langlois (VHB): Multi-agency project Cambridge St/First St/O'Brien Hwy**

- The project consists of 43 acres of residential, office, and lab space in East Cambridge with 11 acres of planned parks/open space. (4.5 million sqft of developed space).
- As part of the project, they will be rebuilding O'Brien Hwy by increasing pedestrian ways, bike lanes, signalization, lighting, and sidewalk improvements (benches, lighting). First Street extension work will begin this year, joining the project through to Lechmere Station.
- Several trees will need to be removed based on conditions and because they impede pedestrian improvements. Two will be relocated, others on the northern side of Cambridge St, and they plan to replace the other trees within the site. 48 new trees will be planted along Cambridge St and McGrath, with 122 new trees in total for the whole project.
- Comments/Questions:
  - Vinita B. - I live in the area and could use more green space so this will be an asset to the area.
  - Maria H.- How will you choose the different species? - Ed- MVVA will choose, along with layered structural soils and irrigation decisions.
  - Ahron L.- Is there an opportunity for forest planting? Space for dense planting since there is such a high density of buildings? - Ed-long-term planning of public roads, conforming to PDU guidelines provided by the state and local guidelines, will take back this feedback to his group.
  - Sara C. - Planting tree pits vs planting strips. There are plantings proposed in the center median and tree pits. Are continuous band plantings possible along Cambridge St and the median? It looks like a good opportunity. - Ed-DOT is strict with these locations, tree placement, and line of sight, but some low growth species will be added in the median strips. There will be structural soil underneath where there are tree pits shown and irrigation.
  - Cynthia S. - Looks like a great design; it could be helpful if you come to our group earlier in the design process since it looks like you are past the approval process. This is more like an informational presentation than looking for actual feedback.

### 4. **Updates by City Arborists**

- Owen O'Riordan presents updates on the Tree Ordinance.
  - The revised ordinance was sent to City Council in late March (the existing ordinance was extended to April 29), but there is no ordinance hearing set as of yet. Presuming it does move from the Ordinance Committee to City Council, it will need two votes for the ordinance to go into effect. The tree-cutting moratorium remains in place.
  - The current amendment requires that anyone removing a tree must receive a permit from the DPW (does not apply to large project review) unless you are in an exceptional category (dead or dangerous tree - emergency deemed by an arborist, uprooted by a storm event,

etc.). City Council added that if the removal of a tree, as identified by an arborist, could improve the canopy on the lot, it could be removed. As it stands, not all tree removal permits have been approved.

- **Comments/Questions:**

- Tracy O.- Is David evaluating every tree submitted for a permit, or is the City working with a private arborist to make these calls? - David - their role is administrative. Tree removal on private property requires an independent arborist. A risk assessment form is required for the application process, and we are consulted as needed. The Cambridge tree removal process is laid out on the website.
- Paula C. - How frequently do you go out to look at the tree rather than rely on arborist pictures? - Abby - We are not allowed to go on private property, but we can do a drive-by if visible from the street or review the Google Street View and see the history if the case isn't clear from the submitted pictures. -Paula- This is problematic; sometimes, this is not adequate and should be reviewed in person; some trees have come down that shouldn't have. -Owen- we are not allowed to go on to private property; it's a liability for us to determine if a tree is deemed dangerous or not. We rely on the professional integrity of arborists to make this determination and engineers if it impacts a structure. There can always be situations where professionals can differ, but we have been reasonably satisfied with what we have received.
- Sandra F.- Can a resident hire someone to review a tree and be from the same company that removes the tree? -Andrew- It only needs to be a certified arborist. This was also discussed with City Council, and we haven't run into situations where people have tried to be sneaky. Sandra- This seems like a conflict of interest. In the case when someone violates the ordinance, does the money go into the tree fund? - Andrew- yes, any violations go into the fund. If the tree can't be replanted, the mitigation goes into the fund. All funds collected go directly into paying for the planting contract.
- **Planting updates from Abby**
  - Spring trees to be delivered tomorrow, and planting begins tomorrow.
  - Cynthia - Would we be able to attend a bare root planting on a typical street tree? - Owen - Entirely possible with social distancing, and we can choose an appropriate location.

## **5. Updates from CDD Rep Erik Thorklidsen**

- There are no project updates to report this month.

## **6. Internal committee business**

- The Google Drive with all CPP materials has been organized and shared with all members and appropriate City staff.