

Committee on Public Planting Meeting Notes

Meeting Date: June 9, 2021

Meeting Notes by: Cynthia Smith and Sophia Emperador

Committee Member Attendees:

Kale Riley; Kris Bradner; Brenden Roy; Belinda Tato; Bryna Charlton; Cindy Carpenter; Sara Cohen; Sophia Emperador; Evan Davenport; Jill Costello; Jackie Reising; Bryna Charlton; Ruth Loetterle; Sandra Fairbanks; Ahron Lerman; Joan Kazak; Paula Cortes; Maggie Booz; Chantal Eide

Staff Attendees:

Abby Bentley, David Lefcourt, Andrew Putnam, Kate Riley, Erik Thorkildsen

Presenters:

Brendon Roy, Construction Program Manager, Tobin School; Evan; Jackie; Bryna Charlton; Caroline Day; Chris Bradner; Dave

Design Development Presentation of Tobin Montessori & Vassal Lane Upper Schools Project: (see ppt on city of Cambridge website)

The Site Location: bordered by Vassal Lane, Concord Avenue in vicinity of Fresh Pond Parkway, Alpine Street and the Armory.

The Site: Existing Tobin Montessori Vassal Lane Upper School and associated grounds and Father Callahan Park (baseball fields).

Significant Existing Vegetation on Site 129 Trees with predominant species being Oaks and Maples.

Trees: To be saved: 35 trees; To be removed: 94 trees; 534 DBH replacement required @3" caliper (178 new replacement trees required.)

Significant Vegetation of Note and Associated Impacts: 10 Large Oak Trees along Vassal Lane are in good condition and are being saved; Large Oak Trees along Pedestrian Path and buffer: Design team is moving the path away from the drip line; The Maples are in mixed condition. Some smaller ones are being transplanted; Trees near Basketball Court: Fair to poor condition ones are already removed.

The Proposed Program: Revitalized (new) school facilities including buildings, drives, arrival court, bus drop off, etc.; new Preschool ; Underground Parking: Reconfigured athletic facilities including a multi-use (soccer) Field; Baseball Field; and several new Playgrounds and small outdoor classroom spaces; some site areas are over deck. Underground drainage structure constraints tree planting on Fresh Pond Parkway site of site.

Proposed Planting Design (Pond /Hills/Upland Themes). Mentioned restoring Pre-Industrial landscape and establishing eco-system types by area. Bio-diversity is a goal.

Proposed Tree Species: Acer rubrum 'Autumn Blaze'; Carpinus caroliniana; Cladrasrus lutea; Betula nigra 'Cully'; Aesculus hippocastanum; Quercus rubra; Acer griseum; Amelanchier sericea; Nyssa sylvatica; Betula papyrifera; Oxydendrum arboretum; Magnolia virginiana;

Discussion and Comments to Design Team and Client Group by Committee related to School Project:

- Applaud the diversity of species proposed.
- Recommend some native tree species replacements such as Tulip Trees in lieu of Horse Chestnut (nuts are a maintenance problem); Basswood to replace *Tilia cordata* (Little Leaf Linden), and introduction of species such as American Holly for 4 seasonal interest and understory.
- Recommend and agree with the use of a range of tree sizes in new planting to achieve replacement goals.
- Discussed measures for Tree Protection. Will there be tree protection enhancements? Will the contractor be working with the city arborists and Dave Lefcourt to ensure the tree protections are optimal? A 6 foot construction fence to protect significant trees and some further soil enhancements were described. Barret Tree Service are the arborists involved.
- Question & Discussion re: Trees on East side of building and whether these could be saved? It was explained the elevation of these existing trees did not work with the proposed design. Furthermore, the project is capturing storm water here with large tanks so they can't be saved.
- The committee expressed concern regarding the quantity of pavement on the west side of the project at the bus drop off area and the need for further mitigation and additional shade trees on this side as a primary recommendation to the design team.
- Related to the it was recommended that the city reach out to the adjacent strip mall owners along the west property line to see if they would consider planting additional shade trees within their property along the school edge. (Brendon Roy explained that these owners include a gas station and repair shop and he thought it was unlikely they would be interested in this.)
- Recommended the use of permeable pavement (granular paths, etc.) and bio-swales in additional areas where possible for additional stormwater capture;
- Recommended some informal planting "drifts" be introduced along soccer and softball field areas to soften the feel of the landscape. The committee was happy that the athletic fields will be natural grass fields not artificial.
- Discussed the possibility of working with the Armory to purchase additional land along the property line there that could afford a better tree line and more shade. The team said they would look into this.
- We said we would provide a short letter with comments.

Dave Lefcourt, City Arborist Updates:

- Ongoing tree planting and watering activities. The city is emphasizing smaller trees be planted for greater survivability using the bare root tree method and following up with ongoing watering over a longer duration. Abby is running the tree planting program.
- 400 trees planted this spring. They have a 3 year warranty for replacement. Lahey has city Contract for tree planting. (Contract is bid on a 3 year basis to the lowest qualified bidder.) 3

year watering responsibility for trees once planted. After 3 years, city water responsibility (water by bike for years 3-7).

- Watering is always difficult to manage for multiple trees and multiple years. Contractor obligations need to be managed. If they don't water, they don't get paid. (A work in progress to manage this and get good performance.)
- Some gator bags used—2 bags per tree generally used. Filled up 2 times per month on average. Defective bags can be fixed by adding additional holes.
- 812 trees throughout the neighborhoods are being watered by a variety of means
- DPW is watering on main streets 4-7 am.
- Tracking watering needs: APP: Commonwealth Connect: Click Fix
- CambridgeMA.gov/311
- Go to Cambridge Urban Forestry page for additional information.

Other Discussion re: Trees (to be continued in future planning meetings:

- Things that can be detrimental to trees: such as ivy covering trees
- Taking care of Trees as a Guerilla activity
- Photo of Great Trees of Cambridge: incorporate into a calendar or put on the yearly Parking Permit sticker
- Tree Education: Black Swallow wort (example city of Somerville information)
- Education to the Public: examples: about Invasive species; not using de-icer door hangar;
- Importance of soil volume and tree pit size.
- Access to Fire Hydrant key (water) for use to water trees (Trusted Community keys)
- Back of Sidewalk Trees: Door hangars advertising back of sidewalk street tree program.
- Interesting topics for discussion to be continued in fall.
- Upcoming Planning Board Topics include: Vassar Street Dorm (June 22); MIY and Volpe Master Plan (July 20)—information not yet available.
- Planning Board has an Opening for an additional member to replace an outgoing person.
- July Meeting: King Open School and site
- No meeting in August.
- Municipal Reforestation Plan: District reps in Commonwealth of Mass. Proposal to have urban forest enhancements. Large scale statewide tree ordinance. Neighborhoods and cities could get more funding. Comprehensive bill.
- Gas Leak allies: Mothers Outfront.
- Possible future topic(s): Soils/Trees aging out.