

City of Cambridge Committee on Public Planting

Meeting Minutes – December 14, 2022 - 5:30-7pm

Virtual Meeting via Zoom

Attendance

CPP Members: Vinita Bhaskar, Cindy Carpenter, Paula Cortes, Chantal Eide, Sophia Emperador, Sandra Fairbank, Ahron Lerman, Ruth Loetterle, Tracey Orr

DPW/City of Cambridge: Abby Bentley, Kevin Beuttell, Ellen Coppinger, David Lefcourt, Andrew Putnam, Gary Chan (CDD)

Guests & members of the public: Charles Teague, Kent Johnson, Patrick Richmond

Meeting notes submitted by: Sophia Emperador

Agenda Items:

1. Review of Meeting Min: October & November
2. Linear Park updates (11/16/22 community presentation) | Kevin Beuttell (DPW)
3. Updates from City Arborists
4. Updates from CDD Rep Gary Chan (standing in for Erik Thorkildsen)
 - a. Planning Board's hearing on the Climate Resilience Zoning Petition on January 10th. Materials will be posted on Planning Board website
 - b. Parks and Open Space Plan
 - c. Citywide Design Guidelines
5. Other items:
 - CPP liaison for City-wide projects. Stay informed on larger efforts around the City that have a significant landscape component: Linear Park Redesign | Ruth; Memorial Drive | Sandra & Maggie; River Street/Carl Barron Plaza; Jefferson Park; IQHQ; Tree protection Ordinance • Similar minded groups - ie. Green Cambridge
 - CPP Goals 2023
 - Promote further implementation of the UFMP Action Plan - which efforts do we want to encourage and push forward? Prioritization of programs, tree fund, zoning & development policies, etc. -Outreach: - Help promote communication to Cambridge residents regarding DPW/Forestry's existing public programs and helpful news - Expand upon Cambridge's ecological initiatives (education, plant lists, planing recommendations, etc) - Engagement with City Councilors and with the City Manager
6. Public comments

1) Review of prior meeting minutes

Meeting minutes for October & November were approved with minor spelling corrections, motion initiated by Chantal Eide and seconded by Ruth Loetterle.

2) Linear Park Updates by Kevin Beuttell (11/16/22 2nd community presentation)

https://www.cambridgema.gov/-/media/Files/CDD/Transportation/Projects/LinearPark/linearpark_publicmeeting2_accessiblepresentation2.pdf

A summary of the conceptual approaches and options for Linear Park (North Cambridge) was presented. The final design is planned for Spring 2023 and will go out for bid in Fall 2023. The initial conceptual design intends to present an inclusive strategy that strengthens existing connections. Community access points are still contentious and under discussion. Less formal seating areas are incorporated within the design but are not actual gathering areas; the intention is to create nice open spaces with areas for rest.

CPP Comments:

CE- the berms on the side of the path are an interesting design idea

RL- park serves as a respite from the surrounding urban condition, suggests not having gathering spaces, and does not agree with specific spaces as destinations. Space currently feels unsafe; how can this be addressed?

AL- good to see areas for increased planting. Will the design incorporate water storage, & micro-drainage areas to deal with stormwater on-site? Will there be any irrigation infrastructure?
KB-they have spoken about stormwater management on-site, but there aren't plans for irrigation. Drought-tolerant species and natives will be used where possible.
PC - reiterates the importance of incorporating benches for multigenerational users and the need for better signage overall.
KB - a variety of informal seating and age-friendly options will be incorporated.

Ruth Loetterle, our CPP liaison for this project, shared a summary of her involvement.
-Along with Charlie Teague, she has been helping to check the existing tree survey since many trees still need to be included. This is key information since the path widening will impact the existing trees.

KB- DPW shares frustration with the state of the current tree survey and has yet to receive the updated survey from the contractor; however, the current survey is sufficient for this initial conceptual design phase. He appreciates all the work done by Ruth and Charlie to update the survey.

IQHQ's developer's encroachment over the property line and destruction of several trees was brought up. They should be held responsible for also protecting the existing tree roots.

Andrew provided some additional context for the IQHQ situation:

-due to their fence encroachment, the construction crew removed 2 magnolia trees and will have to pay \$23,316 in restitution. AP & DL will coordinate further with the developer over the 5 remaining trees on their site.
-Issues will be remediated immediately: move the fence to the appropriate property line, exhaust fans to vent on the property/not the bike path, and tree protection (trunk to drip line) to be installed this week. Ongoing dialog with property owners and developer/owner will be prioritized to avoid future issues.

3)Updates from City Arborist - Abby Bentley

- Lahey has completed all planting of B&B trees
- 100 sites (including new tree wells) have been identified for spring planting (wells to be opened by Lahey)
- 432 trees were planted this Fall (DPW & Lahey) - 392 were installed at Triangle Park & in the Miyawaki Forest
- UFMP goal of 1,000 trees was met over both planting seasons
- 1176 trees (ROW & Triangle Park), 5 back of sidewalk (for calendar year)= 1181 total for 2022

PC - requested more fine grain data for tree removal permits, which tree removal companies are active in the city? Summary of the mitigation payments to date, more data is needed beyond a quick line item.

Action item: Andrew mentioned he would be able to gather more specific data surrounding the tree removal permit.

4)Updates from CDD - Gary Chan in for Erik Thorkildsen

Summaries were provided on several ongoing City-wide efforts:

-Open Space Plan update - document is currently being written and they should have a working draft by the end of 2022.

-Climate Resilience Zoning Task Force will have a Planning Board hearing on Jan 10, 2023 - on the Climate Resilience Zoning Petition, incorporating a performance-based "Cool Factor" scoring for private development, and other climate resilience strategies.

SF - they should also include language that protects trees as a means to address urban heat

5)Others items

- SE-Goal to identify CPP members who will monitor specific long-term projects around the City and serve as informal liaisons for the CPP. A preliminary list of projects is available, please sign up and help us keep track of what is happening in our City so that we have time to react appropriately.

Memorial Drive Reconfiguration - update from Sandra Fairbanks

-new EIR completed by the State, road diet has been applied, separated road, a little more concern for the sycamores - comments to be sent by mid Jan

-site runs from Jerry's landing to JFK street and the whole river edge in Cambridge

- CPP Goals for 2023 (SE)
 - UFMP implementation - Andrew will be providing a summary for the January meeting, the reports and summary have been shared via email, please review these before our next mtg.
 - Expand outreach - how do we share what programs/initiatives are available? How do we help gather community support to help drive these initiatives? Our outreach sub-committee has many suggestions on how to move this forward this year.

6) Public Comments

Charles Teague asked the following questions:

-How many city arborists at the DPW?

AP- 9 arborist, 12 employees total

-Where are the meeting min located?

SE-there have been some technical issues with posting the meeting minutes and we are working to get them up to date

-what is the biggest caliper of tree being planted in tree wells? Is bare root planting working out?

AP - 3-4" caliper trees, there has been some growing pains with the bare root trees as they program is being established. The bare root contractor is not great and they are figuring out the kinks. Survivability rates will increase.

How expensive is it to get a larger tree?

AP-Typically costs an additional few hundred dollars per tree.

How do you choose the three species to plant?

AP-The UFMP has an expanded list, also based on nursery availability, we aim to have a diverse forest but mindful of natives, and those that can best survive in the harshest areas.

Next meeting: A hybrid system will be tested to hold in-person and virtual meetings. The next meeting will be held on January 11, 2023, at 5:30pm and will be advertised to the public in advance.

NOTE: The foregoing represents our understanding of the discussions and decisions made during this meeting. The CPP requests permission to quote or reference these notes.