

City of Cambridge Committee on Public Planting

Meeting Minutes – May 11, 2022 - 5:30-7pm

Virtual Meeting via Zoom

Attendance

CPP Members: Vinita Bhaskar, Cindy Carpenter, Sara Cohen, Chantal Eide, Sophia Emperador, Sandra Fairbank, Maria Hottelet, Ahron Lerman, Ruth Loetterle, Tracey Orr, Cynthia Smith

DPW/City of Cambridge: Abby Bentley, Ellen Coppinger, Kevin Beuttell, David Lefcourt, Andrew Putnam, Erik Thorkildsen

Guests & members of the public: n/a

Meeting notes submitted by: Sophia Emperador

Agenda Items:

1. Review previous meeting minutes (March & April)
 2. Updates from City Arborists
 3. Updates from CDD
 - a. May 17 - Public Hearing | 221 Morgan Ave/14 N First St (PB-179) Parcel R
<https://www.cambridgema.gov/specialpermits/pb179>
 - b. May 24 - Public Hearing | 57 JFK St (PB-390)
<https://www.cambridgema.gov/specialpermits/pb390>
 - c. Jun 7 - Public Hearing | 40 Smith Pl (PB-391) & SoMa Building 2 (PB-303)
<https://www.cambridgema.gov/specialpermits/pb391>
<https://www.cambridgema.gov/specialpermits/pb303>
 4. Other items:
 - Memorial Drive Reconstruction - Tree Walk (4/8/22) update
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1) Review prior meeting minutes

Meeting minutes for March and April were approved, motion initiated by Chantal Eide, and seconded by Sara Cohen. A new disclaimer will be added, to be determined by CPP members.

2) Update from City Arborist - Abby Bentley

Spring planting has begun. DPW (in-house crew) & Lahey Landscaping (contractor) will plant over 400 trees this spring. Replacement trees and trees under warranty (w/in 2y) will be installed before the new trees.

Summer interns are currently being interviewed and will help with the data collection efforts. They plan to hire 4 to 8 water-by-bike interns and one supervisor.

Action items: CPP members request data for (1) the survival rate (%) of B&B vs bare root plantings from the last season and (2) which species did the worst from the fall planting.

3) Updates from CDD - projects coming before the Planning Board

- a. May 17 - Public Hearing | 221 Morgan Ave/14 N First St (PB-179) Parcel R - Cambridge Crossing
Landscape plans show a tree-lined street with continuous planting zones and tree grates.

DPW comments: the English ivy presented in the plans is invasive and should not be used. Additionally, dense ground plantings should be avoided because they contribute to rat habitat.

They recommend more native perennials or species that can be better maintained, such as azaleas.

b. May 24 - Public Hearing | 57 JFK St (PB-390) - the Quadrangle (special permit application)
Plans show a mixed-use development building (lab, office & retail) with a diagonal park leading towards the south, linking up with a multi-use path/trail, ultimately aligning with path over the railroad (local developers pay into fund for this future pedestrian bridge).

CPP Comment: design shows a lack of public facilities; future public access should be codified into the design. **CDD response:** current zoning does not have any requirements to provide public access. The level of public access has yet to be determined for this project.

CPP Comment: it's great to see a project early in the design phase. Are there plans for a green roof to mitigate stormwater? What does the streetscape look like? Since parking is underground, can more of the surface area along the streets be used for green infrastructure, including plantings and street trees? **CDD response:** No green roof because of the space required for mechanical. Many of these street-level specifications have been outlined in the Alewife District Plan.

c. Jun 7 - Public Hearing | 40 Smith Pl (PB-391) & SoMa Building 2 (PB-303)

CPP Comment: will this project be officially presented to the CPP? **CDD response:** We don't know if it will be presented.

CPP Comment: The greening up of the parking lot looks nice. There is no pedestrian walkway along E53 onto the southern side of the driveway. This area looks tight since the building is so big. Maybe have a pedestrian path along the spine. Is this a shared street? The design does not seem to optimize pedestrian movements in this southern portion.

Action items:

1. Erik (CDD) will present a summary of the Alewife District Plan in an upcoming CPP meeting, TBD.
2. Erik (CDD) will share the links to upcoming projects before the Planning Board with Sophia E. ahead of the CPP meeting.

Public comments: n/a

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4) Other items

CPP member noted that a very large pine tree was removed from Hubbard Park and asked why.

DPW Response: the permit for its removal was approved, the property owner was given a fine and required to plant a replacement tree.

Tabled for next meeting:

CPP member suggests we put together a set of case studies. It seems way too easy to remove a tree of any size: look at the number of trees removed before and after the Tree Ordinance was put in place, compare and report back with any concerns or comments.

Memorial drive reconstruction tree walk will be discussed next month.

Next meeting: Our next Zoom meeting will be held on June 8, 2022 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.