

City of Cambridge Committee on Public Planting

Meeting Minutes – October 19, 2022 - 5:30-7pm

Virtual Meeting via Zoom

Attendance

CPP Members: Sophia Emperador, Sara Cohen, Ahron Lerman, Cynthia Smith, Cindy Carpenter, Sandra Fairbank, Tracy Orr, Vinita Bhaskar, Paula Cortes

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

Guests & members of the public: Gretchen Friesinger, Charles Teague

Meeting notes submitted by: Sara Cohen

Agenda Items:

1. Updates on open space projects throughout the City - Kevin Beuttell
 - Brief construction update on Triangle Park
 - Linear Park - initial design concepts
2. Updates from City Arborists
3. Updates from CDD Rep:
4. Other items for discussion:
 - Questions: update on the Tree Canopy Report
 - Drafting letter to City Council/City Manager
 - Location for November CPP meeting: virtual, in-person or hybrid?

Updates on open space projects throughout the City – Kevin Beuttell

Kevin Beuttell (KB) updated the committee on two open spaces.

Triangle Park – Weekly construction meetings happen on Thursdays. Planting is underway, and there are still some footings in progress. The bulk of work will happen this year (2022), with a raised table in the spring, and late spring opening.

Linear Park – KB shared vision statement. KB asked for initial thoughts on that statement and the visual character and programming for the park.

The 3 high-level designs concepts:

Option A: Forest Path – continue the character of the path around Russell field with more naturalistic and wilder plantings

Option B: Forest Path distinct from the Russell Path – There are 2 distinct zones, one that continues the character of the path, and then switches to connect more to the Russell field.

Option C: Transition zone - The forest path blends into Russell path, less strong delineation between the two zones.

In all three options, there are no major alignment changes because it would be too disruptive. There will be only minor changes at Harvey Street.

CPP Comments:

Cynthia: Good start, prefers Option C, two different characters that allow for playing up that duality. It doesn't have to be one single identity. Would like to get more trees in the B&C areas. How will we navigate differently at Mass Ave? What about that awkwardness? How do we connect to Somerville? What about connect existing abutters?

Comments on the vision: These are all physical items, is there more of a vision? Relational vision, making this more of a pass through, maybe there is a stronger connection there?

KB: We will be looking at Mass Ave more closely, as it relates to the existing design elements. We have been reaching out to abutters to get an accessible connection to the trail. Make it more than a transportation corridor?

Sophia: Drawn to Option C. The character doesn't change until you reach the fields, but the vision does not match the images. Are the existing trees shown? Which trees are deciduous versus conifers?

KB: Yes, most existing trees are shown, but smaller trees were not as easily diagrammed because of the how the information was gathered.

Sandra: B/C are better options. The seating needs to have ball netting to protect visitors.

Ellen Coppinger: Will the path be any wider? It seems like A is the best option to discourage lingering. There are improvised side paths: will there be a separation between the walkers and the bikers?

KB: The average width is 11-12', ideally, we would like 14' wide with 2' shoulder. It is nice to have nodes at major entrances, small informal gathering, and program.

Eric Thorkildsen: Are we connecting at all with Somerville?

KB: We are working with Somerville in a coordinated fashion.

No Public comments.

Updates from City Arborists

Abby Bentley (AB) presented the updates.

AB: The in-house crews started planting the week of October 24. New balled and burlapped (B&B) trees should be arriving the week of October 24. Most bareroot trees are being heeled in at the Fresh Pond nursery. 425 trees are being planted this fall, plus Miyawaki forest at Greene Rose and those being planting at Triangle Park; 85 of the trees are B&B replacement trees

CPP: How many empty tree wells are there?

AB: Do not have that exact number. The intern got halfway through the City counting open and empty tree wells.

CPP: Are there specific neighborhoods that are being targeted for planting?

AB: Targeting all over the city, but especially neighborhoods that are deficient in canopy coverage.

Sophia: Is the goal is to have all new trees planted by the City?

AP: The goal is to have a dramatic reduction in trees planted by outside contractors.

Cindy: Are there any lessons learned coming out of the drought in August? How is that affecting how we think about tree planting?

AB: We look to the guidance in the Urban Forest master plan, but we also will look at the tree species that have died based on the drought and climate change issues to alter species.

AP: The drought brought all this to the forefront for us. We decided to help heal in the bareroot trees to help with drought resistance and to improve growing conditions.

Cynthia: Is the urban forestry plan tree list working out?

AP: It is not etched in stone yet; the list is adjusting.

Sara: Will there be any signage for the Miyawaki forest?

AP: The planting will happen the first week in November and there should be a sign installed with that planting.

No Public comments.

Updates from CDD Rep Erik Thorkildsen

Erik Thorkildsen (ET) stated there were no new updates. There is a scheduled meeting of the Climate Resiliency Task Force on November 15, which could be of interest to this Committee.

Sandra: What kinds of zoning changes are being proposed to deal with climate resiliency?

ET: Unclear at this time, but this information may be presented at that meeting.

Other items:

CPP: Is there an update on the Tree Canopy Report?

AP: There is LiDAR data ready, and DPW has a conference call scheduled to review. There will be another meeting with the consultant to target canopy before the end of the year.

A few members of the CPP are drafting letter to City Council/City Manager that will be ready to review by the larger group in November.

The November CPP meeting will be virtual and that will continue at least until January.

Public comments:

Charlie Teague: Why are trees planted so close together?

AP: These tree plantings are similar to those street tree pits, but outside of the individual tree pits we are trying to plant them denser as recommended in the Urban Forestry master plan.

Charlie: Is the Miyawaki forest in Danehy irrigated? And when did the irrigation fail this summer at Danehy Park?

AP: Miyawaki is irrigated. Irrigation was never turned on this spring 2022.

Next meeting: Our next Zoom meeting will be held on November 9, 2022, at 5:30pm and will be advertised to the public in advance.