

City of Cambridge Committee on Public Planting  
Meeting Minutes – June 12, 2024 - 5:30-7pm  
Hybrid Meeting via Zoom & at DPW - 147 Hampshire St.

**Attendance** (\* indicates virtual attendance)

CPP Members: Amira Valliani\*, Cindy Carpenter, Chantal Eide, Gretchen Friesinger, Maggie Booz, Ray Fahrner, Robb Johnson, Ruth Loetterle\*, Sandra Fairbank, Sara Cohen, Sophia Emperador

Members not in attendance: Ahron Lerman, Angela Zhong, Tracey Orr, Cynthia Smith, Archana Venkataraman

DPW/City of Cambridge: Abby Bentley, Ellen Coppinger\*, David Lefcourt, Kevin Beuttell, Cortney Kirk (CDD)

Guests & members of the public: Matt Stewart, James Williamson, Charles Teague, Heather Hoffman, 617-719-8311

Meeting notes submitted by: Sophia Emperador

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**Agenda Items:**

1. Review of Meeting Minutes for May (5 min)
  2. Updates from City Arborist (10 min)
    - Spring tree planting, progress towards annual goals
    - Update on tree well expansion, other sidewalk/road work
    - Number of newsletter subscribers
    - Number of trees adopted - Forest Friends
  3. City events - Urban Forestry and CPP outreach (30 min)
    - Biodiversity Day at Danehy Park - update and feedback (Ruth)
    - Fresh Pond Day (June 22) - planning & sign up opportunities (Cindy)
    - Other upcoming events - for this year or next (e.g., Cambridge River Festival - June 15, Cambridge Jazz Festival at Danehy Park - July 27-28)
  4. Report back: DCR land and current planting efforts (Robb) (10min)
  5. Review draft letter supporting Municipal Reforestation Act (Ruth) (10 min)
  6. Other business (20 min)
    - Summary & Update: Page turn session for Linear Park designs
    - Field trip options for July mtg
    - Current public planting issue: black swallow wort (public service announcement options)
    - Subcommittee discussion
  7. Public comments (5 min)
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**Meeting Notes:**

1. Review of Meeting Minutes for May

- Meeting minutes from May were approved (motion led by Ray and second by Robb).
2. Updates from City Arborist
- Expansion of tree wells is complete (leaving 4' for ADA sidewalk requirements). Larger wells increase the soil volume, allowing to add more soil amendments, room for air and water for roots. (Complaints received on the long/skinny tree wells focus mostly on dog use and lack of weeding.)
  - 40 additional trees were planted, 1/3 planted in parks.
  - Total goal of new trees is 700 (1,100 for the FY-24)
  - The Forest Friends Newsletter has a total of 574 subscribers (goal of 1,000) and 1,100 trees have been adopted.
  - Sophia inquired about the CPP having their own website space - Abby said she would check in with Kristen about this request.
3. City events - Urban Forestry and CPP outreach
- Biodiversity day - summary provided by Gretchen - May 4 @ Danehy Park, was sponsored by the Native Plant Community Gardens Project & Biodiversity for a Living Climate. Aim is to introduce more biodiversity through community gardens in parks and local landscapes & get people excited about planting natives. 3 areas have been identified for native plantings. Ruth and Gretchen are ambassadors.
  - Danehy Master Plan - review June 4 - Courtney mentioned that the community outreach had just begun with the next mtg on June 27.
  - Fresh Pond Day - June 22 | Sophia will check about the table, coordination with David and Abby about materials to hand out.
4. Report back: DCR land and current planting efforts (Robb) (10min)
- The Implementation subcommittee considered four categories: city, state, institutional, and private.
    - i. City ROW and City land is covered well.
    - ii. State: DCR has their own priorities. Perhaps a Friends group can improve DCR's partnering abilities. Cindy Carpenter and Cynthia Smith have experience working with DCR.
    - iii. Is there a possibility of helping the City leverage resources and relationships to get more trees planted on DCR land -- some of which is under-planted and/or poorly maintained?
    - iv. Institutional: MIT has less canopy and is more of a heat island. Cynthia Smith suggests reaching out to Laura Tenney. With permission of the CPP, Ray Fahrner would like to talk to her, and explore possibilities.
    - v. Harvard?
    - vi. Churches? Does the CPP think this might be a fruitful area of exploration? Is this appropriate for Green Cambridge?

- vii. Private: Residential: 1) Maximize community acceptance of trees by contacting community groups, block parties, etc., possibly working with Outreach subcommittee. 2) Build closer relationship with Green Cambridge.
- viii. Commercial: Green Cambridge may be able to help plant back of sidewalk trees in commercial areas. Gas stations are mentioned, as is the parking lot behind the Cambridge Common restaurant/bar.
- ix. The implementation group would like to remain as an official group. Robb and Ray will continue to gather information on these topics.
  - o Other ways to get out the word about the UF and the programs that are available were discussed, including block parties; reaching out to Patty Nolan/Environment Committee (maybe host a mtg with DCR); the Charles River Conservancy works a lot with DCR - (Laura Jasinski & Cathie Zusy)
  - o Maggie also mentioned school grounds as an area of opportunity, does the DPW have a school department contact?
  - o Sara mentioned the PTO and events such as the Cambridgeport block party and other school events could be great places to table. Sophia noted that it would be great to have a set list of materials that would be good to hand out at these events (Forest Friends, etc) stuff to share with parents, etc.
- 5. Review draft letter supporting Municipal Reforestation Act (Ruth) (10 min)
  - o Ruth read a draft of the letter to the committee. The letter asks to provide initial funding for the Municipal Reforestation Bill to keep it viable until the Environmental Bond process provides for its funding. Motion to approve the letter initiated by Chantal and seconded by Maggie.
- 6. Other business (20 min)
  - o Summary & Update: Page turn session for Linear Park designs - May 23 (Maggie, Ruth, and Gretchen attended).
    - o Goals and strategies were discussed, along with a safer path design, tree protection, utility upgrades. Still waiting for the MBTA comments/permits, est. construction 2025, bid at end of the year
    - o Plans: Widening path, side path, design rejuvenation - 60% complete (detailing 20%)
    - o Kathy Watkins said that there would be no reduction in path width - 12' with 4' buffers
    - o Ruth explained why Bartley's Metrics (multiplier of caliper to determine root zone) cannot be used here since this is an urban park, alterations must be done on-site. Also important to note that the additional paths would be impacting additional trees.
    - o Gretchen mentioned alternative strategies, looking for alternative paths, applying street tree standards
    - o Kevin mentioned that all details would be reviewed since plans were incomplete, but overall improvements consisting of decompaction and radial trenching have been under-appreciated. He also ensured that David/Forestry would be called out to make the onsite decisions as needed.

- Gretchen - asked about staking the path and notes that there needs to be a balance of priorities, in a park like this trees should be a priority, not a faster bike lane.
- David notes that the path will be identified, the trees will be air spaded, then the area would be inspected and adjusted as needed.
- Ruth notes there are 150 trees being impacted (based on the metrics) by the full design (path and side paths, boulders, benches) - this is a big impact upon UF. She is worried that so much is being left to be decided on-site & per tree; why isn't this part of an overall change in the design approach.
- Maggie notes it took Ruth's expertise to bring these items to light and other problems with this project, the committee should not need this type of expertise to have this effect on a project.
- Sara notes we should rely on the city's expertise, it is upon the CPP to bring up/raise concerns. The goal of the committee is to bolster the UF and help/aid to voice the concerns; a lot of stuff happens in the field on a regular basis and we have brought up these concerns and done what we can to make them more of a priority and ultimately less disruptive to trees.
- Robb notes that we are an advisory committee, we can raise the profile of trees, balance between the pathway and trees - is there any formal action?
- The committee continues discussion on how best to address the larger issue at hand and decides on drafting a letter to the City Council/City Manager. Items to mention include:
  - i. CPP's role - support urban forests and tenets of the UFMP (tree preservation & protection)
  - ii. Encourage the City to include more diversity from ground to tree canopy
  - iii. Linear park is triggering - larger issues we are seeing throughout the city -UFMP not being respected throughout the city - gap on how we think of all planting
  - iv. The CPP should elevate this issue in the mind of the City Manager, find ways that UF goals be incorporated into all projects/departments
- David notes that this is BAU, any work on this project will greatly improve conditions at the park. From an arborist perspective it isn't clear why so much attention is being given to this project. Unclear why the path is being widened.
- Courtney mentioned that there has not been any new drawings, they appreciate that Ruth has pointed out particular details, they are providing feedback to the design team, will strategize when to bring in an arborist, and if additional reports will be needed. Overall they appreciate the feedback and comments being noted as a direct review of the project.
- Field trip options for July mtg - Arbor week - tree walk - July 10 - Goldstar Mothers Park
- Current public planting issue: black swallow wort (public service announcement options): Black swallow-wort door hanger, Kristen - larger email list, date in June

## 7. Public Comments - no public comments

### Attachment:

- CPP draft letter supporting Municipal Reforestation Act

*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.*

May 8, 2024

Dear Representative Aaron M. Michlewitz and Senator Michael J. Rodrigues,

As the Committee for Public Planting for the City of Cambridge, we were pleased to learn that the Municipal Reforestation Bill has been reported favorably out of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee. Given the delay of the implementation of the Environmental Bond bill until next year, we ask that you provide initial funding for the Municipal Reforestation Bill to keep it viable until Environmental Bond process provides for its funding. Governor Healey's announcement of the new Cooling Corridors program, which builds on the successful Greening the Gateway Cities program, makes the funding of the Municipal Reforestation Bill even more critical to the health and well-being of the citizens of the Commonwealth.

Sincerely,

The Committee on Public Planting  
The City of Cambridge