

City of Cambridge Committee on Public Planting

Meeting Minutes – September 11, 2024 - 5:30-7pm

Hybrid Meeting via Zoom & at DPW - 147 Hampshire St.

Attendance (* indicates virtual attendance)

CPP Members: Ahron Lerman, Archana Venkataraman*, Cindy Carpenter, Chantal Eide, Cynthia Smith*, Gretchen Friesinger, Maggie Booz, Ray Fahrner*, Robb Johnson, Ruth Loetterle, Sandra Fairbank, Sophia Emperador, Tracey Orr* [*Members not in attendance:* Angela Zhong, Sara Cohen]

DPW/City of Cambridge: Abby Bentley, David Lefcourt, Andrew Putnam, Kristen Kelleher*, Cortney Kirk (CDD)

Guests & members of the public: Liana Greenberg-Nielson, Green Cambridge; Charlie Teague, James Williamson, Nonie Valentine

Meeting notes submitted by: Ruth Loetterle

Agenda Items:

1. Review agenda
 - Confirm minute taker for today's meeting
 - Pass around sign-up sheet for minutes for 2024-2025
2. Review & approve April and June meeting minutes
3. Updates from City Arborist
 - Update on summer tree work - watering, roadwork impact, etc.
 - Update on LiDAR done over the summer, and when we'll see results for tree canopy
 - Review fall tree planting plans
4. Design reviews
 - Linear Park -
 - Provide update on IQHQ meeting
 - Provide update on MTA review and design timeline
 - Memorial Drive - request presentation on DCR redesign plan
 - Corcoran Park rebuilding - request review
 - Others coming up?
5. Propose CPP proposal for Participatory Budget
6. Review info re: DCR work with local organizations and discuss next steps
7. Upcoming meeting topics
 - New website page for CPP
 - How to promote UF's Forest Fiends newsletter
 - Review Urban Forest master plan and progress to date
 - Review work that was being done in subcommittees and decide how to move forward on tasks by individuals

- Adopt-a-bump-out idea, with Watertown guests
 - Other requests?
8. Other business
9. Public Comments

1) Review agenda

- Ruth agreed to take minutes for the meeting
- Sign-up sheet for minutes for 2024-2025 was passed around

2) Review & approve April and June meeting minutes

- The April minutes were approved with a couple spelling corrections. Maggie moved to approve, Robb seconded.
- The June meeting minutes were approved as written. Sandra moved to approve, Ron seconded.

3) Updates from City Arborist

- Update on summer tree work - the bike watering program with eight students and four electric cargo bikes was a success. Overnight watering crews were not needed.
- Update on LiDAR done over the summer - UF met with UVM in June to get an update on when the data will be received due to UVM staffing difficulties. No date has been set for delivery. Data from this summer to be rolled into the 5-year update of the UFMP.

Action items: UF will keep CPP updated and will involve CPP in the review of the 5-year update.

- Review fall tree planting plans - expansion of tree pits and site prep has begun for the 625 trees to be planted this fall; 463 in the public ROW and 162 in open space (schools, parks, and at city buildings). The data is available on the UF website. Half of the trees to be contractor-installed ball and burlap (B&B) trees; half to be bare root trees planted by in-house crews. 28% of the ROW trees will be planted in an existing tree well with 43% of those wells being expanded. 71% will be planted in a proposed well. More shade trees than ornamental trees will be planted. Top species for B&B trees will be oaks and Kentucky coffee tree. Less tupelo and hackberries will be planted as they did not do as well this year. Bare root trees have not been selected. Tree species are matched to the size of the tree pit — with London plane trees, oaks and dawn redwoods less appropriate for narrow 10'x2' pits. Tree planting will begin soon and continue until ground freezes, typically in January of late. One of the summer interns will be filling in for Abby while she is on maternity leave.

4) Design reviews

- Linear Park -
 - Update on IQHQ meeting - Ruth reported that she and Gretchen attended a meeting set by Charlie Teague with IQHQ employees and Ian Ramey, from Copley Wolff, the new landscape architecture firm for the project, to request

adjustments that would benefit the existing ash adjacent to the entry and help screen the buildings from within the park. IQHQ committed to 1) having the surveyor confirm the ash's location and 2) checking to see if the entry could be shifted further from the ash (former building foundations and limits of remediation could preclude). Ian committed to reviewing the planting to see if proposed trees could be moved closer to the property line (not to be marked by a fence, per neighborhood input) to improve screening of the buildings beyond. IQHQ provided the background (requested previously of the CDD at CPP meetings) on the proposed walkway that will intersect with the park's central path at a curve despite the existence of two current entrances that closely flank the proposed intersection. The extension of the walk to the Linear Park path and the widening of the walk from the original 6-8' width to it proposed 14' width were both requirements from the City.

- Update on MBTA review and design timeline - Cortney reported that a response to MBTA input is to be sent to MBTA at the end of October and the project will go out to bid in November.

Action items: The City will schedule a public page turn review with the CPP prior to the next CPP meeting, with the drawings made available one week prior to the meeting.

- Memorial Drive - Sandra reported that the plan has been approved by the Cambridge Conservation Commission. Concern for the London plane trees remains; the Cambridge Plant and Garden Club has given a large sum to ensure their preservation. The project is set to go to bid at the end of the year with construction beginning in the fall of 2025.

Action items: Maggie will ask DCR to present the plan to the CPP.

- Corcoran Park rebuilding - Maggie reported on this CHA project in Strawberry Hill, comprised of 2-story townhouses built in the 1960s that is slated for reconstruction due to their deterioration. The suburban quality of the original design has accommodated the growth of numerous large trees. It is hoped that some of those trees and the existing neighborhood spirit can be retained.

CPP Comments: Maggie requested a review by the CPP.

Action items: Andrew will check into having the CPP review the proposed plans.

- Additional upcoming projects - Cortney reported that four projects are in design with community engagement about complete, listed below from most to least advanced.

Rafferty Park - Renovation plan released this week

Raymond Park

Clement Morgan

Danehy Capital Improvement

Projects will be reviewed by CPP following the community engagement phase. All are being designed by outside consultants.

CPP Comments: Cynthia suggested that CPP members independently visit the site prior to this review; as practiced by BZA members.

5) CPP proposal for Participatory Budget

- Maggie suggested: Financial assistance for residents with care and, when necessary, for removal of trees on residential properties, with service provided by Green Cambridge? (Green Cambridge does not have the equipment or capabilities to do this.)
- Gretchen suggested: Substantial protective fencing for street trees (ala pilot program on Mass Ave near Shepard Street).

CPP Comments: Tracey inquired about tree grates. Andrew responded that UF is currently removing 100 existing grates that are impinging on tree growth. The City is not able to remove the rings as suggested by the manufacturers, and therefore only allows developers to use on projects.

Action items: Gretchen will submit this idea. Deadline is Oct 1.

Items for further/future discussion: add brainstorming session to next year's agenda

6) Review DCR work with local organizations

- Robb reported on his conversations with representatives of Green Cambridge, Magazine Beach, the Emerald Necklace Conservancy (ENC), and the Charles River Conservancy (CRC) to gather recommendations for working with DCR to plant more trees on DCR property. The ENC reported success in adhering to the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) of the current master plan. The CRC has a stewardship agreement with the DCR.

CPP Comments: Robb identified the next step as meeting with the DCR.

Action items: Andrew reported that UF is reviewing the MOU at Magazine Beach, and may be applicable to Mem Drive. UF is willing to maintain trees for five years.

7) Upcoming meeting topics

- New website page for CPP with links to projects, minute, agendas
- How to promote UF's Forest Friends newsletter
- Review UFMP and progress to date
- Review work that was being done in subcommittees and decides how to move forward on tasks by individuals
- Adopt-a-bump-out idea, with Watertown guests
- Further coordination/collaboration with Green Cambridge

8) Other Business

- CPP Response to Upzoning Proposal before City Council

Action items: Maggie will share the statement she made at the City Council meeting expressing concern for trees. Cynthia will draft a letter expressing CPPs concern.

Next meeting: Our next Zoom meeting will be held on October 9, 2024 at 5:30pm and will be advertised to the public in advance. Please send agenda items to Sophia and Cindy by Oct. 2.

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.