

City of Cambridge Committee on Public Planting

Meeting Minutes – February 11, 2026 - 5:30-7pm

Hybrid Meeting via Zoom & at DPW - 147 Hampshire Street

Attendance .

CPP Members: Cindy Carpenter, Chantal Eide, Cynthia Smith, Eva Tine, Gretchen Friesinger, Paola Massari, Rob Vandenabeele, Robb Johnson, Sara Cohen, Sophia Emperador
DPW/City of Cambridge: Abby Bentley*, Kevin Beuttell, David Lefcourt,

Guests & members of the public: Charles Teague, Tori, Antonio

Meeting notes submitted by: Chantal Eide and Sophia Emperador

Agenda Items:

1. Review agenda
2. Meeting minutes
3. Updates from Urban Forest team (Abby, David, Andrew & Kirsten)
4. Discuss the work of the Committee for Public Planting
 - Hear from each CPP member
 - Where do you think CPP can contribute most effectively?
 - What areas do you as an individual want to focus on?
5. Other business
 - Rob V - research update - alternatives for the iTree app
6. Public comments

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1. Review of agenda
2. Review prior meeting minutes
 - a. Review of Jan minutes have been pushed to the March mtg
3. Updates from Urban Forest team
 - a. There will be a hearing about a Hawthorne tree to come down next Wednesday
 - b. Arbor week is in April - main public library and city hall annex
 - i. 400 seedlings of flowering trees to be given out, including eastern redbud, lilac, birch & red maple
 - c. There was very little storm damage
 - d. Eva has drafted a poster depicting what individuals can do to help the urban forest
 - e. Slow time of year. Not much planting preparation can happen as the sidewalks are covered in snow.
4. Discuss the work of the Committee for Public Planting

- a. What is our value from the city's point of view?
 - i. Fresh perspectives, diversity of opinions and views, valued feedback
 - ii. A lot of changes can be attributed to the CPP & their support - our work led to the UFMP (& new staff, such as Andrew & Abby's positions)
 - iii. We got a higher budget from the city
 - iv. We go to City Hall, we talk to the commissioner and the council
- b. Explore idea of coalition with other groups
- c. Should we have an updated ordinance?
- d. Owen O'Riordon felt our role as outreach was important
- e. Volunteering- there are more opportunities to engage and make more connections/engage more residents - become a bridge to the public
 - i. Work on areas that are not formalized planting areas
 - ii. Create materials that can reach a larger audience, table at multiple events, reach out to landscaping companies (BestManagementPractices)
 - iii. CPP members should be neighborhood liaisons
 - iv. Externalize action between meetings, provide more advocacy for what the City is already doing - how can we help explain forestry & public planting
- f. Larger topics/projects we could address:
 - i. Residential insurance companies are enforcing stricter regulations regarding proximate trees - perhaps the committee and/or individuals can write to their state legislators.
 - ii. Cool corridors-examine barriers (look how other cities are dealing with this), ID locations in the public right of way that can be planted
 - iii. What about taking over one parking space in a parking lot and planting, what about temporary gardens in a public/private relationship in spaces where development has stalled, what about installing a pollinator garden for six months?
 - iv. There should be a cohesive design for further development along major corridors, not just allowing up zoning and having no regulations
 - v. UFMP will be harder to enforce with the loose zoning - we shall see what the update has to recommend on how we can be more effective in this process
 - vi. Public planting beyond trees - pollinators - map at the neighborhood level, record and ID spaces (start with Ellen's work)
- g. Urban forestry is running out of places to plant trees in the public right of way
 - i. how does that influence what the future of the CPP should be

- ii. We still don't have cool corridors on major streets - can there be new techniques to achieve this, for example trees in raised planters?
- h. It was observed that in the past we used to review public spaces, parks, and institutional plans in our advisory role - this was a good thing & we should look at that again
 - i. Review public open spaces, increase plantings, advocate for more trees on state property, view work from UFMP, provide more feedback to the CDD - more productive together
 - ii. We would need more commitment from committee members to participate in letter writing and written responses (ie letters could consist of five bullet points)
 - iii. Help work on design conflicts (trees/development) - sewer conversion/big projects, bike-ped efforts
- i. Members should show up to external project reviews (Zoning & Planning board) and advocate for increased city plantings (trees & understory)
- j. Planting to support wildlife, urban ecology, birds - plant a tree and tell the public why at the same time
- k. How can we harness our passion about trees and use it to advocate/use as leverage (look at energy & transparency from recycling committee)
 - i. CPP success - look at progress made with DCR
 - ii. Leverage with businesses - chamber of commerce
 - iii. Should CPP attend bike, pedestrian, environmental, and climate committee meetings?
- l. Can Green Cambridge work with businesses and not just residential?
- m. Outreach/Partnership with the Canopy Crew (summer) - the student arm of Green Cambridge (enlist to help with outreach, recruitment)
- n. Dialog with city council - relationship- invite them to mtgs- council orders - upzoning no cohesive direction - have one entity review all projects from a larger more unified vision
- o. Town Gown meetings - advocate for trees - ask them to speak about the campus canopy and how they will make progress
- p. Somerville has a native planting ordinance
- q. Many ideas shared about potential projects/focuses: understory, native pocket parks, hellstrips, how can we find locations to plant smaller gardens, planting between parking spots, ID smaller - replicable projects - how do we best support Ellen!
- r. Subcommittees - action oriented, organize advocacy efforts

5. Research update - alternatives for the iTree app
 - a. Everyone is using it but this federal administration is not funding it

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Public comments:

There were no comments from the Public

Next meeting: Our next meeting will be held on March 11, 2026 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.