

Committee on Public Planting
Minutes
Wednesday, October 17, 2019

Members Present:

Seanna Berry, Maggie Booz (co-Chair), Paula Cortes, Sophia Emperador, Nancy Jordalen, Joan Krizack, Nancy Phillips, Andrew Putnam (City Supt. of Urban Forestry and Landscapes), Erik Thorkildsen (Urban Designer, CDD), Florrie Wescoat (co-Chair).

Guests: Annette Lamond of Cambridge Plant and Garden Club

1. Review of September Minutes – approved with minor amendments
2. Annette Lamond of Cambridge Plant and Garden Club presented on use of roundabouts as a traffic calming strategy as well as an opportunity to increase permeable surface and planting areas
 - Origins of the proposal based on a series of car accidents along Brattle Street (due to speeding). Neighbors have documented accidents and damage to private property as well as large street trees. Ironically the installation of on-street painted bike lanes (and removal of street parking) has increased the speeds and accidents along the street.
 - One intersection in particular is an accident hotspot: where Brattle intersects with Craigie and Sparks Streets.
 - They have met with police, city councilors, and the traffic department. Traffic department proposed a modern roundabout as a design solution. Several examples were shown in the presentation; similar to one on Cambridge/ Belmont line.
 - The neighbors on Brattle are exploring how to get the project funded and executed for safety purposes despite it not being currently on the city's list.
 - There was discussion on how this approach could be applicable to other neighborhoods in Cambridge where there are known unsafe intersections. Many members agreed that traffic calming city-wide was needed and that design solutions can include plantings and depaving opportunities.
3. Updates
Urban Forestry
 - Andrew Putnam updated on the fall tree planting:
 - The streets and sidewalks crew has been widening tree wells to larger specs.
 - Contractor then amends the soil and adds biochar before planting.
 - Numerous trees planted at wrong depth and did not survive; they are under warranty from the contractor and will be replanted.
 - Over 50 calls of significant damage due to high winds overnight and throughout the day
 - Groves are being planted on Harvey Street along Linear Path – improving the soil by air spading and amendments.
 - CRLS students are being trained to plant bare root new trees.
 - The City is proposing to increase the forestry crew to assist in plantings. They can better train and quality control to increase the survival rate of newly planted trees. Currently there are 7 arborists but they do not work on planting.

- Graham and Parks school would like a tree activity to do with kids. Andrew volunteered to follow up and design an activity with them.
- Tree Removal Map that is visible online is in first phase of development and mostly for internal use currently. Next phase will be based on recommendations from the Urban Forest Master Plan.

CDD updates

- Erik Thorkildsen showed the proposal for 87-101 Cambridge Park Drive
 - There will be a raised boardwalk and deck, with flood-tolerant plants below
 - Site will have 25% open space. Currently lots of surface parking.
 - Some of the site's mature trees are slated for removal to build underground parking deck and new building.
 - Proposed new bike path as spur from existing Fitchburg Cutoff Bike Path would be part of open space, and there would be new tree plantings. There was discussion of other proposed bike path along Steel Place at Alewife Station a couple of parcels away.

4. Other business

- Alewife / Watertown path has severe flooding near Mount Auburn as a result of the clear-cutting of mature trees on a slope which was done earlier in the year. The project is stalled for the foreseeable future due to multiple lawsuits. Native plantings will be installed where rip rap currently is near the waterworks part of the path.
- Next meeting of the CPP will be November 13.

Submitted by: Seanna Berry