

Committee on Public Planting

Minutes May 12, 2021

Submitted by Paula Cortes and Sophia Emperador

Attendees: Sophia Emperador, Maggie Booz, Ruth Loetterle, Sara Cohen, Vinita Bhaskar, Tracy Orr, Cindy Carpenter, Cynthia Smith, Sandra Fairbank, Ahron Lerman, Joan Krizack, Jill Costello, Paula Cortes, Chantal Eide

City: Kate Riley, David Lefcourt, Erik Thorkildson, Ellen Coppinger, Andrew Putnam

Members from the Public: Delphine, Kurt Mueller

There was informal conversation regarding bareroot planting and commentary about depth, biochar, basis – how deep to plant, how to or if topdress, addition of compost tea, tree settling in.

The meeting started at 5:36.

Minutes: no changes; accepted.

Question about microforests and whether Danehy is a possible location. TBD.

Updates from City Arborist: to date 304 trees planted and about 163 to be planted. About 305 are street trees, 10 ‘back of sidewalk’, 152 ‘open space’ (golf course, etc.)

A question was asked –is it possible to ramp up the numbers planted and maintained?

Dave L – short term yes, with introduction of bare root stock. Longer term more difficult with increasing lack of space for new trees. Perhaps the public may not be able to deny a tree in front of their property, as they are now.

Ellen C – cooperation needed of schools, universities, DCR for more planting locations.

Need to better advertise/market ‘back of sidewalk’ opportunities. Discussion of how this might work better. Currently city pays for tree, owner maintains it, but city can have tree hearing for removal of tree. State law says any tree planted with public funds within 20 feet of property line is subject to tree removal regulations.

There is also potential conflict with zoning for tree planting, e.g. affordable housing regulations City Council needs to address these issues, open space/trees, zoning ordinance, resilient zoning (trees = cooler and healthier city).

Dave L – tree maintenance and tree pruning contract is with Cambridge Landscape. City is on a 6 year pruning cycle, \$420,000 for 2 years. Recent modifications were made creating subzones within the 6 zones, and a computer system which better tracks the work. Open space trees are on an 8 year cycle. Structural and health pruning is done by caliper of the tree. The City is using Cartegraph system. A ‘tree activity map’ is available for public viewing. It was mentioned that a list by cultivar would be useful for the public to view.

Erik T. upcoming projects - CDD – May 18 General Business – garage at MIT in early stages.

June 8 is second hearing for Ragon Institute, 600 Main St. (medical research) Commentary – design could be more public friendly.

June 15 – third hearing for 727 Mass Ave (hotel addition) minimal trees

Discussion of possibility to connect street tree wells, using permeable paving in bike lane, and irrigation system.

Sara Cohen asked who looks at reviews for tree plantings? DPW does it – suggesting tree species that do well, etc.

Subject for another discussion – UFMP preferred list of trees could be expanded. Questions about how this list was formulated.

Ruth Loetterle asked if a shrub or understory tree might be a better suggestion to plant under an overhang, something that would be more shade tolerant, such as a spice bush.

Ellen C. - the name shouldn't be Linear Park since there is already a project in the City under this name.

Cynthia S. asked which species are proposed as street trees and suggested that they should coordinate with DPW for species and design specifications.

Eric T - Elms, pink oaks and honey locust

Cynthia S. - which projects come to the CPP for review, and could the CPP be made aware of projects with large plantings?

Andrew - projects are brought forth if there is a tree study needed. The new LA hire could straddle the project review between CDD and the Forestry Dept and provide more timely updates on projects.

Eric T - He will provide information about significant upcoming projects.

Q&A session: Adopt-a-tree now Cambridge Urban Forest Friends (re-branding)

-Short update provided by Kate Riley.

-Project has been revamped with updates provided online and overall increased visibility—upgrades made to tracking software and mapping.

-More communication is planned with those who sign up, including a welcome email, monthly tips, more guidance, and a tree care guide.

-Outreach will include confirmation emails, choose trees in highly visible areas, perform a tag blitz online to adopt new trees, and promote the program online. Future goals include Labeling at local events both of this and other related programs.

Cynthia S.- asked if CPP committee members could all be part of the email blitz. She also asked if the watering will remain as part of the water-by-bike program.

Cindy C suggested that the recycling newsletter would be a good place to advertise and highlight the program. She also mentioned that this would be a great opportunity to work with the local high school students.

Tracy O mentioned that programs like these could be great mechanisms to generate enthusiasm in local schools, and students can then serve as liaisons in the community. In addition, it helps create an awareness of the program and should be promoted during Arbor week next year.