

City of Cambridge Committee on Public Planting (CPP)

Meeting Minutes – April 13, 2022 - 5:30-7pm

Virtual Meeting via Zoom

Attendance

CPP Members: Maggie Booz, Cindy Carpenter, Sara Cohen, Paula Cortes, Chantal Eide, Sophia Emperador, Maria Hottelet, Sandra Fairbank, Joan Krizak, Ahron Lerman, Ruth Loetterle, Cynthia Smith

DPW/City of Cambridge: Abby Bentley, Kevin Beuttell, David Lefcourt, Andrew Putnam, Erik Thorkildsen (CDD)

Guests & members of the public: N/A

Meeting notes submitted by: Sara Cohen

Agenda Items:

- 1) Review prior meeting minutes: January, February and March
- 2) Presentation – Urban Forest Master Plan implementation updates by Andrew Putnam
- 3) Updates from City Arborists
- 4) Updates from CDD Rep Erik Thorkildsen
- 5) Other items:
 - a) Memorial Drive Reconstruction – Tree Walk (4/8/22) update
 - b) Volunteer Opportunity – Miyawaki Forest
 - c) City Manager search – call with Allana Mallon, Cambridge City Councilor / Vice- Mayor

1) Review prior meeting minutes: January, February

January and February minutes are approved; **CPP Action item: March and April minutes are forthcoming**

2) Presentation – Urban Forest Master Plan implementation updates by Andrew Putnam

Andrew Putnam (AP) reviewed *Healthy Forest, Healthy City* recommendations, and the current status of each.

- Updating the Tree Protection Ordinance: This has been updated and approved by City Council
- Expand the ways the Tree Fund can be used: AP stated that this has been more challenging than anticipated; Green Cambridge is helping to facilitate.
- Establish a Tree Trust: AP stated that this is currently in the works.
- Plant in parks, Plant 1000 street trees a year: AP reviewed planting projections, and they are on target to get to these numbers. The FY21 goal for Right-of-way (ROW) planting was 363, and 428 ROW trees were planted; the Open Space (OS) goal was 138, and 237 trees were planted.
- Planting diverse and resilient species, Update recommended species list: DPW has expanded the tree list, and reduced numbers on trees that have been overplanted or that have not been performing well.
- Redesign streets and sidewalks to make room for trees: AP Reviewed the Port neighborhood planting, which needs more trees to meet the recommended minimum of 25% coverage. DPW has walked the streets in this neighborhood and has identified locations and opportunities to plant more trees in the Port. DPW is also recommending that new infrastructure projects now include opportunities for tree plantings as a priority.
- Increase trees assessments to improve resiliency: DPW is restructuring tree pruning so that City trees are pruned by size, and are being evaluated every 1-2 years

- Pruning proactively: DPW has reached out to adjacent cities to increase pruning options and frequency since DPW staff is doing more pit opening and other street tree prep; Most likely there will be a separate pruning contract for City trees ages 3-10 years
- Manage urban soils to grow healthier trees: AP reviewed the Cambridge Urban Soils Index (CUSI) process. The results were to plant more robust species in the red zones and newer species would go in the green lower risk zones. The goal is that the CUSI process can happen before planting to get an idea of what the soils needs. The CUSI scores are in process with the spring planting, so minor amendments can be made now, and throughout the summer there will be a more robust implementation. The CUSI data/ maps will be updated as the feedback comes in
- Add landscape architects to City staff to advocate for trees: Kevin Beuttell was hired as a landscape architect in 2021.
- Promote existing City programs: Kate Riley (DPW) has been updating Forest Friends, and images of the Miyawaki Forest helped get people excited. There has been an increase in interest in the flower baskets, which helps water trees

CPP Comments:

What do these [opportunities] look like? **DPW Response:** They are back of sidewalk plantings, curb bump outs, and DPW going street by street to optimize planting locations

Would you share a PPT of the presentation and the soil management guide? **DPW Response:** Yes

Is the **CUSI index** available to everyone and available to other contractors? **DPW Response:** No, currently for in-house crews only. The goal is to keep it in-house.

Has the urban tea compost started up and running for the season? **DPW Response:** Yes, newly planted trees get 2 injections in their first 2 years. DPW brews all summer long, and there is a new brewer at the golf course. It has been most realistic for newly planted trees, and spot targeting other trees with DPW staff.

What is your perspective on the overlap of the different departments of the city; do you have an integrated structure to departments on the same page? **DPW Response:** There is dialogue between agencies but it could improve. Kevin Beuttell has met with City staff and CDD on the parks plan. He has been working on clarifying the process and getting more feedback from DPW throughout the process

The Charles River/DCR could use some of the general advocacy and coordination with DPW; these parks need to be upgraded **DPW Response:** The City is more than willing to engage with the spaces and organizations, but it can be a challenge.

Would DPW or the City be interested in some donated American chestnut trees? **DPW Response:** We have some growing and the locations are not public, but yes DPW would be willing to help plant those in a City open space.

It is smart to plant trees at the edges of the parks. Has there been any discussion of planting more trees along major thoroughfares? What is the percentage and is it a priority? **DPW Response:** Yes, this matches the master plan goals. A DPW intern this summer will be canvassing locations this summer as a high priority item. New bike lanes construction may open up spaces for the trees as well.

Any alternative plans for areas that do not have tree coverage minimums? **DPW Response:** DPW has also focused on de-paving of areas is happening increase areas.

What is the status of tree watering contracts? **DPW Response:** 3 years for watering contracts; need some water by bike people

ACTION ITEMS: CPP requested updated tree list be shared; DPW to share presentation (Delivered 4/17/22)

3) Updates from City Arborists

Abby Bentley (AB) provided the following update: DPW crews have started planting in open and expanded tree wells are. Bareroot planting has started; Balled and burlapped (B&B) planting will start later in the season. There will be 399 trees planted this season. Trees to be planted in the golf course, Donnelly field, City Right-of-ways (ROW). The breakdown of trees being planted is two-thirds are native or eastern US and one-third is non-native.

AB presented the current planting map that is on the urban forestry webpage and shows the spring planting. AB presented species breakdown table, and how the trees are being planted, Open Space (OS) versus ROW.

CPP Comments:

What's the highest planting zones you are using? **DPW Response:** Not sure off-hand, but DPW has been guided by Urban Forest Master Plan for recommendations.

Is there no taxodium on the list? Has it not been successful? **DPW Response:** Yes, 10 are going to be planted. Green Cambridge is taking them to plant in yards with the back of sidewalk program.

What percentage of trees are big shade? **DPW Response:** It is easier to find native shade trees than ornamental trees.

Does DPW consider pruning to encourage root growth? I read that pruning encourages root growth and pollarding can prolong/extend the life of fruit trees. Would it be good to pollard some trees to provide/maintain smaller trees? **DPW Response:** DPW does not pollard and does not have experience with it and there could be structural issues. **CPP Response:** It is a standard practice in other parts of the world, but not seen as much in the US. It could be fun to have a street of pollarded trees as a statement boulevard.

4) Updates from CDD Rep Erik Thorkildsen

Erik Thorkildsen (ET) Presented the MXD project at 290 Binney. The proposed residential building was presented on 4/12/22. The two commercial buildings are being presented the week of 4/18/22. All trees will be removed, and some will be replaced. The public plaza is on top of the future electrical vault, and tree planting is not easily possible. The plaza design has not been reviewed, but CDD will have comments on providing trees, and less paving. At the commercial site there is an underground garage and numerous utility vaults that limit tree planting areas.

CPP Comments:

Why are the trees so big? Over garages, smaller trees may work better.

Are wind studies of the buildings required? **CDD Response:** Yes; Are there any special treatments for the trees on the 6th street connector? **CDD Response:** The trees will need to be protected.

Is CDD suggesting more trees? **CDD Response:** Yes, and CDD will issue a memo to the planning board planning with comments.

CPP has reviewed the designs should find additional locations for planting over deck and provide a shade study.

They are replacing the horseshow garden with paving? Are there specific requirements for green space? **CDD Response:** This parcel is within the larger MXD district, and it's considered a single very large parcel. It is not subject to the same requirements, and CDD needs to confirm which requirements the project has to follow.

Why are the trees specimen? Better advised to put in smaller trees, instead of bigger specimen trees

Do the developers have pay to remove the trees? **CDD Response:** Yes

Does this project come in front of CPP? **DPW/CDD Response:** It would have to be in the public ROW to be presented to CPP; Cynthia Smith: Does Kevin Beuttell review these projects? **DPW/CDD Response:** Yes

Greater shrub/perennial planting species diversity should be provided.

5) Other business

a) Memorial Drive Reconstruction – Tree Walk (4/8/22) update: CPP members attended the tree walk with a small group of people. **CPP Comment:** Are they still removing the trees? **CPP Response:** It is doubtful the project will be put on hold.

b) Volunteer Opportunity – Miyawaki Forest - DPW is looking for volunteers for the upkeep.

c) City Manager search – call with Allana Mallon, Cambridge City Councilor / Vice-Mayor Sophia Emperador gave a summary of the meeting: CPP members discussed CPP’s goals and wish list around trees for the City manager. Councilor Mallon stated that providing transparency and a unified messages across departments is a goal. Councilor Mallon would also like to expand the City manager’s staff to get better response times on issues. Sandra Fairbank mentioned that the City is trying to make projects fill more of the needs to reach broader interests.

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Public comments: n/a

Next meeting: Our next Zoom meeting will be held on May 11, 2022 at 5:30pm and will be advertised to the public in advance.

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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.