

Committee on Public Planting (CPP)
December 2010 Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, December 15th, 2010

Present: David Lefcourt, City Arborist, Emily Axelrod, Margrit Betke, Paula Cortes, David Davis (co-chair), E. Thomas Flynn, Mauricio Gomez, Michael Hanlon (co-chair), Denise Heintze, Kathleen Kelly, Tom Lynott, Carolyn Mathews, Nancy Phillips, Julianne Schwarzer, Grenelle Scott, Cynthia Smith, and Florrie Westcoat

#1: Meeting Minutes - Meeting minutes from November 10th meeting were distributed and reviewed. No changes to minutes. Minutes accepted into public record.

#2: Update on the Environment Committee Meeting (**12/8/10**)

- a. Those in attendance gave a brief overview of the Environment Committee meeting noting the following topics below:
- b. David Lefcourt and Lisa Peterson had presented the following topics at the meeting: 1. City of Cambridge Tree Replacement, 2. Resistographs and their use, and 3. Ways for increasing public engagement in the City of Cambridge Urban Forestry Department.
- c. David Davis mentioned that a general sentiment from attendees seemed to be an ‘us vs. them’ mentality; the public did not feel included in the process.
- d. The meeting had a small turnout.
- e. Subsequent discussion led to a conversation on how Cambridge can educate the public on their Urban Forestry program. Publications were one option discussed (see below).
- f. A committee member who attended the meeting mentioned that meeting attendees suggested the creation of a “tree ownership” program where in addition to tree labels, trees could be tagged and placed under an adoption plan (by the public presumably).
- g. Tree vandalism was another concern brought up numerous times at the meeting.
- h. The chairperson for the “Grow Native” organization in Cambridge attended the meeting and expressed pleasure in number of native tree species on the Cambridge street tree list.
- i. A committee member who attended the meeting suggested increasing public access to the tree inventory GIS info based on comments made during the Environment Committee Meeting. David Lefcourt stated that much of the info is already available on the Cambridge City Viewer website (<http://www.cambridgema.gov/gis.aspx>), but the information is not dynamic (i.e. queries of multiple data sets are not yet available). Asked whether the GIS site contains tree care information as well, David replied not yet.
- j. For ease of access to the Cambridge Trees website, she also suggested shortening the website link to www.cambridgema.gov/trees/. David Lefcourt stated that **Eric Josephson** is responsible for website updates and such requests can be forwarded to him. David also noted that Eric should be able to provide website usage statistics if needed.

Action Item: David L to compile web-related inquiries/suggestions from members and forward to Eric J.

- k. A committee member suggested the creation of a ‘publicity plan’ for the Cambridge Urban Forestry program. Other members proposed a column in the Cambridge Chronicle or postings in the Library, but the website proved to be the most decisive means for information distribution.

Action Item: Members encouraged to bring alternate ideas to the next meeting.

- I. Based on reactions witnessed at the Environment Committee, CPP members discussed the potential for a public complaint/venting forum or blog on the website. This did not seem to have traction with the rest of the committee.

#3. CPP Sponsored Urban Forestry Publication

- a. At the previous meeting, Maggie Booz organized a sub-group to develop an Urban Forestry publication. 10 topics/questions concerning the publication were presented on screen to the members.
- b. During the discussion, members agreed that it would first be necessary to review the already assembled content on the website, determine if the content needs to be amended or added to, and then establish a plan for the publication. The final publication should direct people back to the website (see reference above).
- c. One committee member noted that the timing (quarterly, monthly, once), audience, type and intent of the publication should be assessed prior to developing content. Another member also pointed out that budget will be a determining factor as well.
- e. Regarding distribution of the publication, a committee member suggested appending the Forestry Publication to the Tree Planting Door Hangers so residents will have comprehensive information upon installation of new trees. This comment triggered other suggestions including adding the publications into water, utility or tax bills.

#4. Tree Planting Door Hangers

- a. One committee member raised concerns that the Tree Planting Door Hangers contained information that was not easily accessible to the average public or potentially too detailed.
- b. Other items on the flyer, such as not adding plantings at the base of newly planted trees, also triggered reactions from members. Some members felt that perennial plantings at the base of newly planted trees could have benefits because it may encourage watering and may not be a detriment to initial tree growth.
- c. Members decided to propose alternate suggestions and wording for the Tree Planting Door Hanger.

Action Item: David Lefcourt to send PDFs of the current Tree Planting Door Hanger to committee members.

Action Item: Committee members to review and supply alternative phrasing/content for the Tree Planting Door Hangers.

- d. Following the conversation related to Door Hangers, committee members noted residential sidewalk salting as another item in need of greater attention. However, Michael Hanlon noted a more serious concern is the use of salt by the Cambridge DPW. He mentioned that multiple complaints have been forwarded to Lisa Peterson concerning the DPW's overabundant salt usage. With continued filing of complaints, the City may adjust their practices.
- e. In addition to the Door Hangers, David Davis also talked about other types of pamphlets and formats that the committee could consider as precedents. These included pruning and tree care handouts as well as one on rodent control distributed by the Cambridge DPW (to be considered more as a format precedent). This led to the suggestion that additional on-line resources should provided as links on the Urban Forestry website.

Action Item: David Lefcourt to ask Eric Josephson to add more to or update the "useful links" portion of the website with the specific planting materials discussed at the meeting.

- f. Regarding any type of publications that may be assembled, one committee member suggested that each publication should have at least one unique thing to/about Cambridge in lieu of making it all generic information. Following that suggestion, another member proposed having Cambridge Parking Permits be more tree specific.

#5. Arborist Updates.

- a. Tree Pruning crews are currently pruning in Neighborhood 10 and the Cemetery. A willow was pruned at the Main Library grounds.
- b. Improper tree planting problems discussed at last month's meeting as being "major contractor issues" have been resolved. David Lefcourt had the contractor fix any outstanding items and trees planted too low were raised as needed.

c. The tree at 2443 Mass Ave will be replaced in the spring. The contractor made a failed attempt to transplant a heavily damaged tree and measures will be taken to ensure proper installation of a new replacement tree is completed.

d. Michael Hanlon suggested David Lefcourt distribute list of planted trees to committee members as well as anticipated trees for the spring.

Action Item: David Lefcourt to distribute list of planted trees and future plantings to committee members.

e. During the winter months, David Lefcourt anticipates completing a survey of all empty tree well locations to determine whether they will be viable for new plantings or if they will be closed.

f. A Tree Removal Hearing took place over the last month. Trees at the following locations were approved for removal and ameliorative measures were suggested:

- 15 Hubbard (Resident requested removal)

- 54 Cambridge Park Drive (Pfizer requested removal of street trees due to ailing condition. Proposal to saw cut pavement and increase planting area, however if planting area remains small Michael Hanlon proposed planting more tap rooting trees - oaks, shagbark hickory, paulownia)

g. The discussion then followed into the topic of planting standards with members requesting copies of the current planting standards for review and comment.

Action Item: David Lefcourt to distribute current planting standards to the committee members.

h. One committee member mentioned the trees on Wheeler St appeared to be in poor health. David Lefcourt is aware of the situation and these trees will be addressed. A request to bury electrical lines was made in order to remove all overhead wires from the street.

i. Near the close of the meeting, David Lefcourt asked committee members to take particular notice of problematic tree grates. Over the winter, his crews will be removing or expanding tree grates that are choking trees and input from members on locations will be helpful.

Action Item: Committee members to look out for problematic tree grates and report the location (address or nearest intersection) of issues to David Lefcourt.

There wasn't time to address the "Silver Maple Forest" so this will be discussed at the next meeting. Contact David Lefcourt with any questions or concerns.

Meeting adjourned at 7:00PM.

NEXT MEETING: Due to scheduling conflicts, the CPP meeting will be the third Wed., January 19th, 5:30 – 7:00.