

Committee on Public Planting - June 2011 Meeting Minutes --- recorded by Michael Hanlon

David Lefcourt announced that the City of Cambridge received the 'Tree City USA Award' and is on schedule to receive the award again next year.

David L showed us a copy of the new tree planting brochure that had been approved by the Board and received from the printer.

The scheduled tree planting for spring of 2011 has been completed. David L seems satisfied with the results. Janet Burns mentioned that there was a lack of water at a large tree planting project and David L promised that there would be water on site for future projects.

Lisa Peterson, Commissioner of Public Works and Owen O'Riordan, Commissioner of Engineering attended meeting and spoke about the City's policy and guidelines for evaluating decisions whether to remove trees during sewer separation projects; at a time when streets need to be excavated and redesigned. They also spoke on tree planting policy as it relates to ADA requirements.

Owen stated the 65% of the City currently contains combined sewerage pipes, and future priorities include separating sewer lines to help decrease backups and flooding problems. Current municipal efforts also include improving the water quality in the Alewife Brook area, increasing handicap accessibility, and creating greener neighborhoods. Owen stated that Larch Road was used as an example for balancing and achieving desired goals. There, consideration was given to determining which side of the street would be better suited to provide effective handicap access. Owen also spoke about the use of impervious asphalt and the construction of 'rain gardens' which means losing parking spaces. Owen feels that there is minimal citizen push-back on the loss of parking spaces and mentioned recent work at Prentiss Street as an example.

The construction methods of new sidewalks were discussed. Lisa said that under new sidewalk installation standards, they are made to last between 50 and 70 years.

David Davis spoke about the need for back of sidewalk tree planting (which is a small percent of City trees planted). He wondered if there were ways of creating economic incentives to encourage people to choose back of sidewalk trees for their property. Lisa thought that providing the trees was enough inducement, at least for now.

Discussion followed on the City's policy of planting tree wells. Tree well planting on Upland Road was discussed. Lisa said the City continually endeavors to protect trees and aims to find ways to make tree planting more successful.

David L is still taking requests for tree planting sites for fall 2011.

Policy for watering new trees was discussed. David L stated that new trees are contractually guaranteed for one year. It is the contractor's best interest to keep the trees alive during that initial first year period.

David L noted that scheduled tree pruning in Mid-Cambridge was postponed in order to help with the recent tornado damage in the Springfield area.

David L also plans to analyze the tree pruning contract for the parks and cemetery, to identify mechanisms for streamlining management responsibilities.

Lastly, it was announced that three summer interns are hired to work with the forestry department, including a general intern, a tree inventory intern and a water-by-bike intern

Summer break ----- No scheduled August meeting.