

Committee on Public Planting Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, January 14, 2015
5:30-7:00, DPW, 147 Hampshire Street

Present:

Janet Burns, Maggie Booz, Kathleen Caldera, Paula Cortes, A. David Davis, Chantal Eide, Michael Hanlon, Kathleen Kelly, Jonathan Lewis, Johan Paulsson, Nancy Phillips, Cynthia Smith, Gitte Venicx, Florrie Wescoat
City Arborist Dave Lefcourt, Community Development Representative Gary Chan, DPW Planner Catherine Woodbury

The meeting was called to order at 5:30. Minutes taken by Janet Burns

Minutes from the Meeting of December 10, 2014 were Accepted.

1) Annual Meeting

Election of New Co-Chairs: Appreciation was expressed for six-years of leadership service by co-chairs Dave Davis and Michael Hanlon. Maggie Booz and Florrie Wescoat were elected as new co-chairs.

State Ethics Commission: The annual forms from the state's Ethics Commission were passed out to be signed by committee members.

2) Draft Mission Statement

Dave D. compiled a draft mission statement reflecting ongoing subject matter of the committee, and, in part 2, proposes a few expansions of scope. He asks members to review it and send in comments before the next meeting; he offered to be part of a sub-committee to draft a concise version. There was a request for comparison with the current City ordinance pertaining to the committee.

3) Review of Sand-Based Structural Soils

Catherine Woodbury spoke about current use of structural soils in the large sewer separation areas around Huron and Concord Avenues. Due to the large scale of this project all streets and sidewalks throughout the area are being reconstructed. More expensive sidewalk planting details are possible, beyond the typical standard specs (such as under Chap. 90). In the case of new street tree plantings 100 cubic feet of soil is replaced with a sand-based structural soil mix from the tree well, under the sidewalk to the back of sidewalk. The average tree well size is 2' X 7'. The use of sand-based structural soil is quite expensive due to additional amount of excavation – soil removal, disposal and replacement. Also, significantly increases the duration and disruption associated with construction. This same type of sand-based structural soil was used for Western Ave contract for the same reason of cost opportunity with scale of project.

The City's consultant, Bioengineering (recently purchased by Chester Engineers), developed the specifications for the sand-based structural soil mix for the new trees was in consultation with Pine & Swallow. Bioengineering assists during construction with overseeing tree plantings and installation of the Biobasins. The Pine & Swallow sand-based structural soil mix differs from the Cornell structural soil specifications, because it is not a proprietary mix and can be installed by a non licensed installer. The City was advised that there is a concern with the potential depletion of nutrients over time with the use of the Cornell mix which may not support the replanting of a new tree in the future, the new type of mix does not seem to have this drawback to the same degree. And with the mix extending to back of sidewalk the roots of some trees will extend into adjacent soils.

The soil is purchased pre-mixed, in bulk. A sample is taken from each 1000 cubic foot stock pile to

check material size and composition. The mix varies based on the needs of different locations- for support of sidewalk weight and various rates of infiltration. A perk test is done after the mix is compacted. The soil mix detail calls for 100 cubic feet per tree. Twenty different tree types are being used; which ones will work best under these conditions- "we'll see".

Another piece of the Huron area project are five biobasins and a sections of porous pavement. The soil in them is a special mix intended to clean runoff captured from 1" of rain from a small catchment area. Cambridge is working, under permit from EPA, toward improving street run off that is as clean as possible. One way is to treat storm water going to the new Constructed Alewife Wetland. A maintenance RPF will go out for services to work with the biobasins.

4) New Street

A community meeting on January 15th will address how to make the streetscape of New Street reflect the change in land uses and accommodate all users. The DPW is working on a plan to reconstruct the street as a "complete street" to include sidewalks, bike lanes, and street trees. [Thank you Kathleen Kelly for attending the meeting and distributing a report.]

5) NSTAR Pruning Illustrated

Photos sent to Jonathan showed examples of both good and distressing utility pruning in Cambridge. [Thank you Chantal Eide for the published photos of different utility/tree approaches.]

The meeting adjourned at 7:05.

Next Meeting

CDD Update

Review Draft Mission Statement

Revisit Tree Species List

Review Guidelines for NSTAR Circuit Pruning

Review Guidelines for Planting Holes