

CAMBRIDGE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC PLANTING MEETING MINUTES **Wednesday, September 14, 2016**

Attendance

Maggie Booz, Paula Cortes, Florrie Wescoat, Nancy Phillips, Kathleen Caldara, David Davis, Michael Hanlon, Cynthia Smith, Chantal Eide, Dennis Jen, Gary Chan (CDD), David Lefcourt (DPW), Owen O’Riordan (DPW), John Nardone (DPW), David Webster (DPW).

Visitors: Quentin Zondervan.

Review of Minutes - July 2016 minutes were reviewed and approved.

Quentin Zondervan from Green Cambridge – Biochar, tree programs

Started a new tree program called **Cambridge Trees**, made up three sub-programs:

1. **Plant a tree** – Cambridge residents may request a tree for their property
 - a. City of Cambridge Tree Planting: Back of Sidewalk program
 - b. Green Cambridge Tree Planting: Volunteer expertise is provided to help homeowners with tree species selection. Also volunteers will help with tree planting.
2. **Water a tree:** Rainbarrel program. Green Cambridge partnering with DPW runs a free, volunteer assistance program for people who have purchased rain barrels from the city. Installation free.
3. **Feed a tree:** Green Cambridge is launching a pilot study using Biochar as a soil additive. Street trees growing in soil with Biochar added will be monitored and compared with trees growing without the additive.

Biochar is made by burning plant material in a low oxygen environment at a high temperature. It preserves the structure. Biochar holds water and makes it available to plants. It creates a habitat for microbes. It provides a 3D surface – no nourishment. The material is inert. One application of Biochar lasts forever.

Hopefully the pilot study using Biochar will begin this fall. Observations of the trees in the study (Biochar and controls) will take place over 5-10 years, and differences will be observed. A suggestion was made to have it be unknown which trees in the pilot have biochar added to their soil and which trees do not.

Arborist Updates – David Lefcourt

Drought effects on the urban forest. The Red Maples and Cherry trees started to show signs of the drought by mid- to late-July.

The 5-15 year old trees were hit the worst. The younger trees are being watered; the older trees are okay.

We are seeing early leaf drop.

Drought is cumulative. This is one of the worst droughts. Come next spring there may be many dead trees.

Trees planted within the last 3 years were watered every 7 days. Thus the young trees are looking good.

Question: Would it make sense next year to pay attention to watering the 5-15 year old trees? Would it make sense to plant fewer trees?

Right now we have a 2-year contract to water new trees. Maybe in-house we will cover years 3 and 4 to give the trees a longer establishment period.

Watering leaflets are being sent out with the water bills. These leaflets are not drought related.

Owen – We have an opportunity to invest more money to care for the 5-15 year old trees.

In 2011, a fly-over was done, a UVM document was produced showing an aerial view of Cambridge with a 30% canopy coverage (including parks and private land). We haven't done anything with this yet. Dave Lefcourt says it is an opportunity for CPP. He will send the UVM document to us.

Questions: Are we happy at 30%? What is feasible/realistic? Do we invest in new trees or do we care for the existing trees? Owen thinks we can do both.

Maggie stated 30% is overall. There may be some areas that need trees.

Heat Maps – Some areas are hot, such as MIT and Alewife Concord Avenue area.

Cynthia said this is a teaching opportunity about drought. This should be communicated to City Council.

Fall planting plans: The planting of 300 trees is planned, 100 from the participatory budget, and 200 others. Dave Lefcourt is tagging trees in NJ September 21. There will be no Honeylocust because that is 11% of our tree canopy. Michael is worried about Hackberry as a choice. Cynthia says they planted a few in the Common.

EAB update and Ash trees: Dave is not totally eliminating trees that are susceptible to EAB, just keeping within a percentage. He started the second round of treatment. Hung traps up in 12-14 parks. No EAB was found. It has been identified in Newton. Maggie suggested Dave treats Ash tree on Market Street (private property). Dave said it is a slippery slope. Planting (Back of Sidewalk program) is low risk; Injecting pesticide is high risk. Owen – There is liability with the city using pesticides on private property. Dave Davis asked what will the city do if EAB is found on private property?

Flexipave application in Central Square and Harvard Square: 184 trees got flexipaved. Cost \$250,000.

Will Flexipave be used throughout the city? There is no benefit in residential areas, but it is helpful in heavy use areas such as schools.

Water can infiltrate at 10" per hour.

It was noted that flexipave is beginning to rot on JFK Street, as well as Tremont and Mount Auburn Streets.

Community Development Department Update – Gary Chan

There are two upcoming Planning Board Special Permit cases.

September 20 #315 Kendall Square. Applicant is Boston Properties, seeking approval for a concept plan for the entire area.

September 27 #316 305 Webster Avenue. Demolish existing building and build a new one. Proposal to construct a mixed use development of 35 dwelling units with ground floor retail.

The Volpe Center, located at 55 Broadway, has a 14-acre campus and a multitude of Oak trees. It is federally owned. RFP's are out. Gary will check on the status, and update us next meeting.

Second CPP newsletter – Drought and how residents can help

Florrie has written the 2nd newsletter. She will send a draft to us for comments.

Our next CPP meeting will be re-scheduled from October 12 (Yom Kippur) to another date (to be decided).

Earthwatch: Final reports have been published. See Urban Forestry Management Plan on the DPW website.

Clarification on budget – Owen

FY16 Budget

Capital appropriation

Participatory Budget Tree Planting \$120,000

EAB Treatment \$100,000

Pruning in Parks & Cemeteries \$120,000

Operating budget

Street tree planting \$25,000

Street tree pruning \$330,000

FY17 Budget

Capital appropriation

EAB treatment \$100,000

Pruning in Parks & Cemeteries \$100,000

Additional Street Tree Planting \$225,000

Operating budget

Street tree planting \$100,000

Pruning/removal street trees \$330,000

In 2016, a request was made for additional funds for restoration of streets -- \$4 million, with \$150,000 for tree planting. Each year thereafter (2017, 18, 19, 20) requesting \$2 million, with \$75,000 for tree planting.

Owen will put the numbers in a spreadsheet, and will send it out.

Envision Cambridge: Sign up for email list at envision.cambridgema.gov. Various events are planned in September such as Danehy Park Family Day, Neighborhood BBQ in North Cambridge. Envision Cambridge Working Group will be formed soon. It will be important for us to attend the Envision Cambridge Advisory Committee meetings.

Cambridge Cemetery: Cynthia suggested land use planning for Cambridge Cemetery as a future agenda item.

Minutes submitted by Kathleen Caldara.