

**Committee on Public Planting
Minutes
9 November 2016**

Present: Maggie Booz, Kathleen Caldara, Ellen Coppinger (DPW), Paula Cortes, David Davis, Chantal Eide, Michael Hanlon, Dennis Jen, Kathleen Kelly, David Lefcourt, Carolyn Matthews, Nancy Phillips, David Webster (DPW), Florrie Wescoat

Minutes from the October meeting were read and approved.

Arborist's Report

Fall planting started on 1 November: it is going well. All planting should be finished by 1 December. One hundred and seventy trees are projected to be planted, to make up for what wasn't planted in the spring.

Follow-up inspections showed that contractors (Leahy Landscaping) are planting according to specifications. Lefcourt gave the company a PDF with clear directions (available online) on digging the right-sized hole, removing burlap and wire, and planting at an appropriate depth, along with directions on watering.

The condos next to the Swiss Institute on Broadway planted their own trees, because it did not want to wait until spring for the city to plant. Some concerns about the size of the tree wells were raised by the Committee.

Some discussion ensued concerning how the root ball of a given tree is positioned on compacted soil. The size of the ball determines the depth at which it is set. If the hole is backfilled improperly, it won't settle.

Work was done by Northern Tree around the city; later in the season, NT will also do some work at the golf course. It was noted that the in-house DPW crew focuses on clean-up and requests.

Resolution time to handle requests has been shortened from six or eight months to two months.

CCD Report (Gary Chan)

Two Planning Board Special Permit hearings are scheduled for 15 November:

1. 47 Bishop Allen Drive
2. 415 Massachusetts Ave. and adjacent lots. (Many of the trees along Massachusetts Avenue are in rough shape, and are slated for removal as part of the work on the Red Line. The Watermark Central Venture group will be presenting to the CPP, perhaps in December or January. The Committee requested that a list of tree species be provided before coming, as well as data on whether irrigation will be installed.)

The point was raised that the CPP ought to see plans before they go to the Planning Board. Our recommendations are made moot if the Board has already voted. For example, the Committee would like to advocate for large shade trees if it is clear that no wires are in the way. Perhaps it is possible to intervene in the review process by contacting the developer ahead of time in order to

share what the CPP is looking for when reviewing plans. One of the main challenges is timing, given that the Planning Board meets more frequently than the CPP.

Continuing Discussions

- Review Alewife Development data as collected by Fresh Pond Residents Alliance.
- O'Connell Library Pocket Park plan: it was recommended to keep the tree strip according to current specifications to allow more room for expanding tree roots rather than build a wider byway. Revisit revised plan.
- The crusher run in the new planting at Star Market (Huron and Cushing) was analyzed. However, the point was made that the project was not intended to address the growing conditions of the existing trees, but to green up the area. The Committee discussed the current approach for installing sidewalks, which apparently consists of taking out everything, adding crusher run, then putting in sidewalk and borders, to the detriment of any trees planted.
- A related problem is a maintenance issue with respect to bump-outs that are bricked over with crusher run underneath, when the bump-outs could be planted. Often, abutters don't want to take care of a garden.
- The Committee discussed the pros and cons of mulch or flexi-pave. All new street tree plantings, like Mass Ave, are flexi-paved.
- Given the 2016 drought and projections that it will continue through 2017, more attention must be paid to how deep the roots of tree are. In some species, drought may cause roots to go deeper.
- The subject of homeowners who opt out of having a tree planted in front of their houses was raised and a number of responses offered.
- The Committee will revisit the subject of how trees will be replanted on Huron Avenue in fall 2017.
- The possibility of using Google Docs as a way to share CPP materials was raised.

Action Items

Lefcourt will follow up with Green Cambridge with respect to adding biochar to tree well, and insuring that it be dug in rather than top dressed.