

Cambridge Committee for Public Planting

Attendees: David Lefcourt, Chantal Eide, Cynthia Smith, Janet Burns, Paula Cortes, Melissa Miguel, Nancy Phillips, Florrie Wescoat, Jan Devereux, Owen O'Riordan, Catherine Woodbury, Gary Chan, John Nardone, David Webster, Carolyn Matthews, David Davis, Wil Durbin, Johan Paulsson, Kathleen Kelly, Pamela Lingel, Peggy Kutcher, Jonathan Lewis, Jason Bobowski

Business

- Florrie Wescoat called the meeting to order and the minutes from January were approved.

Tree planting specification - Jason Bobowski - Chester / Bioengineering

- The specifications for city tree planting are being reworked and standardized - three main specifications are being merged into one: City (Lefcourt) specifications; Chapter 90 (State) specifications, and Large Project (e.g. Huron Ave) specifications.
- After three meetings with a CPP subcommittee, language was tightened and simplified for contractors, improvements made, and other municipalities' plans were reviewed. Going forward, a certified arborist must be present for all Cambridge public tree plantings.
- Detail drawings for new and replacement trees were shown. General and special cases for sidewalk widths of 6', 7', and 8' were discussed.
- Trees must be alive two years after planting (formerly one year). A two year watering schedule was discussed.
- Tree well sizes and soil volumes will be increased where possible, and there should be better protection of the tree during establishment. In the future, protective temporary fences may be possible, with a gator bag zip tied to it. Tracking of watering was discussed, to assure that weekly watering occurs.
- O.O. clarified that contractors will widen tree pits when a sidewalk needs to be redone. F.W. brought up a concern that we have lost 20% of minimum tree well area - a 4'x5' pit is now 2'x 8' and advocated for 2'x10'. OO expressed a concern about trampling when exiting cars. JB showed a table of minimum placement distances between streetlights, water and gas connections, etc. DL: this is a minimum standard; must consider on a case by case basis; larger tree pits will be dug wherever possible but new sidewalks cannot be less than 4' wide. MAAB allows preexisting sidewalks to be 3'. CS suggested the new specification document be issued as a draft and reviewed in one year.
- DD mentioned digging a hole at three times the widest width of the root ball, suggested a squared-off area is better than a long area, inquired about a cup-shaped hole. He also suggested that a tag on the tree indicating the last watering date might involve citizens and help increase their awareness of tree care.

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- OO mentioned the cost of planting trees recently at Main St. was roughly \$10,000 per tree. The cost of planting trees will increase by three to four times the current cost because of tree well enlargement, excavation and disposal of existing soil, use of new planting soil, and the longer watering period. When asked why the soil must be removed and appropriately disposed of offsite, OO answered that it is a state law. Apparently there is a considerable amount of important fill material in Cambridge soils, this material is frequently contaminated with hydrocarbons, lead, and other heavy metals, e.g. the Agassiz residential neighborhood, where there has been a considerable amount of construction had much contaminated soil. In general, additional funds are being sought to plant trees following these improved and more costly specifications. New soil and disposal of contaminated soil at Greene-Rose Park cost hundreds of thousands.

CDD update - Gary Chan

- 399 Binney - public hearing on 23 February – of the existing 90 trees, 20 trees are to be removed, and 70 new trees are to be replanted on site. 95 Fawcett to be posted soon.

Smith Campus Center update - David Lefcourt

- Net increase in number of bike racks - some on Harvard property outside, some inside, and some on city land.
- Mt. Auburn plaza - 3 yellowwoods, 8 sourwoods, Harvard has committed to maintain the street trees for five years.
- The position for the chill line has not yet been determined. It could be in the street or back of sidewalk.
- OO – The City Manager shall make the final approval for any tree within the public right of way that receives a written objection.
- Harvard University will contribute \$105,000 for additional tree planting to compensate for loss of canopy. Loss of 140" caliper inches x \$750 per caliper inch. \$750 is new figure the DPW came up with to reflect the current industry trends.

Cambridge Common update - Cynthia Smith, Halvorson Design Partnership

- Many of the trees on the Common were Norway Maples planted after World War II.
- Newport Construction, the crew, is overextended as they are also doing Main St. and many other projects for MassDOT.
- There has been some scope creep of the original work, which included lighting, paths, plazas, canon restoration, and the metal work at the DAR gate.
- Attempting to diversify tree species, preferring native to exotic. The public planting committee has been involved in the oversight of the project from the beginning, including Phoebe Leighton and others decades ago.
- Clear the sight lines along the perimeter, heighten the visibility of the Civil War monument. Realign paths. Ameliorate the canopy. Enhance the lawn vigor, especially at the Cambridge Youth Soccer field.

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- Simplicity of materials - all asphalt path with flush granite curb. Circulation improvements, alignment of path to Civil War monument. Create a hierarchy of widths. Paths are cross-sloped. Puddle areas to be addressed in the spring. Seating and conversation areas improved.
- 104 new trees (including Flagstaff Park), many at perimeter. Removal of 21 trees, mostly ailing Norway Maples. New allée to Civil War monument.
- Mass. DOT would not allow mass planting of red oaks at perimeter – they have had difficulty getting them established on other projects in the past. In the Fall, pin oaks were planted, along with honey locusts, little leaf lindens, and Princeton elms at the allée. In the Spring, tulip trees will be planted, along with yellowwood and red and white oaks. At the perimeter 3 1/2 to 4" caliper trees were planted in a 2' deep by 6' wide continuous trench. Some Sophora japonica were removed. A big elm was saved.
- Hammell nursery is a good nursery.
- The area is being regraded, loose soil is being used around the tree roots and more rigid materials in between.
- There will be new irrigation for high use lawn and the perimeter. Also a wayfinding kiosk at the DAR gate and a history plaque.
- Project is funded by a combination of MassDOT and the City of Cambridge.
- There is multi modal transportation - bike, pedestrian, and auto. Newport Construction usually does highway.

Draft of Running Bamboo ordinance

- Wil Durbin, city council, circulated a draft ordinance regarding running bamboo and the protection of property of citizens. Many localities endorse such an ordinance. A letter from CPP expressing agreement with the spirit of the ordinance, but not endorsement, will be circulated.

Catherine Woodbury - DPW - New Street reconstruction

- A streetscape is being created on New Street in response to a 2014 resident community process. There were inconsistent sidewalks. The plan addresses pedestrian, bicycle, and auto traffic from the rotary to the railroad tracks by establishing sidewalks and bike lanes on both sides of the street for the entire length.
- The public right of way (ROW) varies from 40' at the rotary end of the street to 50' closer to the railroad.
- The character of the street is in transition and a second residential development at 75 New Street, a residential complex, is under construction.
- In some areas, there are back of sidewalk trees, in the area adjacent to Danehy Park, the pedestrian path is moved away from the curb behind the existing oak trees, and in the section between the rotary and Danehy Park the sidewalk will only be 5' wide and therefore no trees will be planted in this section.

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- There will be a tree hearing on 23 February for a tree which would, if it were to remain standing, be in the middle of the proposed bike lane. The tree in question is a 5 1/2" caliper red maple not in great shape.
- Three new trees are planned to be planted here at the back of sidewalk.
- CS points out that the existing pin oaks adjacent to Danehy Park are a big asset and all efforts should be made to preserve them.
- In one area between the cul-de-sac and the railroad tracks (west side), a sidewalk will be cut into a mound - it may interfere with the tree roots of an 11" sweet gum, a smaller sweet gum, and a pin oak. During construction, efforts will be made to protect these trees by adding small retaining walls, relocating the smaller trees or enlarging tree well areas. These trees are also on the February 23rd tree hearing agenda as a precaution, though efforts will be made to save all three trees.
- DD pointed out that the nearby cinema parking is challenging to negotiate. It was pointed out that this is private property and that attempts have been made to negotiate with the owners.
- The cul-de-sac area will continue to be used as a staging area through 2016 and there are no current plans for this lot.
- There is an electric substation at the corner - the city has a standby generator there which OO points out is extraordinarily important. There may be an opportunity to add a tree on the back of sidewalk adjacent to the substation.

End of meeting

- The meeting was adjourned by Florrie Wescoat.

Action items

- OO to produce document for DD regarding approval of removal of tree in case of dispute.
- CPP letter expressing agreement with the spirit of the bamboo ordinance but not endorsement to be circulated.