

Committee on Public Planting Meeting Minutes May 11, 2016

Present: Maggie Booz, Janet Burns, Paula Cortes, David Davis, Chantal Eide, David Lefcourt (DPW), Nancy Phillips, Florrie Wescoat, Kathleen Kelly, Gary Chan (CDD), Kathleen Caldara, Owen O’Riordan (DPW), Carolyn Mathews

Visitors: Mohamed Chakaki, Dennis Jen, Pat Pratt

Review of Minutes April 13, 2016 minutes were reviewed and approved, with some Revisions.

345 Vassar Street Project Kelley Brown and Laura Tenny, MIT

This is a vacant building near Memorial Drive which will undergo gut renovation for conversion to a Theatre Arts use. There are 5 Japanese Tree Lilacs on the public way in front of the building, roughly 3.5” caliper. Two are dead, the others are not thriving. Due to the tightness of the site (the building is about 3’-4’ from the 7’ wide sidewalk) and the extent of the planned construction (involving sidewalk removal and replacement as well as utility work), MIT wants to remove the trees and replace them at project completion. MIT will install larger tree pits than the present pits and will improve the soil. There is no proposal yet as to tree species; there is a height constraint due to overhead wires. CPP asked whether the overhead wires could be buried; MIT responded that this is financially infeasible, and Owen O’Riordan pointed out that the rough cost of burying overhead wires is \$1000/linear foot.

David Lefcourt will provide a recommended planting spec to MIT. MIT will return at a later date with details as to proposed species and specifications.

City Arborist Updates David Lefcourt

Spring Planting Bids: Bid opening is May 12. Four contractors picked up bid packages; David doesn’t know how many will have submitted bids. The process got delayed because of the revised specifications; David will try to shorten the rest of the contract process so as to be able to start planting soon.

Central Square Tree Well Improvements: DPW is doing cleanup, stump and adventitious root removal, and Flexipave installation at 145 tree wells, starting at Lafayette Plaza and working towards Harvard Square.

Winter Moth: David reports that this moth, which has come to the US via Canada, lays its eggs in tree buds; the eggs then hatch destructive green caterpillars. There are few controls so far: synthetic chemicals require spraying, which isn’t allowed in Cambridge; it’s possible, though, that the controls used for Emerald Ash Borers could be used against winter moth. However, a parasitic fly from Asia seems to be a natural predator and has been tested by the USDA. At this point we are waiting for the fly to multiply sufficiently.

Huron B and Concord Avenue: Street and sidewalk work is still in progress and won't be complete until the next construction season. Tree planting should start this fall and be completed next spring.

City of Cambridge Budget for FY 2017 Owen O'Riordan

There has been a major increase in the line items that impact trees. While typically the City has budgeted \$300k for tree planting and \$25k for operations (i.e. pruning, primarily), the 2017 proposed budget calls for a total of \$600k for planting and a total of \$100k for operations. (As in previous years, there is another \$100k for Emerald Ash Borer defense and \$100k for park and cemetery tree pruning.)

Tree Watering

CPP asked for an update on the watering program. Owen reported that a 500-gallon truck waters daily during the growing season, and that in addition the DPW anticipates hiring three water-by-bike interns during the summer.

CDD Updates Gary Chan

There are no project proposals to report. However, Gary noted the need for CPP to be involved with the Envision Cambridge process, and encouraged members to sign up for Envision emails. Maggie Booz pointed out that DCR is doing a study of the Mt. Auburn St./Fresh Pond Parkway area, and suggested that Envision make some links with DCR's process.

Goals for CPP 2016

We continued the discussion of Goals that began at the March meeting. The following goals were suggested, and CPP members are urged to continue to propose others:

- *Find ways to increase Back of Sidewalk tree planting.* In this connection, David Lefcourt noted that the Rain Barrel program has a new feature, offering Rain Barrels free where the property-owner agrees to plant a tree or participate in the Back of Sidewalk program for a new tree within 20' of the public sidewalk.
- *Produce a CPP email newsletter, monthly or, perhaps more feasible, quarterly.*
- *Compile a list of Action Items and maintain it on DropBox, Google Docs, or a similar site.*

Action Items

- Letter from CPP to Envision Cambridge (Florrie Wescoat requests that CPP members send suggested comments).

Minutes Submitted by Nancy Phillips

