

Committee on Public Planting

Meeting Minutes April 13, 2016 – REVISION (SEE ITALICS) PER MEETING OF MAY 11, 2016

Present: Michael Black, Maggie Booz, Janet Burns, Gary Chan, Paula Cortes, Dave Davis, Chantal Eide, Michael Hanlon, David Lefcourt, Jonathan Lewis, Melissa Miguel, Johan Paulson, Nancy Phillips, David Webster, Florrie Wescoat, *Kathleen Kelly*

Visitors: Andrew Arbaugis, Mohamed Chakaki, Dennis Jen, Sindu Meier, Pat Pratt, Martha Sieniewicz, Louise Weed

Review of Minutes March 9, 2016 meeting minutes were reviewed and Approved.

850 Cambridge Street City Project Manager Michael Black

Tear downs, and construction of a new King Open School, Cambridge St Upper School, Valente Library, Public Pool, and new central school administration building. The presentation was in anticipation of the upcoming tree hearing April 26 for removal of six street trees and 38 trees above the 8" cal. threshold. The project feasibility study is online and the schematic design will be online by mid-May, look for at the City Manager's website. It is a 275,000 sq ft project, architects are William Rawn Associates and Arrowstreet. It will be Net Zero and LEED Silver certified. The Net Zero concept is to stay on site--there will be no back up system as there is at the new MLK school which is 45% net zero with 65 geothermal wells. To fulfill the City's Net Zero requirement, nearly the entire site will be excavated for a grid of geothermal wells, set 6' below grad, 520' deep, 20' on center. Various uses will be built on top including rain gardens, playgrounds, patios, and basketball court. Trees and plantings can be worked within the grid. 187 3" cal. trees both on-site and street trees will be planted. Remaining caliper inches lost will be paid into the tree fund. The significant Sycamore tree on Cambridge St. will be well protected, air- spaded, root pruned, and watered. There will be many more street trees -- and the overall concept is "a school in a garden".

Discussion: Bid package drawings will be ready July 2017. There have been many community meetings and the idea of the geothermal wells has been broadly publicized. The trees will come down in several months. There is no plan to irrigate street trees, but they will be watered for three years. Questions: can money from the tree fund ever be used for irrigation. Suggestion: Even after all the community meetings, post the trees after the hearing with the findings and even put hearing results in the Chronicle.

City Arborist Updates David Lefcourt

The spring planting bid documents were delayed this year because of the planting spec rewrite process but are at the Purchasing Dept now. There are about 200 locations approved including 100 trees through the Participatory Budgeting Process. Replacement of Beech at Joan Lorenz Park The Joan Lorenz Park Committee would like to replace a large Beech tree removed in March 2015, a 10" cal tree has been discussed, cost would be \$15,000-20,000. The replacement

proposal has morphed into a Site Assessment Study in order to consider the whole context including pressure for more bicycle parking and benches. Ellen Coppinger (DPW) is on the sub-committee formed to undertake this. Maggie asked if the planting committee would be in the loop. Paula pointed out that there are three experienced landscape architects on the J.L. Park Committee. Cambridge Street a project of seven new street trees with planting beds will be completed near Spaulding/Youville by the end of April.

There was a question about ~~why tree well size became smaller in the new planting specs.~~ The preferred size of 4' x 6' 5" is not realistic as it does not work for 80% of Cambridge. ~~and because the elongation length allowed is reduced from 8' to 5' due to new ADA regs. coming out soon.~~
Note: David Davis noted that the MAAB places no limit on the length of tree pits; the governing rule is that sidewalks must be at least 4' wide in order to comply with the ADA, and no obstruction is allowed that would narrow a sidewalk to less than 3'. Further, new ADA reg.'s have been proposed that would limit the length of such pinch points.

There was a question about the status of back of side-walk planting. David Lefcourt said that in the years since he became City Arborist somewhat less than ~~about~~ 50 trees in all have been planted *back of sidewalk* and within 20' of the right of way. The property owner is responsible for tree care but it is subject to the tree hearing process. He said responsibility is fuzzy and he will bring up the need for clarity with Owen O'R. Dave Davis said researching case law and ownership issues in order to spell out how it works would support public outreach efforts- including promotion on the website.

CDD Rep Gary Chan Updates

A Special Permit is needed for development of 95-99 Elmwood St. The site is north of the Linear Park and is mostly in Somerville. The Planning Board hearing is April 19, plans are on the CDD website. The part in Cambridge is a never-accepted private way, the project needs approval from the Planning Board, but the City is not responsible for plantings. A letter to the Planning Board could ask that the owners be encouraged to water for the first three years.

Co-Chairs Meeting with Owen O'Riordan and John Nardone

Kendall Sq T Stop question: what is behind the \$10,000 per tree cost? Due to contamination the soil is being removed and disposed of, managed under state law. There is underground irrigation and aeration, and large caliper trees. Owen said that a normal new street tree situation in Cambridge costs about \$1,500. New ADA state regulations: the sidewalk passage dimension requirement is going from 36" to 48", and the elongation-pinch point distance-of the tree pit is limited to 5'. Tree surveys: Over time inventories and surveys of public trees have involved in-house efforts, interns, citizen volunteers-- with and without tech support. Public involvement has been regarded as an important aspect. Do the times require a shift in perspective to professionally conducted tree surveys. Owen will wait until Earthwatch, using volunteers, makes their presentation before considering other approaches.

City Council Health and Environment Committee

Jan Devereau asked for a citizen outreach program (similar to Adopt A Tree) to increase watering and weeding of new trees during the establishment period. Also explore planting American Chestnut trees in collaboration with the American Chestnut Foundation. [note: several successful American Chestnuts from the foundation are located in the butterfly meadow at Fresh Pond Reservation]

Goals for CPP 2016

A summary of CPP work in 2015, prepared by Florrie, was available (on the back of the agenda). Looking ahead, Maggie & Florrie ask members for ideas about how a network of tree volunteers could be organized and what goals should be considered, (this might include helping to water new trees, weed tree wells, remove dangling stakes, and spread the word about tree care). The committee's input could help shape Dave's follow-up if there is a city council order to create a volunteer-based program.

The Envision Cambridge process now underway is a chance for the CPP to weigh in on a vision for the urban forest, any thoughts on how or if to take part--time is short. Any other ideas for goals in 2016.

Submitted by, Janet Burns