

COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC PLANTING, Minutes meeting October 11, 2017

Present: Staff: David Lefcourt, Owen O'Riordan, Gary Chan, CDD; Members: Jonathan Lewis, Kathleen Kelly, A. David Davis, Chantal Eide, Florrie Wescoat, Maggie Booz, Sophia Emperador, Dennis Jen, Paula Cortes; Guests: Tim Wilson, Stoss, Laura Tenny, MIT Office of Campus Planning

Meeting called to order 5:40 pm.

Owen discussed progress for consultant selection for the Urban Forest Master Plan. Proposals are due Thursday, reviews happen the next two weeks, and looking toward a choice being made in November. Chantal and Dennis will sit on the selection committee. Start of contract January 2018, for one year. Task Force (12-14 people appointed by City Manager) will interface with the consultant. There was some concern expressed, and discussion about the RFQ scope being very broad, ranging from tree planting to tree effect on climate change to management of urban forest. What authority or influence will Task Force have, rather than just a sounding board? Owen expects influence will be similar to that of the CPP. He stated that the Envision process and the Preparedness Plan, through CDD, will have an impact on climate issues as well. There might be implications for zoning, regulations and ordinances. Considerable discussion ensued.

The consultant will report to the City Manager. The Task Force will also report to the City Manager, and it will have a paid moderator.

Tim Wilson of Stoss, and Laura Tenny presented preliminary designs for a residence hall along the railroad, west of Vassar and Pacific streets. The ground floor will be revitalized and 'greened'. The parking garage will be demolished December 2017 and new construction will be about 18 months. There was considerable discussion around the 15 healthy elm trees which, under the plans presented, will have to be removed. Replacements will occur in 2020. Size of building and construction traffic will necessitate this. Discussion arose around the continual situation where healthy trees are removed, notwithstanding replacements planned, without seeming concern and enough attention to perhaps changing the building configuration and construction, to allow for trees to remain. MIT rep stated that there was no alternative to removing the trees. New tree species TBD. Structural soil will be used. MIT will investigate health of the other trees on Vassar which seems to be declining. With all these trees gone, Vassar St. will be treeless. Need was expressed for influence by MIT on the planning of buildings for tree preservation.

Arborist report: 370 trees planted Spring 2017; about 155 trees to be planted shortly for Fall 2017, and 26 trees replaced through the warranty process of Fall 2016 and Spring 2017. 50 approx. spring planted trees were bare root, of which 5 approx. did not make it. Elm cultivars being used are Princeton, Valley Forge, Jefferson, Prospector.

Leahy Landscaping is doing the planting, and Dave reports he is happy with their work.

Dave distributed a sheet listing tree species planted in 2017 and a sheet listing tree replacement locations for 2017 of trees planted in fall 2016/spring 2017.

Gary Chan, CDD: in the interest of time, the Binney discussion will be in November, and he will be getting more information on the triangle site. There are no new Planning Board special permits.

There is a private property tree ordinance being proposed and is being reviewed by the City legal department. There is slow progress through the City agencies.

Meeting adjourned at 7:10 pm. Minutes taken by Paula Cortes

