

**Committee on Public Planting
Minutes
1 February 2017**

Present: Maggie Booz, Janet Burns, Kathleen Caldara, Gary Chan, Paula Cortes, David Davis, Chantal Eide, Dennis Jen, Kathleen Kelly, David Lefcourt, Jonathan Lewis, Carolyn Matthews, Nancy Phillips, Cynthia Smith, Florrie Wescoat

Guests: Stuart Dash (CDD), Melissa Peters (CDD)

Minutes from the December and January meeting were read and approved.

Stuart Dash (CDD), Melissa Peters (CDD) made a presentation on “Envision Cambridge” with an update on Cambridge and Alewife planning. The focus: 1) plan overview and schedule, 2) vision and core values, 3) Alewife planning.

The City is in year two of the Envision Cambridge initiative, and the future of Alewife and the “Quadrangle” area (currently mostly commercial and mixed use) is of particular concern because both have the greatest potential for redevelopment. At the same time, this area is projected to be particularly vulnerable to flooding due to climate change.

One of the problems with the Quadrangle is that it is a patchwork of lots of varying and sometimes odd sizes with a variety of owners, which makes it difficult to plan for an integrated design.

There is great interest in creating connectivity within the parcel and connecting to the surrounding area. It was acknowledged that any through streets, bicycle paths, and greenways are ideal for planting street trees.

The Committee was specifically interested in looking at projected scenarios for the Quadrangle in order to identify appropriate places for street trees. Dash and Peters stated that it is assumed that street trees are included, even though they are not in the different “optimized baseline” schema. Dash and Peters expressed their commitment to the urban canopy, and were receptive to suggestions that projects or scenarios going forward include street trees in their scenarios. The Committee noted that the area is currently identified as a heat island, and that this can be mitigated by street trees.

Dash said that however the area is developed, they plan to follow the new set of specifications set by the City and the DPW for planting street trees. When asked about cubic feet of soil, he indicated that they were planning on 600 cu. ft., but was aware that research indicates that 1000 cu. ft. is more optimal. He noted that CDD is following city specifications for trees in public parks.

Advocating for the City to buy land for public space in the Quadrangle was discussed, as well as a design which would push open space to the middle of the area, providing more opportunity for street trees along the perimeter and along the interior.

Overall, the City seems committed to what Dash calls “better urbanism.” The initial analysis of Alewife and how it might become a more optimal space was based on producing several different “baseline” scenarios; the next set of analyses are expected to be more fine-grained—it is at this point the CPP may best weigh in. Dash and Peters concluded their presentation by expressing appreciation for any future letters from the CPP that would help the City increase the number of street trees as Envision Cambridge goes forward..

The Committee noted that we had sent a letter to the Planning Board about the Mass on Main project in which we advocated for the connectivity of green spaces, more trees, and buried utility lines. The language of the letter could be easily adapted for Envision Cambridge.

In other business, Gary Chan noted that two more projects, including 907 Main St., are coming up for review.