

September 23, 2022

To the Newton City Council:

As a designated Tree City USA, Newton has valued and served as a proud steward of its trees. Yet much has changed since Newton passed its groundbreaking Tree Ordinance in 1999, particularly the accelerating global climate crisis which has underscored the great value of trees to the population and businesses of Newton. It is time for Newton to update and strengthen existing protections and investment in our trees. Thus, we, the Newton Urban Tree Commission, urge the Newton City Council to enact the strongest protections for trees in Newton.

As an initial, interim measure, while proposed ordinance changes are discussed and finalized, we urge you to enact a temporary moratorium on tree removals and take action as soon as possible. Further, we support the City-Council-proposed ordinance (Docket #411-22) because it greatly strengthens protections for *all* trees 6-inches DBH (in diameter at breast height) and larger across *all* properties in Newton.

We share the concerns expressed at the Programs and Services Committee meeting on September 21 about the rush to remove trees that would happen in the absence of the moratorium during the discussion of the ordinance changes.

Cutting healthy, mature trees has harmful impacts on every local neighborhood, the city, and the region, as well as the global climate emergency for so many reasons, including adverse consequences from:

- neighborhood air pollution and heat indices
- storm water drainage
- road quality
- local public health
- the cost of healthcare to individuals and businesses

Each of these negative impacts leads to many direct and indirect costs for the City of Newton and thus the City's taxpayers.

We also applaud Newton's leadership in recognizing the urgent need to mitigate the impacts of climate change by protecting and preserving mature, healthy trees and investing in new street and community trees. Every mature, healthy tree that is preserved contributes meaningfully to carbon capture and energy savings, stormwater and flooding mitigation, cleansing the air, reducing heat, and improving public health and reducing health care costs - for Newton.

We strongly urge the Newton City Council to enact first a temporary moratorium and then the City-Council-proposed ordinance changes. Following the recent actions of Cambridge and Boston to preserve their trees, this would allow Newton to remain in the forefront of communities to preserve their tree canopy.

Respectfully,

The Newton Urban Tree Commission