

Urban Tree Commission 12.21.2023

Attendance: Howard Birnbaum, Barbara Darnell, Ruth Goldman, Julia Malakie, Laura Petrillo, Amy Sangiolo, Marc Welch, Beth Wilkinson

Approved: Minutes from July, October & November

Update:

Storm clean up: 350 reports from trees. Marc will also follow-up after vacation to see if there is any more clean up and will check on new trees. Looking at stumps etc. At peak, four log trucks and three other trucks.

Planting: November is planting season including sometimes end of October and early December. Overall (including Tree Conservancy) 545 trees, likely a few more (close to 550). A successful planting month. Getting ready for 2024 Fall Planting - likely a similar number.

Will report back on 2023 total, but likely 725 trees.

Filled vacancy in the staff - now fully staffed.

Month coming up and rest of the winter - miscellaneous projects. Trimming around City Hall; picnic area at Auburndale Cove and several on the south side near Oak Hill Park and Brown Middle School, then moving over to the Highlands Playground. Once snow falls, will move to street to street pruning but haven't spent much time in parks lately so focused on these areas. There had been a backlog in parks. Not staffed to do park work but this year has allowed them some time to do other projects. Did some stump and tree removal and grinding. Always address critical hazards in parks but don't typically do "proactive" clean up. But places like Highlands Playground have not been touched in a while.

Update on Tree Ordinance:

Julia: Amendments for increased abutter input by Norton and Malakie and from Crossley & Downs to shift setback allowance; one about not replacing invasives specie trees; and one about not replacing trees with invasive species (which seemed redundant- prohibited by state law and hard to buy the trees). None of these passed. Invasive can be changing and given climate change, native could be changing. Programs and Services would need to discuss this more.

Marc: Trees have a certain value even if they are "invasive". Norway maples provide the same benefits as a regular tree. Public trees are protected in this ordinance - need to be replaced if a street tree is cut down. A longer, more thoughtful conversation about invasive species is required rather than just not replacing them.

Congratulations all round to folks who advocated for this including Julia, Amy, Laura and others on City Council.

Marc has to get the website updated and have a step-by-step process that explains how to undertake the new tree permit process. Will then send a letter to all developers who have worked with City in past five years and will let tree companies know.

A lot of other things happening at the same time. Manage seasonal hiring on a new process. Transitioning to a new 311 system. Transition forestry onto a new inventory system. Open Tree Map is gone - may not be able to retrieve most up to date data. Will use Tree Keeper - there are only a couple systems out there. Second time in 20 years that Marc has changed systems. Davey Tree Company is not shutting down anytime soon. They have been around for 100+ years. Marc's person Jordan will start inventorying trees this spring. Does $\frac{1}{3}$ each year. Davey has helped create the tree calculator. Davey is still privately owned or employee owned.

Beth: Two things to have on our plate re: ordinance. Publicize (with Fig City as one avenue) - getting Josh's Emily's, and Marc's updates. Amy is writing an article for Fig City but will run it by Marc and Julia and Emily to ensure accuracy. How do we get support for Marc? He will have a lot more work.

Marc: The work will be budget driven and the budget process begins in January/February. A 2 - 3 meeting process at the department level at Parks. A separate meeting on forestry with administration. Nothing to do about extra work between now and then.

Barbara: What kind of help will Marc need?

Marc: Tough one to answer. The challenge in the medium picture: the staffing hasn't changed when ordinances have evolved. The oversight work could keep multiple people busy and the staffing has not kept up. There is an initial uptick in work. Dramatic shift with builders - some try to get Marc to do their work for them. Each conversation may take a long time.

Beth: Can we make a case for a half time person to do this? Could you hire someone?

Marc: Leans towards someone to do administrative work - schedule regular truck upkeep inspections etc. Hard to find people for anything and part-time may even be harder. The permitting is pretty consistent. There aren't many lulls. People are building all the time and each one requires a tree permit.

Beth: Can you send a list and overview of the tasks so we can write a letter to the Mayor about getting another staff person.

Marc: Not expecting any budget increases in forestry - hoping it won't go backwards but don't think it will. Gone from \$250k - \$2M today. Can never be certain when presented with a budget. Marc prefers to keep the resources in the field. When Marc took over Deputy Commissioner job, he hired Jordan, who does all the field work that Marc used to do. Jordan does do additional work that never got done in the past. He does not do any admin work. Butchie is the

other inspector and he does the 3,000 customer requests a year and manages the outside crews. Butchie is about 70 and has worked for the City for 40 years.

Howard: Education campaign about the value of trees. Can we do this? Work with Tree Conservancy.

Laura loves this idea. Martha Bixby really likes this idea. Getting folks excited about historic trees and get kids involved. Laura worked on a website.

Julia: diameter and canopy breadth are the measurements - could have a contest for all tree types.

Howard: Could we put this on the agenda?

Beth & Ruth: Agree on advocating for a position at Forestry.

Marc: Best if we take in enough \$\$ on permits to support a position. Tree Ordinance could increase revenue or it could incentivize people to work on alternatives. Unreliable income and don't want it tied to a person. Right now the tree crews are tied to income. Offered that ordinance would generate part of a position and Jonathan Yeo may have indicated this in a committee hearing. Administration is very receptive to anything to do with trees. They don't dismiss me and happy to meet. Easiest group to work with since Marc has been there.

Beth: Put a letter and list from Marc on the agenda for January.

Tree Removal Requests:

1. Two separate ones that are typical developer asks: 7 Stonewood Drive (roots taking up sidewalk on deadend road - don't need the sidewalk) & 18 Norman Road (for driveway). Both Norway Maples. Driveway and sidewalk improvements.
2. Three locations: 334, 374, 426 Ward St - MWRA is installing a new 24 inch water main and they are requesting removal about these trees. Beth mentioned a woman who always speaks up for trees that is likely to reach out. Trees are Linden, Norway Maple, Honey Locust.

Marc sending out a notice today. Deadline for objections is Jan. 4th. People will have to pay for these trees. City will replace MWRA trees. MWRA keeps best records on trees. They are creating redundancy in water mains.

Adjourn: Next Meeting on January 19th.