

Urban Tree Commission

Meeting Minutes - Friday, April 26, 2019

City Hall, Rm 211

Present: Marc Welch, Julia Malakie, Beth Wilkinson, Michele Cruz Yasodhara Paruchuru (at end).
Guests: Julie Winsett, Bill Hoch.

Forestry Update

MW: Last couple months uneventful. Caught up on service requests for pruning & removal requests. About 20 of each still pending. Last 4 weeks has been followup on recent plantings, mulching about 1,200 locations, sites planted last fall and year before. Spring not big planting season. Will be NTC ~120 or a little less, + 80 to 120 city trees in scattered locations.

MW already started risk tree survey. Two quick rounds, May-June, and June-September. Last year much lower removals than prior years. Too early to tell if trend will continue. If so, may be planting more than removing. This FY will be 820-840 Last year was 806. Goal is 800. Includes NTC plantings. Now both planting & removal numbers include new trees that don't make it, and trees that replace them.

Spring city trees are mostly homeowner watering, except for small area near David & Roosevelt Rd that's near areas they're already watering west of Parker Street. Also planting 20-30 trees as mitigation for trees cut down along Mass Pike, scattered because there's not a lot of spots. Some in Walker Park across from Oakley Spa. Some on Auburn St near MBTA parking lot; not a lot cut there, but space to plant. MBTA tree cutting was for a wire that goes whole length of Pike. Trees were mostly ailanthus, a lot of them already dead. Unclear why; ailanthus can get EAB, but no evidence of it.

City watering over 900 locations every week, at or over capacity. Last year was 700 something. Now have tiered approach, watering first year trees every week, and rolling list for second year trees which might get watered every 8-9 days. JM: how are city treegators holding up? MW: city took them off for the winter.

Budget: already done. Parks & Rec no reductions and no monetary changes. Cultural affairs portion of Linda Plaut position now in Parks & Rec, and assistant is funded in operating budget instead of by revolving fund. More for athletic fields maintenance. Forestry tweaked line items to cover shortfall in equipment repair and maintenance, had modest increase in OT & supplies to allow planting of 30-50 more trees/year in operating budget. Are at max for planting without a substantial budget leap (increase in staff or contractor budget). Adding an inspector to assist MW as deputy director. Instead of replacing MW, will be an inspector/arborist to do field work MW would have done. Butch will still do risk tree inspections. MW will still review planting plans for Tree Preservation Ordinance.

JM: what is timing on planting of replacement trees for solar sites? MW: nothing scheduled yet, no trees have been removed yet. Recent Brown planting was the students funded by \$1,000 grant. They got the good spots in front of school.

UTC Membership

JM hoping to have new chair elected, so as not to be head of both UTC and NTC. BW stepping down as head of Conservators but will continue to work w/successor for a year.

New business

JM had inquiry from WN Hill resident about trees at foot of hill on Dexter Road across from Bulloughs Pond, appeared marked for removal.

MW: across from Bulloughs Pond on Dexter Road is wooded area. State considers a portion of that a dam, and not allowed to have vegetation growing on a dam. State told city to do survey & come up with plan to make it safe. Similar to rule on Waban Hill Reservoir. Engineering needed to do survey. Some trees lower branches pruned for site lines for survey. Trees may have been marked for survey purpose. Has not heard more in about a year. Anything that happens will require ConComm approval. MW thinks state will decide what has to happen. Where trees are is all city land, but a lot of the wooded area is not the slope.

JW question about Newton Serves - does UTC recommend projects? BW: UTC is more policy, and NTC does tree care activities throughout year. JM: Tree Stewards to do pruning; want people working on trees to know what they're doing.

Question about tree ordinance and developers. MW: if it's homeowner doing addition, likely exempt, he just looks at street view and aerial. If it's a builder, goes to look at it. Site plan quality varies greatly, but mostly, mission info appears not intentional. , typically Changes made to tree ordinance in 2014 have addressed the concerns we had.: cutting trees down before getting permit, getting home seller to cut the trees. Are now catching them. Went from 30 tree permits per year, to last year about 230 permits. Can't get a building permit for exterior work, except siding or windows, without getting a tree permit first. Vast majority are no trees or small number on lot, or homeowner doing it. Some builders are benefiting from extension of exempt lot status, but it's small number and it seems to be done for other reasons. They built to suit ultimate buyer without ever owning the property. Only 1-3 per year, and they're longtime builders here, not new.

Tab column

YP draft distributed and reviewed. Motion approved to submit to Tab after any minor edits. YP will send digital version for final review. JM can supply photo of properly mulched tree.

Question about all the trees planted in big mulch mounds. MW: person is doing it without permission. Has gotten multiple cease-and-desist and no trespass orders, including JYeo & city solicitor Ouida Young personally serving him papers. City still gets complaints about the piles. Is different than typical mulch volcanos; he's planting high and mounding soil up and mulching over, with purpose of keeping mowers and string trimmers away.

Meeting adjourned

Submitted by Julia Malakie