

Urban Tree Commission

Meeting Minutes

Friday, February 17, 2017, 7:45 a.m.

City Hall Room 205

Present: Jess Barton, Barbara Darnell, Julia Malakie, Barbara Smiley, Marc Welch, Beth Wilkinson.

Absent: Bob DeRubeis, Francesca Piper Koss, Amy Sangiolo.

Approval of minutes

The minutes of the January, 2017 meeting were approved by voice vote.

Forestry Department Update

- The Forestry Department is continuing to work on stump grinding and the number of remaining stumps is down to about 25 trees. Expect to find about 1,000 more after finishing the city-wide tree risk survey.
- Some damage from the snowstorms, about 200-300 locations and about 8 actual trees.
- DPW replacement trees: (the trees that DPW has requested removal on, such as Auburndale Square, Randlett Park, Aspen Avenue, Newton South area). Will maybe start plantings this spring, but the bulk will likely be in the fall.
- Snow plow tree damage: More trees than typical hit in the Lower Falls area.
- Budget: Last year Forestry used contracted work to cover a large amount of work, such as 2,500 stumps to grind. Also got additional money to purchase stump grinding machines, which also will not be needed this coming year.

Long Term Planning Department Presentation on West Newton Square & Walnut Street by Rachel Blatt and Barney Heath

West Newton Square Enhancements Project:

- Safety is number one focus
- Looking at the materials that will surround the base of the trees. Suggestion to look for native ground cover for the trees so that it is easier to care for and does not require frequent watering.
- Working with engineering and landscape consultants for the project.
- Three character areas: gateway zones, business zones, and civic zones. Want to have a different “tree palate” in each zone.
- Rain garden in front of Police Department building. Can serve as a security barrier to the police station without actually looking like a barrier.
- Tree selection so far.
 - Last time landscaped was 1977, only 8 trees left from that time.

Walnut Street Enhancements Project:

- Comparable project to West Newton Square project.
- Much earlier in the planning stages than for West Newton Square project.
- There are some mature trees that anchor the landscape on Walnut Street already so whatever they look at will try to match what is there now.

They are not yet at the tree selection stage for either project and will come back to work with the Urban Tree Commission when they are at that stage.

2017 Planning

- Merit trees: Talked about further planning on the merit tree program, will continue to plan this.
- Newsletter: Short discussion, will continue to plan this. Newsletter will be online.
- Tree manual: Reintroduction of the tree manual. A more thorough discussion of the tree manual will occur at the March meeting.
- Assessment of Newton's trees: Still working on ways to assess Newton's trees using aerial photos and/or other technology.
- Tab Article: might focus on insects or winter moths next.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned.