

Urban Tree Commission

Meeting Minutes

Friday, November 18, 2016, 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 October meeting were approved by voice vote.

Forestry Department update

November has been focused on planting "city" trees and assisting the Newton Tree Conservancy (NTC) with their tree planting. Total trees planted during the Fall season by Forestry and NTC: 300 – 320. Forestry plantings included responses to 200+ citizen requests for trees (after a 10 – 15% cancellation rate). The trees were planted in several "tree ordinance" locations (e. g., Angier School, Rt. 9 [aka "Wegman's"]) as well as the service request locations. Forestry also responded to some street tree removal requests. December operations will focus on stump grinding.

Beth mentioned interest expressed by a NNHS science faculty member in doing some tree planting on the campus. Marc pointed out that the campus had been fairly well planted when built, but noted that there might still be a few planting opportunities.

Forestry's FY16 operating budget covered 220 – 250 trees. The same number is being carried forward to FY17. Marc explained that Forestry's planting capacity is determined by:

- Tree resources in the Forestry operating budget;
- City project funding (school, DPW and other building projects);
- Tree Ordinance planting and funds.

Marc noted that this season has been the first where Forestry undertook watering responsibility for the street trees they planted. Their capacity for planting and watering is 500 – 600 trees per year with current staff and budget. With current equipment, it takes about five minutes to fill a bag. (If a tree is planted in response to a property owner request, Forestry would like to be able to rely on the requestor for this.)

Looking back at this year, with full staffing levels, defined operating systems, and Forestry's move to Elliott St., Marc pointed to "clear direction from the executive office and clear expectations".

New Business

Beth urged that we ask candidates in the coming elections to support continuation of the present Forestry operation's staff and funding.

She also pointed out the importance of ensuring Forestry Department (and Tree Commission) involvement in the work of Village Center improvement. The Auburndale project may not have involved Forestry early enough, possibly resulting in greater tree loss than necessary. Forestry's role in the West Newton project was more timely (and promising).

Jess Barton's urban tree op-ed piece was scheduled for the next week's TAB.

Barbara Darnell asked about instance of Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) in city trees. Marc had heard of an instance near the aqueduct (Park & Pleasant) in Newton Centre, where several trees were dead (and would be removed). Julia had sighted EAB damage. Marc said Forestry will continue to be watchful, but unlike some other cities with problems, our street tree population is only about 2% ash trees.

UTC 2017

Jessica Barton was elected UTC Chair for 2017, by unanimous voice vote.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned.