**Urban Tree Commission Minutes**

**December 18, 2020**

**In attendance:** March Welch

Michel Forte Cruz

Julia Malakie

Beth Wilkinson

**Newton Urban Forestry Report:**

Forestry staff have been working on tree pruning work, which is continuing later than usual because of staffing changes caused by Covid-19. The recent snowfall will make progress more difficult, but the crews should finish pruning by mid-January.

Few stumps have been ground yet. Once the pruning is done, the crews will grind stumps as weather permits. Next on their agenda will be the removal of at-risk trees. The winter assessment is under way. Because of recent storms, there will be a higher number of removals than in most years—estimated to be 120.

On Monday, new hire Mike Boulrice joined the Forestry Department to fill the position that had been open for the past year. Mike has more than twenty years of experience and was previously employed by City contractor Northern Tree.

With the addition of Mike and repair to two trucks, there will be three fully functioning crews at work.

The City will begin work on departmental budgets after the new year begins.

**New Business**

Trees in Cold Spring Park

There has been some concern about increased number of trees falling in Cold Spring Park. Marc reported that the City Engineer and stormwater folks are investigating whether the water table is rising in the park. The Forestry team will remove some dead trees this winter.

Marc also noted that there has been an increase of dead pine trees along the MWRA aqueduct near Beethoven Street and said they also will be removed this winter.

Open Tree Map software

The Open Tree Map program that Marc has been using will no longer be functioning after the end of 2021—unless the program is taken over by another group. The software was developed by a grant from the federal government and should continue to be available for another organization to use for free. Marc is investigating other possibilities, including having the environmental software firm Azavia help to transfer the information to the City’s GIS system.

**Damaged leaves on Washington Street**

During Hot-in-Place repaving of the portion of Washington Street near Trader Joe’s, some of the leaves were burned—as they were during similar work on Winchester Street two years ago. No lasting damage is expected. Marc has advised the DPW to do that work from late September through the end of October to avoid harm to the trees’ food-producing cycle.

**Elms planted on Washington Street**

The elms planted on Washington Street with CDBG funding are growing well and need pruning. Marc will add them to the request list.

**New members**

It would be great to fill all of the seats on the Commission. Recommendations would be appreciated.