**Urban Tree Commission Minutes**

**February 19. 2021**

 In attendance: March Welch

     Julia Malakie

     Amy Sangiolo

     Beth Wilkinson

     Julie WInsett

     Guest: Howard Birnbaum

Howard Birnbaum, who is interested in becoming a member of the UTC, introduced himself and explained that he’s done research on the connection between increased leaf cover in a community and the health of its human inhabitants.

**Newton Urban Forestry Report**

Work on the FY2022 budget will begin in mid-March. No additional cuts are expected.

Because of the persistent snow cover, work on stumps and pruning has been slow.

A request for a tree permit is expected from the Newton Housing Authority’s Haywood House on Jackson Road. For the trees that they need to remove on city property (because of construction), they expect to plant 9-14 trees on their own property and also expect to make a contribution to the tree fund for trees that are not replaced. Because the immediate area received street trees after work at Aquinas, the new trees will be planted on Newton Housing Authority properties in other areas.

The Green Newton 4C Tree project for memorial trees for Newton residents who died from Covid has raised enough money to plant 170 trees this spring. They also will donate funds to water those trees for the first year. Most of the trees will be planted on school properties throughout the city. Forestry staff will plant most of the trees; the 4C volunteers (many students) will do the rest of the planting. Marc already has ordered the trees.

**New Business**

 Marc provided a brief update on the overall state of Newton’s street trees. Twenty years ago, the city had 37,000 street trees. It now has 21,000. That loss happened from the late 80s until 2015, a span when there was no city tree-planting program.

On average, 850-950 street trees are lost each year. In FY20, 900 trees were lost.  FY20 was the first time in 30 years that more trees were planted than lost. With the addition of the Green Newton 4C trees, FY21 is expected to be just barely net positive--in spite of cuts to the tree-planting budget necessitated by Covid. The ideal goal would be to plant 600-800 more trees than are lost each year for the near future.

In a discussion of tree species being planted and lost, Marc noted that a goal is not to have more than 10% of any one genus represented in street trees (in contrast to there being more than 80% Norway maples planted in the 1960s). He explained that the only noticeable patten on the recent loss of trees has been in the loss of white pine trees, which have been affected by disease, insects, and climate change.

In response to a question about increasing the program of planting individual street trees in front of homes of those who agree to water them, Marc explained that there is no funding for that at this time but that he has good ideas for FY23 or FY24.