

## **Urban Tree Commission Minutes**

**February 17, 2023**

In attendance: Marc Welch  
Howard Birnbaum  
Amy Sangiolo  
Liza Sockwell  
Beth Wilkinson  
Julie Winsett

### **Opening and Minutes**

Those present introduced themselves to Ruth Goldman, who has applied to be a member of the commission.

The minutes of the December meeting were approved (by all 4 voting members) once a quorum was present.

### **Forestry Report:**

Marc reported that December was another month with no unexpected events for the forestry crew. They did pruning and tree removal from service requests. They also did pro-active tree work along Commonwealth Avenue.

On the first Wednesday in February, the forestry staff will begin pruning funded by ARPA funds. Because they are coming to the end of that money, there will be less of that work than last year. They expect to work in the West Newton area, from which many requests have been submitted.

Work on the budget for the Forestry Department for next year has not yet started. If the override passes on March 14, important funding will be added to the budget, and it would be able to increase its staff to nine people.

### **Tree Removals**

None for January.

### **Programs and Services Committee Discussion of Proposed Changes to Tree Ordinance**

On Thursday, February 2, the P&S Committee will devote an entire meeting to the discussion of proposed changes to the Tree Protection Ordinance.

### **New Business**

Julia Malakie raised the issue of a 27” tree that was killed on City property along Cavanaugh Path in Oak Hill Park—off Spiers Road. It was not a street tree: it was one of several city-owned trees along the path in front of houses. The City owns 3-6’ on each side of that walkway. The builder for a replacement house along the path excavated onto City property and cut the roots, which were on both public and private property. (There was some question whether the builder knew that the tree was on City property.) Marc said that there was no way that the tree could be saved, and with high winds due at the end of December, a tree crew removed the tree.

Marc sent a violation letter to the owner, stating that the owner has to pay the replacement cost for the tree as well as the cost of removing the damaged tree. The replacement cost is \$5400. The removal did not require the assistance of a contractor and took the in-house staff about an hour to an hour and a half to complete. Marc said that the removal cost is \$100, a fifth of the cost to have a contractor do it. Fines will accrue until the costs are paid.

Marc said that there is a long history of the Cavanaugh Path trees falling over. Three others close to the damaged tree have fallen down over the years.

Julia suggested that in the future, the department could fence off city trees and put a note on them when a building permit is filed. She also asked whether it’s possible to plant new trees on the path. Marc said that the path is not wide enough to have access for cranes and that it’s a challenging site to maintain trees.

Marc also reported that cranes cannot work in two thirds of Oak Hill Park because they become “energized”: they conduct waves from the nearby radio towers. That causes the cable on a crane to become hot and dangerous. When the Forestry Department had observed that effect many years ago and contacted both Eversource and the crane manufacturers, who did not have an explanation. Finally, a longtime tree worker explained what happens to the crane.

Melissa Brown asked Marc about that the removal of trees the new project by the Toll Brothers at 528 Boylston Street will have on the overall environment. Marc said that he has not yet been contacted about the project.