

# Urban Tree Commission Minutes

October 21, 2022

In attendance: Marc Welch  
Barbara Darnell  
Julia Malakie  
Amy Sangiolo  
Beth Wilkinson  
Julie Winsett

Guests: Melissa Brown  
David Backer  
Laura Petrillo

## Opening and Minutes

Mark started a recording of the meeting.

The minutes of the September 16 and 23 meetings were approved.

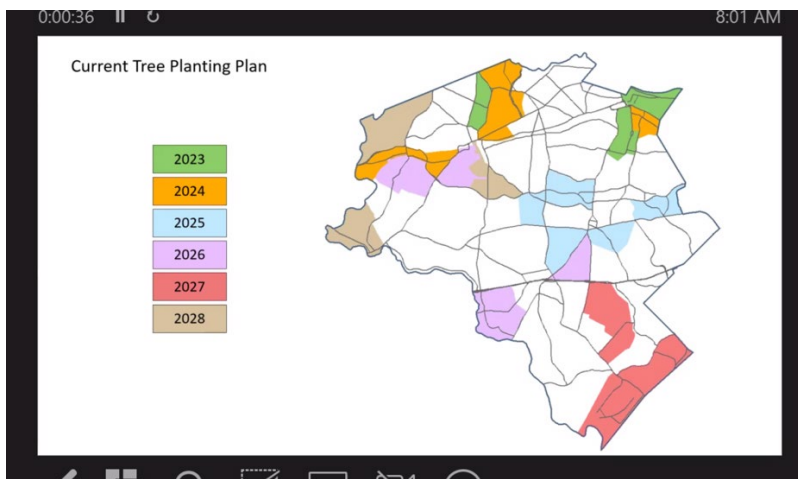
## Forestry Report:

Marc reported that the new trees for the fall tree planting will arrive on Monday, and the planting will begin within the next two weeks. The order is arriving early because it is so large that it will fill a whole truck; the nursery in Buffalo is allowing an extra week in case they have to send some of the trees in a separate order.

The Newton Tree Conservancy planting is not as large as usual because there were fewer applications.

In the next couple weeks before the planting, the Forestry crew will replace young trees that died. One crew will work on stump removal.

Marc presented a map of the Tree Planting Plan, on which the areas to be planted this year are shown in green:



The first Tree Planting Plan was a five-year plan developed in 2010-11 and was for 300-400 trees per year. However, because there wasn't sufficient City funding, the target was not reached

for the first couple years. Since then, progress has been steady. The estimates of which areas can be done in future years are based on the current tree count. As more trees are lost, it may take longer to complete some areas.

Marc said that the department's inventory of all street trees in Newton is 99% complete. The ongoing plan is to update 1/3 of the city each year. The inventory is not yet available on the City's website, but Marc will work with Newton's GIS Coordinator Doug Greenfield to make that happen. At this point, the inventory is stored on Open Tree Map, which just was purchased by a new company. Marc estimated that the inventory could be available to the public by the spring.

### **Potential Benefits of Override**

Mayor Ruthanne Fuller has proposed an \$9.175 million override to the City budget, with the vote to take place in March of 2023. If the override passes, the Forestry Department will receive an increase of \$500,000 in its budget. That money would be used to plant 8,000 new trees by 2030 (an additional 300 trees per year), to prune every street tree every five years, and to provide more care for young trees.

Melissa Brown asked whether some of that money would be spent on Forestry Department staff. Marc said that they are examining the costs of contract versus in-house staffing but that he expects that the tree crew will grow and could increase from the current 6 to 10 or 11. One difficulty in that plan would be finding people to fill those spots. Marc said that because of the shortage of trained tree workers, they will have to be creative in finding new staff. The sixth person that was expected to fill out the current staffing is not going to join the department.

If more people are added to the in-house staff, the department may change the division between in-house work and contracted work. For example, the in-house staff may do more tree-removal work and have the contracted staff may do more pruning because they charge less for that work (because it uses less equipment). The current charge for tree removal work is \$500 per person per hour, and the current charge for tree pruning is \$200 per person per hour. The cost of the contract with Northern Tree has remained the same for the past three 3-year contracts. The in-house staff would be able to remove approximately four to five trees per day.

In addition to the six staff members that do tree work, Butch and Jordan join Marc in doing administrative work. Butch responds to 99% of the service requests and checks out approximately 3,000 trees per year. Arborist/inspector Jordan does the inventory, does most of the risk assessment, and marks most of the planting sites.

When asked whether the Forestry Department has enough equipment to take on that additional work, Marc said "yes." He said when the first in-house tree workers were added in 2010, they purchased three used trucks, and they still are using all three. One of them was built in 1987.

### **Tree Removals**

The abutter to the street tree on Mague Avenue for which the removal request was denied last month has filed an appeal to the Mayor.

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

The members of the commission discussed their reaction to the discussion this past Wednesday at the City Council Programs and Services Committee.

Julia Malakie said that there is no information about when the discussion will be continued at the P&S Committee but said that they seem committed to move quickly. Melissa Brown suggested sending the committee members educational material about the environmental value of trees.

### **New Business**

Marc reported that there will be a series of topic-specific presentations in regard to the override. Next Wednesday, there will be a presentation on all of the funding that would go to the Parks, Recreation, and Culture Department, and Marc will give a brief presentation. Later, there will be an entire session devoted to the benefits for the Forestry Department. Links and recordings will be available on the City website.

Julia asked about treating the Ash trees at the rear of McGrath Park for the emerald ash borer. Marc said that they hope to do so next year.