

Trees for Watertown Minutes
Board Meeting
February 15, 2017
Sasaki Associates, 64 Pleasant Street

TFW Board members present: Dennis J. Duff, David Jay, Genie Johnston, Bob Lauricella, Libby Shaw, Michele Waldman. Absent: Jane Holden.

TFW Members: John Luther, David Meshoulam. Guests: Ozzie Bateman, Sharon Cook

The minutes for the January meeting were accepted unanimously (Dennis moved, Michele seconded)

The treasurer's report for the past month was accepted unanimously (Genie moved, Dennis seconded)

Island at Mobil Station, Mount Auburn-Arlington Street Intersection

Dennis: The island is planted to red, white and blue (roses, salvia, blue fescue) since it's the site of the start of Fourth of July and Memorial Day parades. Irrigation is a problem for maintenance of plantings on this island. Significant street renovations are planned for Mount Auburn Street, might be a good time to add a water line, hasn't been discussed with DPW. Precedent: the planting strip on the other side of Arlington, near Celebrity Pizza, may be irrigated.

Ozzie and Sharon: would like to beautify this whole intersection area.

John: suggests looking for a corporate sponsor.

Siena Village Public Shade Tree Planting

Michele: Chris Hayward came over and viewed the proposed site with Michele, thought it was perfect for a shade tree. The condo association will pay for watering and the condo owner is very cooperative. Another prospective planting site looked good to Chris too, and Michele saw a third where a tree could shade Lexington Street. Will revisit those sites with Chris and Ron Brown, Siena Village manager.

Board discussion: regarding tree planting protocols, debating over the survivability of smaller caliper versus larger (3-4 inch DBH) trees - Bigger trees may withstand trunk abuse better, but smaller trees recover from transplant shock faster. It was agreed that good site preparation and adequate watering over the first months and years are vital. Sharon mentioned that the Treegator watering pouch design is improved, now double walled. Issue however is how to keep them filled for the 2-3 years recommended.

TFW Tree Nursery at the Grove Street Community Garden

Genie: The goal of TFW's tree nursery is to grow trees that are experimental or not available in planting sizes. Chestnut oak was discussed as a new species to try, it's cited in the February Urban Forester as the Society of Municipal Arborists' 2017 Urban Tree of the Year. It's well adapted to dry places but Genie didn't know how well it would do in compacted soil. Libby wondered if it has a taproot, which might make it harder to transplant.

If we have to start the next trees with a whip or an acorn, the garden at Grove Street might not be the best location since seedlings take several years to grow to adequate transplant size and the garden will close in three years. She is planning to start some Osage Orange from cuttings this summer, and we'll again try transplanting a wild Mazzard cherry in the Spring.

TODO GENIE Check to see if the TFW nursery can move to the new community garden behind the Arsenal. Does it have water supply plumbing yet?

Ozzie suggested Golden Rain as a possible street tree species. It's native to Eastern Asia, 30-40 feet tall, as wide as tall, holds its flowers throughout the summer and has great fall color. Group discussion: Dennis said he had one in his yard that split due to ice damage. A small Golden Rain can be seen on Spring street, a block behind the Senior Center. John mentioned catalpa used to be very common in Watertown.

TODO LIBBY: discuss planting Golden Rain tree, elms, catalpas with Chris.

Tree Ordinance to protect significant trees on private property

Cambridge has a Tree Ordinance which attempts to ensure better protection for "Significant Trees" (trees of greater than 8" DBH) in developments. The City cannot require that a tree be preserved, but the property owner must file a Tree Study declaring their intent to either preserve or remove Significant Trees during a construction project. If the choice is to preserve trees the ordinance requires specific tree protections during the project. If the choice is to remove trees the property owner must supply a detailed Mitigation Plan.

https://www.municode.com/library/ma/cambridge/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=TIT8HESA_CH8.66TRPR

Board discussion: Currently development in Watertown takes two major forms: large multi-apartment developments like along Arsenal and Pleasant Streets, and single- or two-family teardowns replaced by large expensive townhouses that crowd the lot. The latter development type often includes significant tree loss and developments commonly plant new trees poorly, with inadequate planning for long term tree health.

Could an ordinance like Cambridge's pass in Watertown? Could it have some bite with developers? Libby sent this question to Town Council President Mark Sideris. To be discussed further.

TFW Community Day

David Meshoulam: proposed a kickoff meeting at the Library with a movie screening and an announcement of Jane's Biggest Tree contest and David M's Watertown Tree map-app. The goal of the event being to increase awareness of the importance of urban trees, and to increase membership. The goal of the map-app being to get people out looking at trees and relating to trees. He demonstrated the app and created treesforwatertownma@gmail.com as an address for people to send their tree choices too, that would be readable by board members.

Board discussion: a day close to Arbor Day would be nice, try not to schedule it much later in Spring since weddings and graduations start kicking in. Movie possibility: a PBS documentary on tree planting in Washington DC, 1.5h, a political movie about an organization that supports a job-training tree-planting program for released convicts. Will look for other movie possibilities. Could also include a tree ID hiking tour with the map app as guide. Bob, Michele, Ozzie, Sharon, Libby interested in joining subcommittee to make plans.

TODO David M: organize a subcommittee meeting to iron out details.

Watertown Square Delta Redesign

David Jay sent his proposed landscaping plan to Chris Hayward with the addition of the underground utilities evident on the older map the Town Engineer had provided. John mentioned that his grandfather planted the Delta.

David Jay described his current proposal: The goal is a strong design, easy to maintain, featuring three specimen trees. He proposes replace the existing specimen maples with three new specimen trees, and infill with honey locust trees which being lighter colored and lighter-leaved would contrast nicely. Because the leaves are light they would be easy to clean up.

Group discussion: Ozzie and Sharon experience is that honey locust roots often come up into the grass, this would make mowing difficult and can be tripping hazard. But this root area is a great place to plant

thousands of bulbs and a ground cover. Genie said mowing damage can cause sprouting from the roots. David J said the trees would be in planting beds, though there might still be root issues.

David J: The remaining two maples might have 5 years. There's also a fairly new swamp white oak and the poor-condition Bunbury maple. He envisions nine honey locusts added. When the big maple in the center goes, could leave as open space rather than trying to fill. Could use elms for the specimen trees.

TODO David Jay: get gas company to fix a gas leak that impacts plant health.

Seven-Eleven planting project

The smaller sycamore in front of the 7-11 was knocked down. No other news this month.

Cambridge tree cutting along Linear Park

Dennis: Charlie Ohanian got Linear Park built. Bruce Roberts planted the cherries, the big shade trees all were likely planted by birds many decades earlier. The town has not taken an inventory. Over 20 trees already removed. Cambridge Water Department is ignoring Watertown citizen concerns.

Group discussion on how to arrest the takedowns. Email town council, ask town attorney to put a stay on it. Will Cambridge reimburse Watertown for the lost ecological and community value of these trees? Where can we get some calculation of value being taken away? Chris Hayward: "my hands are tied" Ask the Tab to be more involved. Take pictures. Contact the Boston Globe.

Sweet Gum Allées at Mosesian Center for the Arts

Note from Jane Holden on a communication from Roberta Miller, Mosesian Center Director: "Athena is at least two years away from doing anything to reconfigure the front of the theater area. Her message said that the parking garage has been much more money than what was budgeted and she thinks removing more trees from in front of her area isn't even being considered yet."

Other News

State Representative Jonathan Hecht refiled an updated Chapter 87 Mass. Shade Tree Act.

Libby created a TFW Facebook page, and updated the TFW website Kids Activities page.

The Massachusetts Arborist Certification requires a lot of study but does not currently require time in the field. Per Brookline Tree Warden Tom Brady, this may change soon.

Libby will meet with Chris Hayward on Feb. 22nd and again a week or so later. They aim to set up a regular monthly meeting date.

The annual UMass Community Tree Conference will be on March 7 in Amherst. Libby plans to attend.

Respectfully submitted,
Bob Lauricella and Libby Shaw