

Trees for Watertown Board Meeting Minutes APPROVED
December 19, 2018
Sasaki Associates, 64 Pleasant Street

Board members present: Genie Johnson, Bob Lauricella, David Meshoulam, Michael Moran, Libby Shaw, Michele Waldman.

Absent: Dennis J. Duff

Correction to November 18 minutes: Elliot Richardson was not present.

The corrected November 18 minutes were approved unanimously (David moved, Michael seconded)

The December 19 financial report was approved unanimously (Genie moved, MicheleW seconded)

The **postcard party** (for citizens to write to Councilors, urging they uprank funding for long range planning for urban forestry) went really well. MicheleW did a fantastic job of recruiting neighbors from her condo association. DavidM reserved us the room at the Library. Sixteen people participated at the Library, others including DavidM participated from home. Each participant sent cards to their District Councilor, the Council President, and our four Councilors-at-Large. Libby read a thank you message for this successful effort to TFW and Watertown Citizens (Deborah Peterson) from Meredith Fields, Chair of the Watertown Environment and Energy Efficiency Committee.

Jolly Tager thanked TFW at Town Council meeting for support for the **solar panel ordinance** recently passed by the town, and reiterated her support for never removing trees for solar panels. **"Solar and trees must work together."**

DavidM said there's a **debate in Newton pitting solar canopies against trees**. He was at a Newton hearing yesterday on this topic, the Boston Globe was there too. Trees are slated for removal around several parking lots: the Public Library, lots next to schools, Auburndale Cove, [Albemarle](#) Road. The city plan for solar would take down 86 trees. Newton's new mayor is going along with this.

The biggest concern is [Albemarle](#) Road, where the public pool is; there's a little brook and an allée of beautiful trees. They want to take down 30-40 trees to line street with solar panels.

Libby suggested that Jolly Tager could perhaps write a letter to Newton supporting preservation of trees.

TODO Libby: follow up with Jolly Tager.

Michele: why doesn't Newton put solar panels on the Library roof, school roofs, rather than in parking lots? David: they say most roofs can't hold the weight. Solar power output must be maximized. Solar canopies can provide car charging stations.

David also went to a meeting Monday about the **veteran red oak at Harvard Divinity School** that HDS wants to take down to make way for an addition. From the schematics, the architects could move things a little bit to save the tree.

A tree was saved years ago in Cambridge by designating it a **Legacy Tree**, the only Legacy Tree Cambridge has to date -- a huge beech next to where Cambridge College used to be, that a developer wanted to take down to make way for mixed-use condos. Genie worked at Cambridge College, and David grew up around the corner from the tree. The tree is still there, 30 years after the threat.

Michele asked, do we as a group want to make it a **policy to support organizations in other towns**, and list our name as supporting them? Consensus was yes, as long as we know the situation first-hand.

Another private tree needing protection is in Watertown, a beautiful **silver maple in the vacant lot across from Russo's**. The board discussed strategies for saving it. MicheleW wondered if Watertown can buy the property? Bob thought not, prime development land, may be worth \$10M. David noted it's in the least-canopied part of the city (Precinct 12, 12.9 percent canopy cover). The lot could perhaps be bought

with CPA money. DavidM: another possibility might be to work with the Conservation Foundation, as it is close to the Charles River. Concern was expressed about inflating the land price via public discussion.
TODO Michele - talk with Ken Woodland as a constituent to ask if it can that be saved? Can that land be used for public purpose?

Individual tree protections in the region:

Cambridge's Legacy Tree status provided legal protection for the beech.

Bob had a Heritage Tree across from his house in Newton.

Arlington has a Heritage Tree program.

Massachusetts has a Heritage tree program, specifies the biggest tree of the species in the state, but provides no legal protection.

MicheleW: Watertown trees over 50 years old could perhaps be evaluated as Legacy Trees.

David: The big American elm on Oliver St could certainly qualify, dates from maybe 1857, when the house it neighbors was built.

Genie: is Legacy Tree a city or a State legal definition?

TODO TFW: get an answer, perhaps from David Lefcourt

Note: Arlington just came out with new Tree Management Plan a couple months ago.

MicheleW: The **removal of the berm at 285 Pleasant** had terrible impact on the neighborhood behind it. The homes in back on Waltham Street now are directly exposed to Pleasant Street noise and dirt, have no protective tree canopy at all on the south side, and their tiny back yards and rear windows have no privacy from the development.

Bob thought the development might at least increase their property values.

TODO TFW: don't let Watertown forget the huge environmental impact removal of the forested berm has had on the neighborhood.

Bob wondered what the plan is for the little lot by the Public Library parking lot where a building used to be: This lot will eventually become part of a pedestrian/bike path through the center of town.

David shared the **Final Draft of the Teens for Trees report**.

Looks terrific!

TODO David: Send hardcopy to the Teens

TODO Libby: Send hardcopy to Julie Coop and other people who donated time, email link to TFW membership, Chris Hayward, Jerry Mee, Charlie Breitrose, the Tab, post link to the Final Report on TFW's Facebook page

MicheleW advised David to think now of organizations to approach for next year's funding.

Tree Inventory Discussion with Chris Hayward

Chris and David met one-on-one to look at the inventory results. Chris was very enthusiastic about how to use the data and think about it. Jerry Mee seems enthusiastic too: Upon bumping into David leaving the meeting with Chris, Jerry said, "I'd have sat in on your meeting!"

Chris and David talked about aligning the OpenTreeMap data with Chris's old inventory, determining what data we can trust, and how to sort through it.

Chris now uses TreeKeeper, developed by Davey tree. This database is only for trees.

It could in theory be a GIS layer, a map that could be superimposed on other GIS maps.

How to extract all the data we have and create a new layer?

Watertown's GIS system has different layers -- for roads, houses, electricity, plumbing.

Can put them [on top of](#) each other. Where does sewer line meet wetland, etc.

Doesn't have a street tree inventory layer. And PeopleGIS doesn't talk to TreeKeeper. So Chris's inventory never gets correlated.

David spoke a year ago to Gideon, senior planner, whose friend Adam built Arlington a tree inventory layer using Arlington's OpenTreeMap data.

Adam is a full time GIS analyst for Arlington. Unfortunately Watertown doesn't have such a person.

The Arlington Tree Warden can incorporate the data immediately. Can build a work order.

Adam said he'd be happy to share his conversion software. Chris is in favor of it.

Merging the data is not inspirational work, but critical to do, while the data are fresh.

Chris is planning to follow up with Gideon.

Chris requested data cleanup: correlation with original 2008-2017 database and OTM database.

TODO David: a protocol to check how reliable the OTM numbers are. Do a random spot check.

Chris specifically asked for OTM data to be separated into sub-databases.

1. trees there in 2008 that are still there
2. trees there in 2008 but now empty pit
3. proposed tree sites that never had trees
4. sites empty in 2008 that now have trees.

This was done by T4T participant Marissa, took her an hour.

MicheleW: what happens next with the inventory merging? How to present to Chris and Jerry?

Consensus: present as simply as possible, see how Chris wants to use the data.

Michael: would be helpful to see a **canopy map over time**, showing where large canopy trees have been replaced by smaller canopy trees, demonstrate canopy loss. Concerned about overzealous tree removal. The tree removed via Tree Hearing at the corner of Maplewood and Templeton Parkway didn't show any rot in its trunk. The emphasis should be on saving existing trees as much as possible. For example have seen numerous places in Cambridge where someone accommodated a tree by cutting a hole in their fence to make space for a limb.

Following up on Watertown's **FY2020 long range planning funding for forestry**: Invite Meredith Field and perhaps Ed Lewis of WE3C to come discuss policy recommendations.

David asked Chris what he thinks about the increase in the FY2020 forestry budget?

Chris said we need to make sure that we're taking care of our big trees. Pruning on a schedule. Feels he's stretched thin in terms of maintenance. Pruning budget is a problem in many cities.

TODO TFW: meet with Chris to talk about how to increase Watertown's pruning budget.

MicheleW: let's have a party, a social event. Invite Watertown Faces Climate Change, WE3C, Chris, soften the chains of communication that way. Each group could summarize its goal.

Consensus was a great idea, maybe in February. Could use GoToMeeting to find a good time.

One issue would be Councilor participation -- don't want to violate the Open Meeting Law.

TODO TFW: clarify the Open Meeting Law. Ask MichelleC?

Two people in neighboring cities for TFW to reach out to:

1. Julie Malakie, Newton Tree Conservancy, who is leading the charge against Newton tree removals due to solar panels. leading charge against tree removal due to solar panels. Had two meetings last week -- with engineers, town; the Public Library trustees had a meeting last night to discuss the parking lot.

TODO Libby: contact Julie

2. Grad student Shane Brodie at Harvard Divinity School. There will be another meeting in a couple weeks after the new year, Hopefully HDS heard the concerns and will reexamine the designs.

TODO Libby: follow up on fb, go to that meeting

Michele: do we get enough info when bad things are happening to trees in the region?

Challenge: there's no centralized source for regional information.

Example: the threatened canopy loss at the Waltham monastery to make way for a new high school is another concern.

TFW should not draft a support letter until we are comfortable with the info we have.

Arborist metaphors to describe tree response to transplant shock:

Chris: trees sit, then walk, then run. David Lefcourt: Trees sleep, then creep, then leap.

Respectfully submitted,

Bob Lauricella and Libby Shaw