



City Hall Park Ad-hoc Committee Meeting - Tuesday, June 12, 2018, 7:30 pm, Community Room, Burlington Police Department, One North Avenue, Burlington 6/12/2018

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Generated by Holli Bushnell 6/17/2018

DRAFT

Committee Members Present: Councilor Kurt Wright, Councilor David Hartnett, Councilor Sharon Bushor, VJ Comai (City Arborist), Mayor Miro Weinberger, Monique Fordham (Keep the Park Green), Donna Walters (Keep the Park Green)

Staff Members Present: Doreen Kraft (BCA), Holli Bushnell (Parks/Clerk's Office – Minutes), Laura Wheelock

Staff Missing – Cindi Wight, Meagan Tuttle

Others Present – Jeff Hodgson Project Landscape Architect

Councilor Wright called to order at 7:31

1. Agenda

Action, Procedural - 1.01 motion to amend/adopt agenda

Councilor Bushor moved to adopt the agenda. All were in favor.

2. Acceptance Of Communications

Action, Informational - 2.01 Communication: AARP, re: Redesign Of City Hall Park

Waive the reading, accept the communication and place it on file

Action, Informational - 2.02 Communication: Debra Roseman, re: City Hall Park

Waive the reading, accept the communication and place it on file

Action, Informational - 2.03 Communication: Donna Walters, re: Agenda Items & Requests

Waive the reading, accept the communication and place it on file

Councilor Bushor moved to accept communications. Councilor Harnett seconded. All were in favor.

2A. Added Item – Presentation of New Information by City Staff

As there was a request at the previous meeting for additional design materials, the Parks and DPW staff along with Jeff Hodgson and Mayor Weinberger created a presentation to provide the requested information.



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The first park plan put forth to the DRB called for a total of 34 trees in the park. 22 existing trees and 12 new plantings of significant size. As a part of the DRB deliberations and public comment 2 additional existing trees and 2 additional new trees were added to the plan, bring the total for the DRB approved plan to 38 trees. During the process of the ad-hoc committee 2 more existing trees (crabapples) and 1 additional tree have been added to the plan bringing the total to 41 total trees. Finally, since the 6/6/18 meeting, the designers have added an additional "nurse tree" to the plan to assist in the rehabilitation of a less healthy preserved tree. That brings the total of trees in the park to 42. This is 8 more trees than the original DRB presented plan, 4 added trees from the Ad-hoc committee process.

Mayor Weinberger stated that city hall park is already an important space, and is frequently used for press conferences, protests, and community events. It doesn't function as the space we want and need as it is today. Grass does not grow in front of the city hall steps where the crabapples are planted; the plantings are too dense and the ground it doesn't drain properly. Because of this constant maintenance is required to make it usable. The park redesign is predicated on the allocation of specific spaces for specific kinds of use. For example, due to the addition of a retaining wall to assist in storm water runoff the area currently used for the Jazz Fest stage will no longer be accessible. While this may seem inconvenient, the suggested changes will provide opportunities for new and better programing in the park, better governance of park usage, and improved maintenance of the entire space.

VJ Comai added that the diversity of species and ages of trees in the park is crucial for a safety and health of the space. Burlington has been named a Tree City USA for 24 years by the National Arbor Day Foundation. According to that group, available space is the consideration most overlooked and misunderstood in deciding what tree to plant. The mature stature of a tree is often discounted when choosing a planting. Based on the recommendations of NADF, trees require spacing of 40 to 50 feet to be healthy. The current greenspace of the park (not including hardscape) is 58,724sqft. When divided by the area of a 45ft diameter tree that breaks down to 1,589sqft. Using this equation there is comfortably room for 37 trees in the park. As previously mentioned there are 42 trees in the current plan. This is about the long term future, not just tomorrow but way down the line. Trees are an investment in the future.

3. Public Forum

Action, Informational, Procedural - 3.01 Verbal Comments

The public forum was opened by Councilor Wright at 7:52pm

Richard Bragg currently has construction happening on his street (Decatur). He has watched large vehicles come, rip out and repair the sidewalk, and not damage a single tree. He feels that the city is lying about the need to remove trees for construction in the park. He fears that City Hall Park will be a concrete garden. He wants to see concrete removed from the plan to add more trees.

Charlie Messing – Thinks that the plan looks great on paper and on the screen, but the earth doesn't look like that. It's big, chaotic and sloppy, like life. He wants the paths to wiggle around the trees to save more trees, and he especially wants to see more Elm trees as they are his favorite. 1960 Burlington Annual report listed 509 Elm trees as being cut, which he feels was a travesty. He likes the density of natural forests and believes that the park should look more like a wild space. He



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feels that, instead of the city deciding when to remove trees, we should let god decide what trees should come down. He wants the plan to move around the trees. The more trees we save the happier people will be. The more trees we take the worse it's going to be. In 30 years people won't care what the park looks like now, but he feels that the present is just as important as the future.

Wayne Senville lives in ward 1. He thanks volunteers (and city councilors) for their time on this project. Thanks Sharon for doing walk thru with VJ about trees and for sending out email presentation. He joked that it seems that the administration is adding 1 tree per meeting and wants 4 more meetings for 4 more trees. He thinks that there must be some way to be more flexible with the plan. He pointed out that saving healthy trees requires changing the plan and hopes that the committee will consider doing so.

Jean Knodell – City Councilor for the Central District. She was very impressed with the work the ad-hoc committee is doing. She believes the committee is a good model for moving forward on complex projects in the future. She expressed hope that the group will come to a consensus. To her mind, all sides must be flexible and move towards the middle. She feels that the number of trees currently saved in the plan is not enough. Wants to save more or plant more trees so that all feel this was a meaningful process and that this was worth it for everyone, but also feels that both sides must give. The performance space must be well programed or it's not worth it to remove crabapples. She concluded by saying that she would like to possibly reduce paved space to compromise even though it's not part of the resolution.

Jimmy Leas – Looked at city council discussion from September of 2017. Councilor Dane asked about pavement to grass ratio, 40% paved according to Meagan Tuttle. Regarding trees in the park, as many healthy trees will be saved as possible. His understanding of the original plan was that dying trees would be removed and replaced with long-lived trees. As time went on he feels that the plan changed and healthy trees were going to be cut down. This was not approved by the city council. To his knowledge, there have been little to no facts about the ADA presented, which seems to be the reasoning for the removal of healthy trees. He feels that the ADA shouldn't be used as a pretext or abused, and that the ADA should be followed to the letter of the law and everyone should know the facts. There can be no legitimate decision without this information. He wants to know the current slopes, proposed slopes, and what the exact requirements of the ADA are. He questioned whether we can truly move forward if we don't know what the slope is going to be.

Barbara McGrew is concerned about the cost of the project. The park will cost about 3 million dollars. For a 3rd or less than that you can preserve a beautiful park and fix the damaged infrastructure. She doesn't understand the need for a complete overhaul of the park. She would like to take the money saved from this approach and repair Church Street. She feels we should fix the park, but leave it as it is from a design perspective.

The public forum was closed at 8:14pm.

4. Committee Discussion With Expected Vote

Action, Discussion, Informational - 4.01 Committee Discussion With Expected Vote

Donna Walters commented on the age of Crabapples trees. They were planted by UVM students in the middle of the night and are about 30 to 40 years old. Generally speaking, Crabapple trees only live about 40 years. She feels we should let them live out their lives then cut them down when they become hazardous. Walters also requested the information that Jimmy Leas asked for (ADA info, slope, width, and transition plan) in writing before the previous meeting. She had hoped and expected to see that information tonight. She questions why the documents and information have not been presented?



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Laura Wheeler responded that the city did do a study on the existing park slopes, and they current park does not meet ADA requirements. The proposed design provides paths from the origin of accessible parking to multiple destinations. While there isn't a memo or a note, accessibility has been a huge part of the planning process. A transition plan has been created that employees both slope and cross-slope ADA requirements. 5 of the 7 paths in the proposed plan will meet requirements as opposed to just 2 paths in the current park.

Monique Fordham asked for clarification on areas paths that are and are no ADA compliant in the plan. She points out that all the trees Keep the Park Green is hoping to save are *healthy* trees – the Crabapples, a Zelkova, a Red Oak, and a Honey Locust. She expressed her frustration her group has been lambasted in the past as being uninformed and trying to save dead or dying trees. Every tree they are currently trying to save is a healthy tree. Keep the Park Green is not asking to save less healthy trees because they were pushed into only advocating for healthy trees. She feels that the city has been unwilling to give during this process. Over 700 people concerned about this issue, over 200 have turned out to talk about it, and this is an unprecedented number of people showing their support for a city issue. She pointed out that Keep the Park Green has a constituency to which they are accountable and they will keep fighting to protect the trees.

Councilor Hartnett put forth a motion for city council to consider the proposed options 1b (saving 2 additional crabapples), 3 (adding 1 additional trees), and 4 (adding a nurse tree in the southwest corner of the park). To summarize, this is adding 2 existing trees and 2 additional trees to the plan. Councilor Hartnett asked for vote. Mayor seconded.

Councilor Bushor apologized for missing several committee members in her email. She spent an afternoon walking through the park with Comai to try and determine if there are any other trees that could be saved. This tour was very informative, and she now feels understands how VJ sees the park. Her goal was to balance present and future to allow us to adjust to change in the park. While she doesn't like the plan she still wants what's best for the park. She looked short-term and identified a few trees that should be eliminated. After listening to what VJ said she feels that the central crabapple (the only crabapples still scheduled for removal) is beautiful and should be kept. Though the paved area will come close to the roots of the crabapple and the tree might not survive very long she feels it is worth the risk. Willing to give up a view of the performance area and the City Hall steps to keep the tree for a little while longer.

Another tree of great interest to Bushor was an American Elm (tree 970). She couldn't understand why that tree was being removed. According to VJ the Elm is being removed for Great Streets proposal. Bushor would like to keep that Elm and is upset by idea of its removal.

Wheelock clarified that the Elm is currently in public right of way. It looks like it's part of the park but it's not. Construction of park retaining wall and footing will severely impact the roots of the Elm. It is too close to the retaining wall. That tree has to go because of the design of the park, not because of Great Streets.

Councilor Bushor reiterated that she still wants to save the Elm (tree 970) but now understands why it is problematic. She also brought up a Sugar Maple in the same southwest area (tree 964). The tree is not currently healthy but she believes that it could be allowed to live a little longer while a newly planted neighbor tree grows larger and stronger, preserving shade for a longer period.

Next she brought up trees 911 and 914, both Silver Lindens. These 2 trees are near college street and she thinks she it could be kept. While both trees have root issues tree 911 is in moderately better shape. It comes close to the proposed path but could possibly remain under a "wait and see" approach.

In the last quadrant, there is a Red Maple, Bushor would like to try to keep for a while longer until a better plan could be developed. Saving this tree would require modifying the plans for the public restroom in that area, but she feels it would be worth considering. She wants to hear why the designers like the northeast quadrant. It's lacking imagination, definition, and, most importantly, trees. VJ doesn't like Sharon's plan, but she is proposing what she thinks she has a good plan. She would like the committee to embrace what we have. She asks that the committee members question whether each



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quadrant meet the spirit of what we want to accomplish.

Councilor Wright asked how many of 6 proposed trees in Bushor's plan would be kept forever and how many would be phased out over time.

Councilor Bushor wants the American Elm (970) to remain a permanent part of the park as well as trees 914 and 911 (Silver Lindens). Trees 964 (Sugar Maple) and 945 (center Crabapple) could be saved in the interim, she is on the fence about the possibility of keeping tree 929 (Red Maple) could stay permanently or go.

Mayor Weinberger appreciates Bushor's proposal, likes some of the ideas and feels we can pro-con it. Several of the ideas are simply not viable and would require too dramatic a change. He is unclear whether silver lindens and red maple can be saved and asked for clarification from Comai and Hodgson.

Hodgson explained that both Silver Lindens are either in or right next to the sidewalk. This project has been a big balancing act to meet goals of design/plan. As for Red Maple it clips the path and to save it the grading of that area would have to be dramatically changed as well as the utilities that are being added for bathroom.

Councilor Bushor asked why there are no trees in the northeast quadrant of the park.

Hodgson reiterated that there are different goals to different areas of the park, and the goal of the northeast corner did not initially did not include a lot of trees. That said, he could see planting a new tree in this section, but doesn't think we could save the Red Maple.

Wheeler interjected to point out that she also doesn't think saving tree 929 (Red Maple) is possible, but she agrees that planting a new tree makes sense.

Mayor Weinberger suggested that Councilor Bushor offer amendments on each of the trees she suggested instead of grouping the trees together as an amendment.

Councilor Bushor moved to amend Councilor Hartnett's motion by adding back tree 945 (center Crabapple).

Mayor asked for image of City Hall to be brought up to show the impact of saving all the crabapples.

Councilor Wright called for a vote on the amendment in favor of retaining tree 945 (center crabapple). Vote was 5 to 2 vote to retain. Bushor, Harnett, Fordham, Walters, and Wright were in favor. Mayor Weinberger and Comai were opposed.

Bushor moved to amend Councilor Hartnett's motion by adding back 964 (Sugar Maple), acknowledging that it may be removed in the future (5 to 10 years). She feels this tree is even more important if the American Elm (tree 970) cannot be saved.

Comai interjected that tree 964 (Sugar Maple) is in severe decline. He feels it would be extremely complicated to save while also to make it healthy enough for the new tree that will also be growing in that area. He feels this suggestion of Bushor's is not practical.

Fordham asked about the possibility of aerating the roots and treating tree 964 (Sugar Maple) so that it might improve.

It is Comai's expert opinion that tree 964 (Sugar Maple) is beyond the point of remediation.

Councilor Wright called for a vote on the proposal to retain tree 964 (Sugar Maple) for as long as possible. Vote was 4 to 3 to retain. Bushor, Wright, Fordham and Walters were in favor, Hartnett, Mayor Weinberger, and Comai were opposed.

After a great deal of discussion and clarification it became clear that tree 914 (Silver Linden) was placed so close to the



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proposed path that its roots would be irreparably compromised. Bushor rejected her idea of saving tree 914 (Silver Linden)

Bushor then moved to retain tree 911 (Silver Linden) on a temporary basis.

Councilor Wright called the vote. 4 to 3 to retain. Bushor, Wright, Fordham, and Walters in favor. Mayor Weinberger, Hartnett, and Comai opposed.

Bushor moved to retain tree 929 (Red Maple) if modifications to restrooms can be made. As the committee was charged with not creating a redesign this movement was rejected in favor of adding a new tree planting in the northeast quadrant.

Councilor Wright called the vote. The vote was unanimous to add a new tree.

Councilor Harnett asked for a vote on his amended motion. To clarify, this motion now includes proposed options 1b, 3, and 4 (2 existing crabapples and 2 new plantings for a total of 4 trees) plus added trees 945, 964, 911, and new planting in northeast quadrant.

Councilor Wright called the vote. The vote was unanimously in favor.

Councilor Harnett asked for clarification on the total number of trees now saved. With this amendment 5 trees are now retained and 3 new trees have been added bringing us to a total of 8 trees.

Councilor Bushor moved that every effort is made to retain and preserve tree 970 (American Elm). She asked for a good faith effort to modify park construction and possibly plan to retain this beautiful tree.

Harnett asks that we put faith in the people doing the project. Asks that no outside experts weigh in on this issue.

Councilor Wright called the vote. Vote was 6 to 1 in favor of good faith effort. Mayor Weinberger, Wright, Hartnett, Bushor, Fordham and Walters were in favor. Comai was opposed.

Next Walters presented the Keep the Park Green proposal. In addition to crabapples which were already saved from earlier discussion, the group wants to add trees 915 (Little Leaf Linden) and 912 (Red Oak) in northwest quadrant. Saving both or either of these trees would require extensive modification to the current plan. They also are looking to save trees 958 (Zelkova), 957 (Red Oak), 956 (Honey Locust) in the southwest quadrant. Saving these trees would also require plan modification, however all the trees they are requesting to save are healthy.

Fordham points out that the current paths in the plan are located based on design aesthetics and that they could be modified to save these healthy trees. She asks for a reduction in performance area and make adjustments to the problematic southwest corner. She points out that the fountain area could be used as performance space. She feels that if the committee would be willing to save the final 2 crabapples Keep the Park Green would be content. She asks that, as her group has made multiple concessions, the design team make a concession to them.

Mayor Weinberger summed up the fact that the committee has now saved 8 trees and intent to put a good faith effort forward to the American Elm. They have reached the 8 trees that Keep the Park Green was hoping for. The city has been extremely accommodating, trying to add back trees time and again. He feels that every time the city gives, keep the park green complains that the city isn't compromising. He pointed out that the majority of the city council didn't want a redesign and that was why this ad-hoc committee was formed. He asked for one more vote on all the trees Keep the Park Green is suggesting.

Wright pointed out to Fordham and Walters that the amendment votes can be done all at once or in sections.

Fordham reminded the committee that Keep the Park Green's goal was to save 8 existing trees; not 5 existing trees and 3



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new ones.

Hodgeson shared that it is his belief that all the crabapples may be saved on a temporary basis and the planned amphitheater modified after the trees have died and been removed. The curved edges could be squared off once the crabapples are no longer a consideration.

Councilor Wright called the vote to retain trees 958 (Zelkova), 957 (Red Oak), and 956 (Honey Locust) in southwest quadrant. Vote was 5-2 opposed. Fordham and Walters in favor, Mayor Weinberger, Wright, Harnett, Bushor, and Comai against.

Councilor Wright called the vote to retain trees 915 (Little Leaf Linden) and 912 (Red Oak). Vote was 5-2 opposed. Fordham and Walters in favor, Mayor Weinberger, Wright, Harnett, Bushor, and Comai against.

Fordham proposed a final vote to retain entire crabapple grove (as clarification on previous votes).

Wright confirmed that. if final vote passes, trees will be retained with potential to make changes to area.

Councilor Wright called the vote. Vote was 4 to 3 opposed. Wright, Fordham, and Walters in favor, Mayor Weinberger, Hartnett, Bushor, and Comai against.

5. Adjournment

Action, Procedural - 5.01 motion to adjourn

Councilor Wright motioned to adjourn and was seconded by Bushor. All were in favor.

Meeting was Adjourned at 10:01 pm.