

John Long

From: Matthew Shuman <matthew_shuman@hotmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, May 29, 2019 9:46 AM
To: Lance Davis; Vanessa Boukili
Cc: Denise Taylor; Malik Drayton; Katjana Ballantyne; City Clerk Contact
Subject: Re: Ward 6 Tree Woes

Hi Vanessa and Malik, third request, below.

I attended a public meeting regarding a proposed Tree Protection Ordinance a number of months ago and was struck by what one of the City Councilors said--he initially did not support the Ordinance because he did not feel the City was doing its job protecting its own trees. He felt that the City had taken great strides with this issue and was now supportive of the Ordinance. While I applaud the recent tree plantings in my neighborhood, the fact that the City has not been able to respond to my concerns and comments raised almost a month ago about tree protection on Powderhouse Blvd. raises a lot of questions to me. I am copying the City Clerk on this e-mail so that it is part of the public record regarding the Tree Ordinance.

I walked Powderhouse Blvd. a few weeks ago and saw a number of recently planted trees, within the past 1 to 2 years. I now understand from attending the Powderhouse Blvd. Traffic Calming meeting that work on this street has been planned for several years. I am surprised that the trees were planted right before the work was done; it seems more protective to plant the trees after the work is complete--this is how I've seen it everywhere else I've worked. It again makes me question whether there is proper coordination within the City.

Again, if you are not the correct people to contact regarding these issues, please direct me to the proper people. Thanks.

From: Matthew Shuman <matthew_shuman@hotmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, May 15, 2019 8:38 AM
To: Lance Davis; Vanessa Boukili
Cc: Denise Taylor; Malik Drayton; Katjana Ballantyne
Subject: Re: Ward 6 Tree Woes

Hi Vanessa--

I am following up on my e-mail of May 3 regarding tree protection on Powderhouse Boulevard. I was in the area this morning and saw that the other side of the street is being worked on. Still no tree protection or response from the City. Please advise. Thanks.

From: Matthew Shuman <matthew_shuman@hotmail.com>
Sent: Friday, May 3, 2019 12:29 PM
To: Lance Davis; Vanessa Boukili
Cc: Denise Taylor; Malik Drayton; Katjana Ballantyne
Subject: Re: Ward 6 Tree Woes

Hi Vanessa--

It did not take me long to find work in the City that does not have adequate tree protection. Sidewalk and curbing work on Powderhouse Blvd. is underway and absolutely no tree protection is provided. This type of work involves heavy machinery excavating around trees with the risk of damaging bark, structural damage to the tree, not to mention potential root cutting as part of sidewalk fine grading and curbing installation or adjustment.

I attended the Ward 6 Resistant meeting on Wednesday and the administration made it a point to note the strides the City is taking in Tree Planting. I am quite pleased to see a very significant program being successfully implemented in my neighborhood. But we can't just plant trees; we need to preserve and protect our existing urban canopy. It is very disheartening to see no tree protection provided on a basic road project that is being overseen by the City. Much as I described in my previous e-mail last May, it causes me to continue to question what steps the City is taking to protect trees and what level of interdepartmental coordination is occurring.

I urge you to do what is right and require tree protection immediately be installed on the Powderhouse Blvd. project and all other City infrastructure projects. I am including Councilor Ballantyne on this e-mail as this work is in her Ward.

From: Matthew Shuman <matthew_shuman@hotmail.com>

Sent: Wednesday, May 1, 2019 1:38 PM

To: Lance Davis; Vanessa Boukili

Cc: Denise Taylor; Malik Drayton

Subject: Re: Ward 6 Tree Woes

Thanks Vanessa and Lance for following up on this. I am glad that the trees are being pruned as this is important, but also that Eversource will be watched closely and that appropriate limitations are being placed on them.

I do think some additional information on the web-site highlighting their presence would be helpful; I now see the video you refer to.

I hope that you can work with various departments to make sure that tree protection is a part of every project, including small developments and utility work, including the trees and the root structures that get so disturbed. We are now having our Tree Warden inspect utility projects (we have National Grid in Watertown) for proper tree protection before they start working. We are now calling for contractors on our own utility projects to trim all trees in the work zone before they begin work as well so that damage is minimized (and there is less burden on own crews to trim).

I also hope you can work with other departments to make sure larger tree pits are installed during sidewalk work. I recently observed the development sidewalk work on Willow Ave. at Highland Ave., where the tree pits are very small, though larger than they were before. When the width of the tree pit cannot be increased due to ADA concerns, they can often be lengthened. These trees look like they are vulnerable Ash trees and are surrounded by impervious surfaces.

I will be sure to report any issues I observe. Thanks again.

From: Lance Davis <lancedavisward6@gmail.com>

Sent: Tuesday, April 30, 2019 2:43 PM

To: Vanessa Boukili

Cc: Matthew Shuman; Denise Taylor; Malik Drayton

Subject: Re: Ward 6 Tree Woes

Matt,

Thank you for raising these issues and for your advocacy.

Thank you, Dr. Boukili, for the response. The problem with utility crews over-pruning is, as you well know, a long-standing one. I have in the past (and am reminded to do so again this summer) kept a copy of the City's 5-foot policy in my bag when I'm door knocking and have had to pull it out to correct crews who are not aware of it, believing that they have, for example, a 15 foot rule. Anything we can do to enforce the five foot rule would have my support.

Best,
Lance

Lance Davis (Ward 6)
857.261.1909

Land Use (Chair)
Legislative Matters (Vice Chair)
Rules (Special Committee, Vice Chair)
Traffic and Parking
Seniors
Youth Services

On Mon, Apr 29, 2019 at 3:17 PM Vanessa Boukili <vboukili@somervillema.gov> wrote:

Hi Matt,

Thank you very much for your email, and I apologize for the delay in responding. It is an extremely busy time of year.

City staff, including myself, our new urban forestry Malik Drayton, and the Tree Warden Steve MacEachern, have been in regular communication with Eversource and their tree trimming contractor regarding pruning around utility lines. We have a Yearly Operational Plan (YOP) from Eversource with all of the routes they will be pruning on this year, which is about 60 pages long and is not formatted in an easily digestible form to put on the website. They prune all trees around their primary power lines on a 4-year cycle, and this year they are completing the pruning work on about 75% of our roads. The reason there is so much work this year is because they were not allowed to prune for a number of years in the past due to over pruning. Eversource's contractor, Asplundh, started trimming work last week, and will continue for many months to come.

In Somerville we are allowing them to clear limbs up to 5 feet below and to the sides of the primary wires, and 10 feet above. This is less than their standard clearance in other municipalities. They are sending us daily updates of where they are working, and we are doing spot checks of their work to ensure they are not over pruning.

I did create an explanatory video about the tree trimming work a few years ago, and the information still applies (except for the locations). You can find the video "Tree Trimming Around Power Lines" under the "Videos" tab of the Urban Forestry webpage (<https://www.somervillema.gov/urbanforestry>). Asplundh was the contractor doing the work at the time of the video (2017), and they are also doing the pruning work this year. They did a good job then and we are holding them to the same standards and expectations.

Eversource is helping to arrange the removal of 6 trees that are dead or hazardous and which our tree crews cannot remove because of the proximity of branches to primary wires. They are trees we have specifically asked for help with removing. No other trees will be removed by Eversource or their contractor.

For future questions or concerns about utility work around tree, Malik Drayton (CCed here) should be your primary contact, although you can also reach out to me. Malik joined the Urban Forestry Division a little over one month ago, doubling our staff. His background includes tree protections and inspections regarding utility work, and thus he has significantly increased

our capacity to deal with these kinds of issues. He and I have been working on some guidelines for tree protections where underground utility work is involved, and we will be disseminating this information to utility companies shortly.

As for the tree at 62 Lowden Avenue, that tree is already on our removal list, which is long but we are working through it.

We recently completed the public tree inventory for the entire city, in which all of the publicly owned trees have been mapped and identified to species by certified arborists. Additional information about each tree was also collected, such as their size (diameter) and condition, as well as various details related to the site condition. You can see a map of all of the trees here: <https://somervillema.treekeepersoftware.com/index.cfm>. You will be able to see the species, size, and condition of any trees as a guest on this site, but please note that we also have much more information about each tree. Among other things, we are using the tree inventory to list and prioritize necessary tree removals in the city.

Thanks again for reaching out.

All my best,
Vanessa

Vanessa Boukili, PhD, MCA, MQTW, ISA TRAQ
Senior Urban Forestry & Landscape Planner
Conservation Agent
Mayor's Office of Strategic Planning & Community Development
City of Somerville
93 Highland Ave
617-625-6600 X 2516
vboukili@somervillema.gov

From: Matthew Shuman [mailto:matthew_shuman@hotmail.com]
Sent: Monday, April 22, 2019 11:21 AM
To: Vanessa Boukili
Cc: Denise Taylor; Lance Davis
Subject: Re: Ward 6 Tree Woes

Hi Vanessa, I am following up on my e-mail and requests for information from 4/3. If you are not in charge of these issues, please provide the appropriate City contact. Thanks.

From: Matthew Shuman
Sent: Wednesday, April 3, 2019 6:00 PM
To: Vanessa Boukili
Cc: Denise Taylor; Lance Davis
Subject: Ward 6 Tree Woes

Hi Vanessa--

This weekend I received a letter from Eversource regarding "tree maintenance" in my "area" with scant else information available. As you are aware, there are numerous instances of the City not overseeing or following up with utility companies to ensure proper tree protection (see attached e-mail to which you never replied). My concern only grows as construction season begins anew.

I went on to the City web-site to see if additional information was available, to no avail.

I would like to know what the geographical limits of pruning will be as well as what the maximum physical limits of the pruning within the trees will be. Most importantly, I would like to know who from the City will be the liaison for this work to ensure that the trees are pruned responsibly, are not overpruned, and that the Public Shade Tree law is followed if a removal is required. Will Eversource be planting replacement trees or contributing to the tree fund?

I would also like a response to my May 7, 2018 e-mail, namely who from the City is the liaison for utility work and what provisions are in place to make sure that adequate tree protection is provided?

It's disappointing that so little information was provided on the notice I received. In communities I've worked in, the maps have been available on-line and a municipal contact was always provided. Some have had informational meetings about the subject. It's irresponsible of the City to allow a notice to be distributed as it was.

Thanks,
Matt

PS, the tree on my street that I referred to in my May 2018 e-mail, decimated by utility companies, is at 62 Lowden Ave. and now has mushrooms growing in the top of it. In my opinion, it should have been removed a while ago and is now a liability to the City.