

City of Cambridge

Councillor Born then invited public comment on the capital open space plan. There was none.

Councillor Born then moved to the issue of park maintenance and invited a presentation from City staff.

Greg Garber, Superintendent of Parks, stated that over the last 18 months, a great deal of progress has been made. He then summarized the expected annual maintenance. Much work remains to be done in the area of turf replacement and renovation. Over the next three years, approximately \$100,000 per year will be devoted to turf maintenance and repair. Mr. Garber said that twelve playgrounds have been identified as having critical repair needs. Two of the oldest wooden playground structures, one at the Kennedy School and the other at the King School, will be replaced, the Kennedy structure this summer and the King structure during FY2001.

In response to Councillor Born's question of how many tot lots the City of Cambridge has, Mr. Garber said that there are forty-five. Mr. Garber reported that the City is rethinking its playground surfaces. The City was using poured rubber, but it seems quite susceptible to vandalism. They are going to try shredded rubber, which has been used successfully in some nearby cities. It looks like the shredded wood that has been used in the past, but it doesn't freeze in the winter like shredded wood.

Mr. Garber said that the specifications for park maintenance contracts for service with outside contractors have been rewritten and tightened up. Also, the skill level of the Department of Public Works employees has improved, so more maintenance is now done in-house, for example, Quincy Square. He continued that the goal is a visit by a park supervisor to every park, every day. There are maintenance visits at least two times per week, up to five times per week in heavily used parks.

Councillor Born expressed her pleasure at what has been done over the past four years. The City is in a proactive mode; it is no longer in a reactive mode. Mr. Healy stated that this has been an evolutionary process. The organization has been professionalized and this has allowed the proactive work that is now occurring.

Councillor Born also noted her approval of returning some of the work in-house.

Larry Acosta, City Arborist, then described the street tree pruning efforts. When he first came, the pruning was done as a response to public requests, as it is in most cities. Cambridge has 12,000 street trees. Mr. Acosta stated that he is developing a pruning cycle and he sees four to seven years as a realistic estimate of how long it will take to complete the full pruning cycle.

City of Cambridge

Councillor Davis said that there was a concern expressed during the budget hearing about conflicts between street tree pruning and park tree pruning in that the park pruning was taking away resources from the street tree pruning. Mr. Acosta said that some additional money has been moved into the pruning program.

Councillor Davis asked whether Mr. Healy has thought about increasing the access of the public to information about trees. Mr. Healy answered in the affirmative. As part of the effort described at the recent meeting of the Government Operations Committee, the city staff is trying to increase information to the public in all areas, including trees.

Mr. Acosta emphasized that safety is the primary consideration in pruning.

Councillor Born inquired as to the procedure for reporting dangerous trees. Mr. Acosta said that a person can call the DPW and the DPW will try to inspect it as soon as possible.

Mr. Acosta said that there are many trees in need of service. The majority of the City's mature street trees are about the same age, so they are experiencing the problems of aging trees all at the same time. Norway Maples are the primary problem.

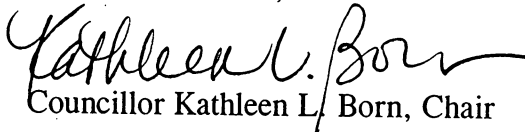
Councillor Born then invited public comment.

Coleen Burke, 1A Garden Street, asked how the decision as to where to start the pruning cycle. Mr. Acosta said they started with the more "rural" neighborhoods, to gain experience before tackling the denser neighborhoods where parking, not interfering with traffic, etc. will present more challenges. Pruning has been done in Neighborhoods 12, 13, 7 and 1.

Councillor Born thanked those present for their attendance.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:48 P.M.

For the Committee,


Councillor Kathleen L. Born, Chair



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE • EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT

Robert W. Healy, City Manager Richard C. Rossi, Deputy City Manager

To the Honorable, the City Council:

In response to Awaiting Report #00-04 regarding a three-year plan for capital improvement and maintenance of playing fields, tot lots and tree pruning and planting, pleased be advised of the following:

CAPITAL OPEN SPACE PLAN**FY2000 (current year funds)**

Russell Field	\$3,850,000
Track Facility/Danahy Park	3,000,000
Reverend Williams Playground (Sleeper)	300,000
Peabody School Playground	250,000
Paine Park	200,000
Larch Road Playground	200,000
Donnelly Field Master Plan	200,000
Golf Course Improvements	40,000
Rindge Field	Fitzgerald School renovations
Fitzgerald School Tot Lot	Fitzgerald School renovations
Traffic Island Improvements	100,000
Cronin Park	
Windsor/Hampshire	
Park Preventative Maintenance Program	175,000
Playground Structure Replacement	75,000
Raymond Street Playground	
Fresh Pond Master Plan Implementation	250,000
Open Space Acquisition Fund	2,000,000
Magazine Beach improvements	1,500,000
TOTAL	\$12,140,000



FY2001

King School Playground	600,000
Franklin Street Park	300,000
Bergin Playground	250,000
Area 4 Open Space Planning & Design	520,000
Squirrel Nut Brands open space	
238 Broadway (including building demolition)	
Maynard School Playground	
Park Preventative Maintenance Program	175,000
Playground Structure Replacement	100,000
Kennedy School Playground	
Golf Course/FP Master Plan Improvements	100,000
Fresh Pond Master Plan Implementation	250,000
Open Space Acquisition Fund	2,000,000
 TOTAL	 \$4,295,000

FY2002

Area 4 Open Space Construction	1,500,000
Squirrel Nut Brands	
238 Broadway/Harvard Street Park	
Maynard School Playground	
Donnelly Field	1,000,000
Glacken, Lusitania Field, Neville	1,250,000 (2 year project)
Lowell School	300,000
Traffic Island Improvements/beautification	100,000
Park Preventative Maintenance Program	175,000
Playground Structure Replacement	100,000
Lopez Street Playground	
Golf Course/FP Master Plan Improvements	100,000
Fresh Pond Master Plan Implementation	250,000
Open Space Acquisition Fund	2,000,000
 TOTAL	 \$6,775,000

FY2003

Donnelly/Gold Star Pool	1,000,000
Glacken, Lusitania Field, Neville	1,250,000 (2 year project)
Dana Park	200,000
Maple Avenue Tot Lot	200,000
Raymond Street Park	550,000
Traffic Island Improvements	100,000
Park Preventative Maintenance Program	175,000
Playground Structure Replacement	100,000

Golf Course/FP Master Plan Improvements	100,000
Fresh Pond Master Plan Implementation	250,000
Open Space Acquisition Fund	2,000,000 *

TOTAL	\$5,925,000
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* Depending on future financial conditions, funding may be used to develop newly acquired open space.

Park Preventative Maintenance. Funds in the Park Preventative Maintenance program are used for a number of maintenance activities in the parks including turf repair and renovation, playground structure and surfacing repair, fence repair and court resurfacing. Over the next three years, preventative maintenance will continue to be aggressive and comprehensive. The primary consideration will be the safety of the user public.

To that end, much work remains with respect to turf replacement and renovation. Many injuries among youth sports participants nationwide can be linked to hard, compacted playing surfaces. Furthermore, soil compaction retards proper root zone development in turf-grass, and contributes to poor drainage of playing fields. Over the next three years, approximately \$100,000 annually will be earmarked for institutionalized practices such as deep-tine aeration, top-dressing, and over-seeding. Where the intensity of use outpaces even an assertive maintenance program, sod will be replaced in the high-stress areas. To illustrate, in the fall of 1999, three and a half acres of sod was placed at a total of eight sites. Approximately 32 acres of open space were aerated, seeded and top-dressed. The cost was \$110,000. In addition to the direct benefit to turf-grass, these cultural practices also promote healthy trees via better percolation of moisture and air into the root zone.

The City currently has twelve wooden playground structures that require significant repairs, primarily due to age. During the past winter, the Parks and Forestry Division conducted a detailed safety audit of each site to identify those needs that are crucial to the safety of children. Bids for that work will be solicited this month, and the project will be completed in the spring. The cost will approach \$60,000. This work will virtually eliminate any hazardous conditions; however, it cannot reverse the fact that many of these wooden structures are past their typical lifespan. Two of the most aged and heavily-used structures, at Kennedy School and King School, have been proposed for replacement in FY 2001. Approximately \$15,000 annually will be dedicated to continual repair of those remaining sites until replacement can be provided by capital appropriation.

At the more contemporary playground sites, there is a constant need to ensure the integrity of the poured-in-place rubber safety surfacing. (Indeed, at future site renovations, the City will review new playground surfacing and install materials that is not prone to vandalism, and does not freeze like loose-fill wood fiber.) The City has contracted for approximately \$15,000 of rubber surfacing repairs this coming spring (damage caused primarily by vandalism), and likely will earmark a similar figure in future years.

Approximately seven sport courts (e.g. tennis, basketball) throughout the City are in need of resurfacing. It is anticipated that these sites will be improved in the fall of 2000, at a cost of

approximately \$35,000. In future years, approximately \$5,000 will be set aside with the intent of renovating one court annually.

It anticipated that \$40,000 annually will be dedicated to as-needed or emergency replacement and repair. Typically, much of this expenditure is directed to fencing (e.g. storm or vehicle damage), or infield soil amendments. This spring, \$16,000 will be spent to restore the structural integrity of the bleachers at Russell Field. Approximately \$20,000 annually will be available for City-wide graffiti removal service (inclusive of parks), to augment smaller-scale efforts by Division staff.

Beautification. Four sites have been identified for large-scale landscape renovation, with a total project budget of \$200,000: Arsenal Square; Vellucci Park (Millers River); the intersection at Hampshire/Windsor/Plymouth; and, Cronin Plaza. Design development for the first two sites is complete, with bidding to take place in spring 2000, and commencement of work hoped for in October. Design development for the Hampshire project is expected to conclude this summer, with construction anticipated in 2001. Design development for Cronin Plaza will commence later this year; it is likely that construction will commence in early 2002.

MAINTENANCE OVERVIEW

Contract Services. Last fall, the Parks and Forestry Division announced its intent to terminate all but one of its landscape service contracts, with the intent of overhauling the specifications and soliciting new bids. (There is one year remaining on the existing service contract for Quincy, Tubman, Sullivan, and Central Squares.) This winter, bids were received on a total of nine service contracts (geographic clusters) encompassing 28 park parcels and two roadway medians. Approximately \$440,000 will be spent annually for the next three years on this initiative, the focus of which is the larger passive parcels (e.g. Cambridge Common, Joan Lorenz Park) as well as the major playing fields (e.g. Tobin Field, Hoyt Field).

The new specifications are more comprehensive and contain much tighter enforcement language than previous contracts. (Monitoring will be a chief focus of the Turf and Landscape Manager, a new personnel addition within the last year.) All spring cleanups will be completed by the third week of April. Grass will be mowed once weekly between the third week of April and second week of November. Soils will be tested annually to determine amendment needs (e.g. lime). All mulching of trees and planting beds will be complete by the first week of June. Sweeping of hardscape areas and trash pickup will occur three times weekly between April 15 and November 30.

Regular maintenance practices embrace Integrated Pest Management principles. Passive turf areas will be core aerated twice annually, while playing fields will be done four times. All turf areas will be fertilized three times and slice-seeded twice. Ornamental shrubs will be pruned annually.

Reporting requirements on the part of the contractor include a weekly written work plan and a weekly walk-through with the Park District Supervisor for that site. A system of fines has been established for certain aspects of non-compliance, including unauthorized vehicle access.

Divisional Services. Much progress has been made in the past year with respect to in-service training of existing personnel, as well as the addition of new skilled personnel. As a result, the standard of care provided by the Parks and Forestry staff has increased dramatically. This spring, the Division will execute a number of small-scale, yet high-profile landscape beautification projects that formerly would have been considered bid work. Examples include the Fire Headquarters and the intersection of Lincoln and Windsor Streets. The Landscape Project Administrator (now a full-time position, as of last summer), in addition to completing design development on the aforementioned capital projects, will begin to compile a resource manual for less complicated endeavors that can be accomplished in-house, on an incremental basis. Examples include seasonal displays at public buildings and the creation of new planting beds in selected parks.

The Neighborhood Park Initiative model has developed quite satisfactorily. Except when emergency conditions dictate otherwise, each of the three Park District Supervisors visits each park in a respective district each weekday. Thus, response time to critical needs has been reduced dramatically. Maintenance sweeps are scheduled based on the size of the parcel and the intensity of use. Effective this year, it is anticipated that every park maintained by Division staff will be policed a minimum of twice per week, with some (e.g. Columbia Park, Alberico Playground) receiving five visits weekly.

A program of preventative maintenance provided by Division staff has been initiated, again with an eye toward safety. Much of the connective hardware (e.g. S-hooks) on all City play structures has been replaced within the last year, a practice that will continue annually. (What has not yet been replaced will be part of the wooden structure repair project.) For the first time, the Division has begun weather-treating the wooden play structures, several of which have existed for 12 years or more without such treatment. To date, structures at Lopez Street, Bergin, Alberico, Paine, Kennedy School, Tobin School and Cambridge Common playgrounds have been sanded and treated, with Fulmore, Agassiz, and Old Morse scheduled for this year. Surfacing at Market Street, Lopez Street, Kennedy School, Columbia, Paine, and Alberico playgrounds has been converted from sand or gravel to woodcarpet. The existing woodcarpet at Harvard Street, Harrington School, Glacken, Sleeper, Wilder, Hurley, Sennott, and Rafferty playgrounds has been replenished.

The departmental commitment to servicing youth sports organizations has greatly increased. Much more attention has been paid to eliminating inherent hazards in the City's baseball and softball infields (e.g. reducing lip buildup that contributes to trip hazards and errant hops). Infield clay at Donnelly, Tobin, Hoyt, Comeau, and Ahern Fields has been amended with soil conditioners to reduce compaction and facilitate drainage. Approximately \$10,000 annually will be set aside for this purpose, with Rindge and Glacken Fields the primary focus of attention in the spring of 2000.

Confidence in the quality of Division services has risen to a level that allows for regular maintenance of the City Hall grounds by Division staff, as opposed to contract service, effective in 2000.

Personnel Reorganization. As mentioned previously, the Division added a Turf and Landscape Manager in 1999, and elevated the Landscape Project Administrator position to full-time status. Thus, much more technical support is available to the labor staff, and better monitoring of

contract functions is expected. Design development of capital projects can also proceed at a more rapid clip.

In addition, the Department of Public Works implemented a merger of the Parks and Urban Forestry Divisions, effective September 13 of last year. There are many anticipated benefits. Coupled with a slightly increased outsourcing of street tree pruning and emergency work, the tree inventory of the parks, up to now essentially not cared for, will receive much more attention. The City Arborist will be freed from several administrative functions, thus allowing more time for public outreach and proactive planning. And, the personnel of both former divisions will be more available to support each other in project-based tasks generally out of the scope of the daily routine. As an example, personnel may now be dedicated on a given day to watering of color zone displays, a function not easily accomplished last year. That fact, coupled with last year's extended drought, precluded the Division from planting annuals at many customary sites.

TREE PRUNING AND PLANTING

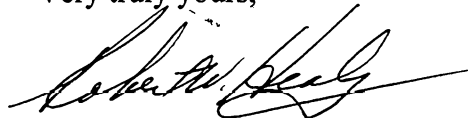
Tree pruning. As our street tree pruning contracts continue to prune along roadways, crews will be assigned to prune parks trees in the contract areas. During snow or rain it is difficult to post and work along streets, so crews are assigned trees in parks and schools. For example, during FY98 tree pruning activity in neighborhood #1, contractors pruned trees in Gore, Hurley Street, and Costa Lopez Parks. This fiscal year, they pruned trees at the Harrington School and the Morse School as well as in Sennott Park, Elm and Hampshire, and Hastings Square Park. Our plan is to prune all thirteen neighborhoods over the next three years, designating park and school trees to be pruned when weather makes street tree pruning impossible.

Tree Planting. The Significant Tree Planting Program will plant thirty-nine, 6"-7" caliper trees in parks citywide over the next three years. To date twenty-six such trees have been planted since FY98. Cost is \$25,000 to \$30,000 per year; which is included in the DPW operating budget.

The Commemorative Tree Planting Program offers citizens opportunity to plant trees in parks each year. Since FY98 four such trees have been planted in parks. Cost is \$100 to \$200 per tree to the City with the participant paying \$100 to \$200.

Over the next three years requests from Parks Planning, Parks District Supervisors and citizens will result in the planting of replacement trees for those which die or are removed. Cost is \$300.00 to \$400.00 per tree.

Very truly yours,



Robert W. Healy
City Manager

City of Cambridge

**PUBLIC FACILITIES, ART AND
CELEBRATIONS COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

*Councillor Kathleen L. Born, Chair
Councillor Henrietta Davis
Councillor Michael A. Sullivan*

In City Council June 19, 2000

The Public Facilities, Art and Celebrations Committee held a public hearing on June 7, 2000, beginning at 5:50 P.M. in the Sullivan Chamber for the purpose of considering the City's three-year plan for capital improvements and maintenance of existing open space and tot lots.

Present at the hearing were Kathleen L. Born, Chair of the Committee, Councillor Henrietta Davis, and City Clerk D. Margaret Drury. Also present were Robert W. Healy, City Manager, Lisa Peterson, Assistant to the City Manager, Bob Cantoreggi, Turf and Landscape Manager, Paul Ryder, Director of Recreation, Department of Human Services, Greg Garber, Superintendent of Parks, Clarinda Spinelli, Landscape Project Administrator, Larry Acosta, City Arborist.

Councillor Born convened the hearing and explained the purpose.

She invited Robert Healy, City Manager, to make a presentation. Mr. Healy began with a brief overview of the City's accomplishments and plans for parks and tot lots. He emphasized that over \$12 million is committed to parks and open space in the FY2001 budget and expressed his pride in the level of the City's commitment. He noted that the City has significantly expanded its inventory of open space as well as its maintenance and restoration activities. See ATTACHMENT A.

Councillor Born stated that the City looks a lot better than it did six and one-half years ago. It looks much fresher, greener and more cared-for. The areas where flowers have been planted look great.

Councillor Born asked why the amount for open space drops from \$12.5 million this year to \$6.7 million next year in the attached report. In response to a question from Councillor Born, Mr. Healy said that work on Danehy and Russell Field is bond-financed. The payment to MDC for Magazine Beach renovation shows up as an FY2000 expense because the money has been paid to MDC even though construction will start in the spring of 2001, with a completion date in July of 2002. Mr. Healy noted that Russell Field is still in the stage of development of the plan for soil remediation. Remediation may include removal of soil. Until the remediation is done, the planned Russell Field renovations cannot be done.

Committee Report #2

2075

A report from Councillor Born,
Chair of the Public Facilities,
Art and Celebrations Committee,
for a public meeting held on
June 7, 2000 for the purpose
of considering the City's
three-year plan for capital
improvements and maintenance
of existing open space and
tot lots.

In City Council June 19, 2000

Report Accepted.

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