

Notes from Boston Urban Forest Friends Meeting

Friday June 11th 2021, 11:00am

[BUFF Website](#)

[Link to Meeting Recording](#)

Community Updates

- Events Coming Up
 - Informational Session on the Municipal Reforestation Bill (S.504/H.905)
 - Originally scheduled for June 22nd but will be some time in July
 - Boston Park Advocates Mayoral Candidates Forum on Parks and Open Space
 - Tuesday July 29th at 6:00-7:30pm. Read more about the event and how to have your organization sign on as a cosponsor [here](#). Register at <http://parkforum.net/>
 - BUFF asked to cosponsor - thoughts?
 - Positive responses! - Keep pushing, let them know that some of their promises have not been upheld
- Heidi Moesinger - removal of 32 mature trees from [McConnell Park in Dorchester](#)
 - The park is being raised by 3.5 feet. The residents were not given advanced notice from the city and there wasn't a meeting until after the trees were removed. They removed trees around the edge of the park that did not need to be removed. They will be planting 56 trees with 3.5 caliper trees, but that does not replace mature trees. There is no information on the maintenance and watering for the trees. At one point the project manager said 6 sycamore trees would not be removed but were "accidentally" removed, however, later it was said this was not a mistake.
 - Here is a [google folder](#) with some documents in case you are interested.
 - Ultimately, people need to be held accountable and they should know voters are angry about it. We should not only be pressing the mayoral candidates but the City Council candidates as well. Try to get a story, Letter to the Editor or op-Ed in the Globe about the lack of process and public notice for tree removals.
- Josie Anderson (she/her) - Conservation Law Foundation Bus Idling Cases janderson@clf.org
 - We need locals to agree to be a standing witness. There is no special expertise required, only a desire for your community's air to be cleaner. If you live or work in one of the following areas, reach out to Josie: the Boston University gym, the Wellington Orange Line Station in Medford, the Alewife Red Line Station in Cambridge, the Riverside Green Line Station in Newton, the Chelsea Silver Line Station, or the Encore Boston Harbor Casino in Everett.
- David Meshoulam & Bill Masterson - Adopt-a-tree Program
 - [Check it out here](#)! It will serve as a model for the rest of the city to keep young trees alive. It is only in East Boston and Ellis Neighborhood officially but anyone can adopt one of the older trees around the city.

Equity and Involvement in Boston's Urban Forest Plan

Dr. Neenah Estrella-Luna, Social Equity Consultant for the UFP

- Engagement Structure
 - We are focusing on our historically excluded communities of Boston (communities of color and low income communities).
 - The Community Advisory Board is structured in 3 parts:
 - Intergovernmental Working Group - the city
 - Equity Council - residents or other members of the community who advocate for historically excluded communities
 - Collaborating Partners - everyone else who has an interest and passion for our open spaces
- Interested in joining?
 - Sign up to be a Community Partner on the Community Advisory Board for Boston's Urban Forest Plan [here](#) by **JUNE 18TH**. You can fill out an expression of interest and find more information such as dates, timeframes, and roles.

Q&A with Dr. Neenah Estrella-Luna

- What is the timetable for this project?
 - As for the time frame, the equity council will have their first meeting this month and they'll work to create a plan. First set of public workshops with all members will happen at the end of July - monthly two hour meetings in July, August, September and into the fall. Ideally, they hope to have a plan in the early part of next year.
- In these discussions where will there be discussion about what is happening in the city related to development? It plays a huge role but seems to be talked about separately.
 - We have members from the Boston Planning and Development Agency, the Department of Neighborhood Development, and Office of Neighborhood Services. We had staff excited about this because they would like more authority to protect trees in development processes. Cautiously optimistic that a lot of folks working for the city want to see change.
- Is the Boston Civic Design Commission part of the group?
 - Not sure, will have to go back and look. Not all of the work will happen at the meetings, we will have other opportunities to speak to others such as BCDC (Boston Civic Design Commission) or ZBA (Zoning Board of Appeal).
- Are the collaborating partners a group of as many people interested in joining or is it limited?
 - We would like to include as many people as interested as possible but it will depend on how many people express interest- still have not set a limited number but **if interested please apply**. If we have to limit the number this does not mean we will ignore you- we will keep your contact and keep you in the loop. There will be plenty of opportunities to get informed and provide feedback.
- What was the selection process for the equity council, how were people chosen, and is it finished? Are all neighborhoods represented?

- It was people who were recommended based on their activities and also based on very specific demographic communities. That said, not every community wanted to participate, some have good reasons to not trust the city. With these communities, we will meet them at their meetings and have separate conversations with them as we go through the process. The city has historically not taken equity seriously, so these communities want to know what is going on, but we have to find the best processes for doing that.
- Are all the selected people residents of the neighborhoods they represent?
 - To my knowledge, 99% of everybody lives in Boston. Some may live in different neighborhoods but they live in Boston.
- When will the names of the people involved be shared publicly?
 - No decision has been made on that yet. For the equity council, they want to have an initial meeting before releasing the information.
- Are elected officials involved in these three groups?
 - No elected officials or candidates are members of this group currently. The staff members of certain elected officials have expressed interest in joining so we have to think of how to integrate them.
- Where is the opportunity for the average community member to participate in the process?
 - Anybody can be a collaborating partner, you do not need to be part of an organization. We will also be going to where people are, including through social media engagement activities. You can share your stories through images of meaningful trees, places that need trees, or trees that have fallen.

Next Meeting - Friday July 9th at 11am

- Discussion on writing letters to mayoral candidates listing our urban forestry priorities and what we want the next mayor to do. Please come with ideas of what we should add.