

CITY OF PORTLAND, MAINE

Standing Committee Sustainability and Transportation
Councilor Spencer Thibodeau (D2), Chair
Councilor Belinda Ray (D1)
Councilor Jill Duson (A/L)

Councilors Present: Council Hinck, Councilor Thibodeau, Councilor Suslovic
Staff present: Troy Moon, Jeff Tarling

Councilor Suslovic moved to accept the minutes from the previous meeting. Councilor Thibodeau seconded the motion. All were in favor.

Councilor Hinck introduced Lee Dassler of the Western Foothill Land Trust who offered a presentation on efforts to preserve undeveloped land surrounding the lake as part of efforts to protect the water quality in the lake. Councilor Hinck indicated that the City and the Portland Water District should take greater interest in preserving the undeveloped land in the Sebago Lake watershed in order to preserve the high quality of our drinking water.

Jeff Tarling discussed challenges related to maintaining the urban tree canopy. The recent inventory indicates we have almost 19,500 street trees and major trees in parks. The crew assigned to them consists of 4 arborists. This leads to a reactive approach addressing complaints rather than addressing tree maintenance in a comprehensive way. The tree replacement budget is very small. Replacements often occur through the tree co-op program where residents sign up to purchase approved trees at a local nursery and have it planted by City arborists. This accounts for about 30 new trees per year. Mr. Tarling indicated that funds contributed toward trees by development should be targeted to areas of need, which may not necessarily be near the contributing development. He also indicated that we should be looking at making the urban environment more hospitable to street trees by improving the tree wells and using alternatives to road salt in the Old Port and PD.

Councilor Suslovic noted that the City struggles to keep up with maintenance of trees. All councilors agreed that the Finance Committee should look at funding for tree maintenance in the budget. Councilor Suslovic made a motion the Planning Department consider expanding the tree canopy as part of the Comprehensive Plan. Councilor Hinck offered an amendment that the Planning Department also consider changes in design standards for tree planting that would improve tree habitat. These include larger tree wells and structural soils. All were in favor of the amendment and all in favor of the original motion. The committee also suggested that DPW should look at alternatives to road salt, particularly where trees are most impacted.

To conclude the meeting the committee reviewed a summary of the work they completed during the year.