



Grassroots Support for a Green Community

March 14, 2022

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To Members of the Capital Sub-committee of the Advisory Committee

Brookline GreenSpace Alliance would like to state its support of the budget of the Parks and Open Space Division. Also, there are needs that are not covered in the proposed budget that would make for a healthier, safer, more attractive community, more resilient to the negative impacts of climate change. For example, the Town is limited in the ability to offer playing time on fields which cannot be maintained adequately given the current use. The important Forestry Zone Manager position is not filled very possibly because of the salary we are able to offer. Town Arborist/Tree Warden is a half-time position which limits the effectiveness of the maintenance, management, and outreach functions of the job.

In regards to the forestry department, I would like to quote from the Brookline Urban Forest Climate Resiliency Master Plan approved June 2021.

While many practices and standards are similar, Brookline's budget equates to \$55.03 per tree compared to Newton (\$75 per tree) or Cambridge (\$137 per tree) illustrating that Brookline is stretching each dollar to deliver urban forestry services. Both Cambridge and Newton have tree preservation ordinances that require staff/ budget for review and enforcement. Brookline continues to provide excellent tree care and a robust planting program despite a stagnant budget. With emphasis on expansion of the tree canopy, increased care for existing trees, response to more frequent and intensive storms, and rising costs for contracting tree work, the budget cannot remain the same without impacting the services provided. A fully-funded program would be able to provide proactive management, anticipating and addressing issues before they become emergencies. When budgets decline, many towns resort to a reactive maintenance program, which ultimately costs municipalities far more than a proactive maintenance program...

Based on the information reviewed, the following recommendations would help minimize risks to the tree program and would enhance service levels, ensuring effective, sustainable tree care. • Increase funding to support proactive pruning, improve the Town's response to more frequent and more intense storms, and care for the aging tree canopy. • Hire 2 additional full-time staff to increase the number of in-house tree crews for pruning, planting, watering, and general services. Promotion of in-house crews is a more economical way to enhance services when compared with the rising costs of contracted crews. • Make the Tree Warden a full-time position. A full-time Tree Warden will not only assist in elevating service levels and allow for the enforcement of a tree protection bylaw, but will also signal to the community the importance of the forestry program and the urban forest. • Enhance record keeping protocols. Maintaining clear and accurate records is essential to a fortified risk management program. • Enhance storm budgets to respond to an increasing frequency and severity of storms expected with climate change

Brookline Urban Forest Climate Resiliency Master Plan p 108

Thank you for your support of the P&OS budget and for your consideration of the outstanding needs of this division in light of the important functions it performs for our Town.

Arlene Mattison

BGSA president, on behalf of the Board of Directors