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City Council Meeting – Oct. 19 2015

Thank you for this chance to speak. My name is FW and I'm co-chair of the CPP.

The Committee is working with the DPW, (also thank Owen and his staff for extra meetings this summer), to improve the vigor and coverage of the tree canopy in Cambridge in a number of ways: assuring plentiful watering the first 2 years; <sup>rewriting</sup> new specifications for tree planting and maintenance of trees and importantly, monitoring of the specifications, better oversight of pruning including utility pruning. We are advocating planting species that will grow big enough to provide shade to the streets, even under wires. We feel that we need to reduce the amount of salt that is applied to streets and sidewalks, or use a less harmful de-icer. We need to do something about natural gas leaks that are killing trees and adding to climate warming.

policy order #3

So the proposal to offer an incentive of a 50.00 per year rebate on water <sup>bills</sup> costs to homeowners who will water newly planted street trees in front of their homes seems to me a good start, (at the same time recognizing and thanking the many people who are already doing this.) However, I want to ask that you consider refining the offer in several ways, all of which will improve the chances the tree will thrive:

1. Require the homeowner to <sup>pull</sup> weed, and <sup>clean</sup> keep debris out of the tree well
2. Inform the waterer of the enormous damage that excessive salt plays in the decline of trees. Request that they shovel thoroughly and sprinkle only the smallest possible amount of salt, because ultimately it will melt into the tree well.
3. Ask that they do not build up soil or mulch around the base (trunk flair) of the tree because it will compress the tree tissue (?) (cells) where the roots meet the trunk, and cause the tree to decline or die.
4. In the policy order resolution it is stated that the waterer will be eligible for a rebate "as long as the tree stays alive". "stays alive" might be changed to "Grows and Thrives", because that is what we need our trees to do if they are going to provide a healthy canopy. It's an important distinction. It's the trees that get planted, hang onto life for a few years, don't grow, and die that we are very concerned about. *and watering adequately is crucial.*

Many people simply are unaware of these things and it could be a great way to get additional tree health information to those who are willing to water and care for a new tree.

I hope this pilot project will inspire Cambridge residents in caring for our public street trees. Lush healthy trees signal a commitment to the environment, to the neighborhood and to the residents themselves.