

Draft Minutes

LORAX Task Force Meeting

October 24, 2016, 6:30 PM

City Council Chambers

Participants: Task Force Chair: Councillor David Eppley. Councillor Steve Dibble Christopher Burke (Parks and Rec), Rick Rennard (Tree Warden), Flora Tonthat (NIAC), Polly Wilbert (SSNA)

Observers: Frank Silva, and Mary Anne Silva, Pat Gozemba (Co-Chair, SAFE), Anne Sterling (NIAC), Tim Jenkins (HSI), Sandi Power (SSNA Tree Committee), Bob Rowand (SAFE)

Absent: Paul L'Heureux (SPS), Ron Malione (Shade Tree), Joanne Mizioch (Cemetery Commission), Kirt Rieder (Planning Board), Barbara Warren (Salem Sound Coastwatch)

Copies of Minutes to: Mayor Driscoll, Chief of Staff Dominick Pangallo, Salem City Clerk Cheryl LaPointe

(Meeting videotaped by SATV, Alan Hanscom)

Flora Tonthat reported on tree kick off event (soft kickoff). A larger kickoff event in the spring, if we can get some things accomplished. SATV was thanked for their excellent videotaped broadcast of the tree planting event. Anne Sterling was impressed with Jim McAllister's presentation. Councillor Dibble praised event and speakers.

SD: Would have had questions for Ron about selection of trees that were planted. Needed trees with higher branching. Not the species but the individual trees and not planted in center of tree pit. Where are the metal grates? Grates should have been stockpiled. Hoses needed on cables so no trunk scarring. Important to get it right. One bag not watered.

FT: Trees were planted by our staff.

Bob Rowand/SAFE: Acorns from those trees.

TJ: Cornell, urban tree recommendations.

DE: Update from Barbara Warren who could not attend tonight's meeting. She met with Tom Devine about the DCR tree grant (tree inventory) and provided a SSC letter of support. Will hear back about our grant application in the spring.

PG: methane gas (Dave Rowand, SAFE Adv. Board) natural gas leaks. When the City Council held a hearing on National Grid's natural gas leaks in Salem in November 2015. Many gas leaks. SAFE is interested, dangerous outside PG house (w/i 15 feet of house, Grade 1 leak). NG came and fixed it right away because it was Grade 1 (public safety hazard). SAFE concerned about climate change. Escaping methane is a major component of climate change. Almost offsets progress we have made on climate change

through other efforts. Methane kills trees, natural gas percolates up through the soil and dehydrates, gas companies look for dead trees when they are searching for a gas leak. Referenced other communities lawsuits re trees killed by as leaks (Brookline, Hingham, Milton, Nahant, Saugus). We might think about holding NG responsible for trees killed by methane. But important to get gas leaks repaired and hold NG's feet to the fire.

Contacted Dr. Nathan Philips (Boston University) on natural gas effect on trees. Met with SAFE. We know where the gas leaks are because DPU made it imperative for NG to make maps available for all the cities and towns that show where the gas leaks are. NG says that some of the leaks on the 12/15 map have been repaired, but NPhillips says NG is under reporting their gas leaks by 30 percent. Bob _____ in August in Salem with GIS guided gas analyzer through 94 streets in Salem. Could clearly see where the leaks are and the trees mirrored the leaks. Peabody Street as example. Found leaks near those trees. Until those gas leaks are fixed, we can't put good trees in places where gas leaks exist. Will share the data with LORAX.

SAFE has developed a video on the gas leaks in Salem and the Commonwealth. 32 minutes long. Covers major points that SAFE is concerned about.

DE: Overlay gas leaks on the comprehensive tree data survey from the DCR grant.

PG: Foolhardy to plant trees if they will be killed by existing leaks. Statewide problem, same situation on Beacon Hill, 8 percent of dying trees were where there were gas leaks. Need to be methodical about planting trees where they will survive. Proud to be a tree hugger. SAFE wants to stay in communication with LORAX to coordinate information. Bob Rowand is willing to do the gas leak identification work for free. Alan Hanscom edited the SAFE video, great work. Other video (4 minutes). Will have a regular SAFE attendee at the LORAX meetings. A lot of information to share.

DE: Difference among Grade 1, 2, and 3 leaks. Winter St. leak not near enough to humans, but large leak. (Grade 1 within 15 feet of house.) When they were out with the analyzer they found large leaks but they weren't Grade 1 by definition. 2 is farther away, 3 is even farther away from habitation. All of them are environmental hazards, not public safety but all of them are environmental. So Nathan Philips had determined 7 percent of the gas leaks account for 50 percent of the release of methane. The 1s all get repaired fast, so the others are 2s and 3s. Some in Salem have not been repaired in 15 years because they are 2s and 3s. We should do something with the largest leaks (no matter what Grade they are) Super emitters. Lori Ehrlich submitted legislation. If Grade 2/3s are killing trees wouldn't it make sense for our City Solicitor and Mayor to take a page out of Brookline's play book and look for some recovery from NG to incent NG to fix the leaks.

PG: Someone on LORAX be in touch with Brookline, Milton, Hingham, Nahant, Saugus (August 2015 report) to see what the status of that pending litigation might be. Work in concert with those other communities. SAFE is meeting again with Nathan Phillips.

AS: Can't we get Grade 2/3s fixed?

DE: 2/3s are not required to be fixed. Jamie Eldridge (one bill passed, this past July, than when a street is opened for repair of infrastructure that NG is required to fix any gas leaks that exist while the street is open). The second bill not yet passed would have prevented the gas companies from charging us for the leaked gas. Leaked gas is divided up (\$2MM/year, est. by Nathan Philips) and paid for by the gas company customers. Lori Ehrlich will now focus on the super emitters.

TJ: Pink/red leaks they have fixed. Are they all 1s? If they were, they are everywhere in Salem, which means their infrastructure is dilapidated and in need of repair/replacement. Warren St. entire main replaced/not on map. Map updated every year (Dec. 2016). If they are everywhere and they are Grade 1s, we have a citywide problem.

PG: The infrastrucgture is cast iron, pipes are 100 years old. When they were put in there, the gas had much more water in it than they do now. Joints were sealed with jute, which works great with moist gas, it worked, but today's gas is dryer so now it doesn't work and leaks at the same. Bob Eppley If they found one gas leak, 12 feet down the road they will find another one. Rare in the middle of the pipe, usually at the seal.

DE: Nov. 15, 2015, at Council meeting, two or three Grade 1 leak are identified, NG and FD is immediately dealing with it.

SP: How are jute leaks repaired?

PG: Sleeves are put in (big long yellow pipe) inside, sometimes they tape the joints. They do know how to repair the leaks. PG would be happy if all the cast iron pipe were sleeved. There are methods that they can use to repair those joints. It's the cumulative effect of the leaks. Reason to believe Heat Mass . org that 30 percent under reported. The enormity of the problem is serious.

PG: Other sources of methane, marshlands, cows, but we are looking at the natural gas leaks in conjunction with the damage to the trees.

SD: Safe bet that towns who are litigating that their leaks have been are being repaired already.... PG will check Bike path gas leak (gas company came and sleeved it and fixed it, delayed two paving two days). Came that day and repaired next day, but NG had to be ordered to do it. Gas hurts human health.....? How does it hurt humans (climate change, extreme weather, and extreme weather patterns) deaths in hurricanes, severe rainfalls.

PG: First meeting with Nathan Philips, perfectly healthy tree (109 Columbus) died from a leak, looked at stump and could tell that it had died from gas leak from the fungus in the stump.

DE: Biologic effects on tree is a symptom/evidence. Geodermas, fungus known to grow on trees that have natural gas leaks. Have let Mayor, State Rep and State Senator to know what is happening. Very scientific.

FT: How does the gas travel.

PG: Can travel along the pipes and finds openings. Videotaped Story St. and smelled gas near her house, called gas company and house across the street was sold and were doing updates and discovered a huge leak that had been there for a long time, but it was not a Grade 1 leak, but Senator Lovely could smell the gas. Important to call the gas company when you smell gas. Chief Cody was also concerned about this as a public safety issue. No home testing kit, equipment is expensive. Nathan Philips can scratch on the bark of the tree and tell whether there is a gas leak.

Gas leaks and house explosions referenced (Ann Sterling, Rick Rennard).

PG: Let's be vigilant and let's see what we can get done and raise public consciousness. Explosions do happen and people do die.

SD: Timing, 1 day training in Louisiana, methan gas leaks (Merchant Marine). Finds its way through soils and exit through catch basins because of compacted soil. Gas company will drill holes in the pavement looking for leaks.

PG: NP looked at street and saw where the gas company had pierced the pavement to look for leaks. Solid main and slotted main covers, NG to prevent explosions and put in a slotted main cover to let the gas escape. Email address on the information sheet with co-chair Kathy Karcher to have students work on this at Pingree School.

PW: Initial draft of LORAX recommendations distributed and reviewed quickly.

Next Meeting: November 28th next meeting. Discussion of the budget. If you can't make the meeting, let DE or PW know now so (not 24 hours notice) SD will not be available.

PG: will send material to be shared electronically with Task Force.

DE: Web page liaison for the Task Force? Work with Matt the city's IT guy. Looking for a volunteer.

Distribute: RFPs either in central location on city website or distributed to Task Force members.

Attach: SAFE Methane Handout, Draft Summary Document, Updated Contact Sheet