



**CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS**  
**URBAN FORESTRY COMMITTEE**  
**KATJANA BALLANTYNE**  
**MAYOR**

**Urban Forestry Committee Meeting**  
**NOVEMBER 17, 2022 4:30PM**  
**MINUTES**

**Pursuant to Chapter 22 of the Acts of 2022, this meeting was held remotely**

A recording of the meeting can be accessed here:

<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/recording/8126928473712802049>

*Meeting notes prepared by Amy Mertl and Vanessa Boukili*

**Committee Members in attendance:** Chris Dwan (Co-Chair), Amy Mertl, Breck Miller (Tree Warden), Jennifer Clifford, Leah Grossman, Murphy Langevin (left ~5:55pm), Vanessa Boukili (Senior Urban Forestry & Landscape Planner), Tori Antonino (Co-Chair)

**Committee Members absent:** none

**Others in Attendance:** Abby Frank, Denis and Denise (Tarsha) Stacke, Divyanshu Verma, Max Meinhold, Crystal H.

**Call to Order:** Dwan called meeting to order at 4:32 pm

**1. Introductions / Housekeeping**

- a. Committee members introduced themselves.
- b. Audience members were promoted to panelists, followed by introductions.

**2. Resident Concerns**

- a. Stackes – concern about 150 year old oak tree in yard, want it to stay healthy.
- b. Crystal - wondering if the city could plant fruit trees as street trees.
  - i. Boukili – city does plant serviceberries, crabapples, don't plant more typical fruit trees because they make a mess and create a food source for rats.
  - ii. Committee members discussed options/issues with fruit trees in the city, including issues with lead in the soil.

**3. Updates from City**

- a.) City Tree Removals

- i.) Miller- In between contracts for tree crew so not much happening. Tree hearing coming up for 10 Poplar St, which is mostly invasive species, and 120 Middlesex, 4 freeman maples
- b.) Private Tree Removal Permit(s) and Exception(s)
  - i.) Boukili - 8 trees removed at 250 Broadway, one undersized, are 4 significant but invasive species, 21 School st. removed 6 trees, all invasive.
  - ii.) 79 trees total proposed for removal this year, some withdrawn, many issued, a few pending, multiple have been waived due to owner occupied.
- c.) City Tree Planting
  - i.) Boukili – Fall tree planting is underway, started around Halloween, 60 planted so far, hopefully will get 150 in ground before freezing. Feedback received from SSPP group, species have already been selected for fall but we can incorporate moving forward, had a good discussion with SSPP on difficulties planting in urban conditions.
    - (1) Grossman: discussion was helpful, now have a list of specific needs for trees to search for and experiment with.
    - (2) Clifford: challenges include size, heat, pollution, salt tolerance.
    - (3) Antonino: had a meeting on 11/17 between Boukili, Clifford, Grossman and Antonino on how to get more native species planted next year. Certain species can fit in small spaces, serviceberries can fit in some spots but not all. Might be a long process to find native trees that work in different spaces. Multi-stemmed shrubs need more pruning, need a tree crew. When planting big trees and we have space the city plants large native trees.
  - ii.) Crystal: Is it ok to plant flowers in the wells around the trees?
    - (1) Boukili - it's ok to plant in tree wells with certain caveats. Plants cannot impede pedestrian traffic (short plants that do not flop). People have to be ok with losing the plants if there is an issue and DPW comes to cut or remove them. Some species are good companion plants, others are not good (such as sunflowers and tomatoes).
    - (2) Plants like marigolds and Bee Balm are fine.
    - (3) Grossman shared photos of tree well pilot, doing great despite drought and not much attention. Idea for these to be demonstration gardens and encourage folks to adopt tree pots and fill with native plants. Can include recommended species for tree wells. Some tree pits were 80% sand, so these are tough plants.
  - iii.) Huff: Can we add compost to tree wells?
    - (1) Boukili - yes that would be super beneficial. Not raising the level of the soil, not to injure roots but otherwise great.
- d.) Prospect Hill Wedding Nook
  - i.) Boukili - Discussed in September, Antonino and Grossman provided comments and suggestions, PSUF took info and incorporated some suggested species into the new design. We reached a compromise design, planting palette will be mostly native. Nook will be planted in spring. PSUF planted some bulbs here this fall.
- e.) Somerville Pollinator Action Plan

- i.) Boukili - Had call for applications for advisory committee, received 50 applications for 5 or 6 positions. Luisa Oliveira is working to set up interviews. Committee will be formed in the next few months, actual document will take up to a year to produce.
- ii.) Antonino - Could we have additional members on the committee if so many applicants? Other ways to keep everyone engaged.
  - (1) Boukili - Composition up to Luisa Oliveira and the Mayor, depends how interviews go. Too many people may make it hard to get anything done. City does want to encourage the enthusiasm of people who have applied, not sure what the nature of interactions will be. North Hampton and Lincoln have pollinator action plans, as does Great Barrington, Will need a lot of help with implementation. May or may not need more minds and hands at that stage.
- f.) Glen Street Community Garden Expansion
  - i.) Boukili: 5 Palmer Ave., site adjacent to community garden. City plans to expand the garden area. Plans are designed, intention to do it next construction season
  - ii.) Antonino: concern that gardens are too exclusive, no prioritization on list, can this expansion be a place that more collective gardening could happen.
    - (1) Boukili - This spot is planned as same type of community gardens as other spots, City tried a more socialist garden a Lincoln Park and it did not work well.
    - (2) Dawn proposed moving this item to a later agenda to give it the attention it deserves.

#### 4. UFC Outreach

- a. Clifford - Outreach group met to brainstorm ways to evolve and grow our outreach and education efforts. We have some reasonable ways to face the public. What do we want people to know about us, get people to come to meetings. Outreach was done to teachers to recruit youth members, curious if that was effective.
  - i. Boukili - one youth applicant from the high school.
- b. Clifford - suggest creating new parameters for youth members, one year commitment might work better.
  - i. Boukili - Would have to be updated by city council as codified in ordinance.
- c. Dwan - Draft revision for TPO needed, next step is to look at other communities/other committees, find draft language to shop around to ourselves and city staff, have a council put it in and go through public process. Overhaul could include other things, such as protecting street trees during construction.
- d. Grossman - Somerstreets went well! Grossman and Mertl ran a table, made plant wands.
- e. Grossman - Can we discuss applications for open committee slots?
  - i. Boukili - 9 applicants, including one youth and one with urban forestry expertise. Will be setting up interviews.
- f. Stacke: Does UFC have connections with the growing center? They have a youth program.
  - i. Antonino - We do have a connection there, youth program there is for younger students, but could be a pipeline.

#### 5. Quincy Street Open Space

- a. Antonino - Currently bare, seems unlikely that much vegetation could be removed without an herbicide. Just bare ground. Rat holes. Boardwalk may be attracting rats not the plants.
  - i. Boukili - Quincy st. is part of the horticultural contract, to my knowledge the horticulturalist is the only ones working on it on the city side. I do not believe we would use herbicides for that. It is a public park, other people could pull things out too.
  - ii. Grossman: How do we move this forward, can we invite the horticulturalist to a UFC meeting even if they are not required to come? Better communication with horticulturalist and DPW?
    1. Boukili - Could have a written document of questions that we could request answers to.
    2. Grossman - SSPP subcommittee can work on this.
- b. Dwan - Do we want to plan an extra meeting before 12/15, we have a lot of issues to cover from missing October meeting. Need to send out a poll for 12/8. Either we will have a meeting or a working group for TPO if not quorum.
  - i. Antonino: request to invite Boynton yards to another meeting.
- c. Crystal - Updates on Adopt-a-Tree?
  - i. Clifford - Will set up a follow up meeting with working group, 130 people adopted, no requests for certificates as far as I can tell. Can work this out in working group, what can be improved on for next time.

**6. Miyawaki forest group - tabled**

**7. High School Planting Beds - tabled**

**8. Use of Pesticides at Maxwell's Green - tabled**

**9. Poured-in-Place Around Trees – tabled**

**10. Ongoing Work Updates- tabled**

- a. Adopt-a-Tree program
- b. Species Selection and Planting Protocol
- c. Tree Preservation Ordinance
- d. Somerville's Most Wanted Weeds
- e. GLX Corridor Greening

**2. Approval of Minutes from Previous Meetings**

- a. September 15<sup>th</sup>, 2022

**Roll call vote to approve September 15, 2022 meeting minutes (motion Dwan):**

- (1) Yay: Mertl, Miller, Dwan, Clifford, Grossman, Boukili, Antonino
- (2) Nay: none
- (3) Abstain: none

Motion passes unanimously at 6:32 pm.

**3. Adjourn:** Motion to adjourn meeting unanimously approved at 6:33 pm [motion- Boukili, second-Grossman]