



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
KATJANA BALLANTYNE
MAYOR

THOMAS GALLIGANI
ACTING EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Urban Forestry Committee Meeting
AUGUST 17, 2023 4:30PM
MINUTES

Pursuant to Chapter 2 of the Acts of 2023, this meeting was held remotely

Meeting notes prepared by Breck Miller & Vanessa Boukili

Committee Members in attendance: Tori Antonino (Co-Chair), Leah Grossman (Co-Chair), Amy Mertl, Calla Taylor, Chris Dwan, Doris Jenkins, Breck Miller (Tree Warden), Vanessa Boukili (Senior Urban Forestry and Landscape Planner)

Committee Members absent: Dorothy Suput

Others in Attendance: Malik Drayton, Anne Ryan, Rob Vandenebelle, Ana Poisko, Pamela Blittersdorf, Darrick Yee

Call to Order: Grossman called meeting to order at 4:33 pm

1. Introductions / Housekeeping

- a. UFC member introductions.
- b. Housekeeping - Code of Conduct:
 - i. Boukili - Administration would like committees to formally adopt the Code of Conduct (vote to abide by it).
 - ii. Dwan - what problem are we solving?
 - iii. Antonino - the document is preemptive.

Roll call vote to formally adopt Code of Conduct (motion – Antonino, second – Boukili):

1. Yay: Mertl, Miller, Taylor, Dwan, Jenkins, Grossman, Boukili, Antonino
2. Nay: none
3. Abstain: none

Motion unanimously passes at 4:58 pm (8:0:0).

2. **Resident Concerns** – Residents promoted to panelists and given opportunity to speak
 - a. Anne Ryan – attended FEMA presentation on heat islands. Concerns about birds at Cobble Hill- abnormal absence of birds. Wondering where to report. Dwan has observed similar situation in his neighborhood, maybe due to cats. Mertl will ask friend who works with birds. Could also ask Mass Audubon.
 - b. Dwan - City has decided not to pursue lawsuit with contractor that removed trees on Beacon Street without proper notification. City solicitor believes City unlikely to gain anything from suit.
 - c. Grossman - GLX bike path herbicide (later on agenda)

3. **Updates from City**

- a. **City Tree Removals**

- i. Miller – new list forthcoming – about 25 trees, mostly dead or dying.
 - ii. Tree hearing on August 31st for a Siberian Elm.

- b. **Private Tree Removal Permit(s) and Exception(s)**

- i. Drayton - some updates to spreadsheet. Updates on various sites (refer to spreadsheet)
 - ii. Just received major mitigation check for 33-inch pine

- c. **Somerville Pollinator Action Plan Advisory Committee updates**

- i. Boukili – last meeting was at the Growing Center. RFP will be advertised next week, and will be posted for 3 weeks.
 - ii. Mertl – will be leaving UFC in September, need to be replaced as representative for SPAP Advisor Committee as well.
 1. Grossman – propose Antonino to be representative.

Roll call vote to have Antonino be UFC representative on SPAP AC (motion – Grossman, second – Boukili):

- ii. Yay: Mertl, Miller, Dwan, Taylor, Jenkins, Grossman, Boukili, Antonino
 - iii. Nay: none
 - iv. Abstain: none

Motion unanimously passes (8:0:0).

4. **Miyawaki Forest Update**

- a. Boukili - Miyawaki forest planned behind high school on Medford. Will involve day of planting with about 40 volunteers – about 500 trees/shrubs in 1400 sq. ft.

space. Will mimic oak-hickory forest. Species list shared via email. [Somerville page.](#)

- b. Grossman - how much engagement with students has there been?
 - i. Taylor- hadn't heard of it until now but would be happy to spread the word.
- c. Boukili - Allison Maurer working on connections for the fall. Would be helpful to have student help with weeding, watering, etc.
- d. Jenkins - potential to incorporate into lesson plans? Should start soon, prepare for teachers. Would like to be involved/spearhead.
- e. Taylor - can make connection with AP Environmental Studies teacher
- f. Antonino - no herbaceous plants – was that deliberate?
 - i. Boukili - yes, easier for maintenance, may be installed once woody plants are established but not sure if feasible given density.
 - ii. Mertl - judging by density of Cambridge Miyawaki herbaceous would be tough.

5. **Urban Forestry related job postings and RFPs**

- a. Tree crew jobs are posted but so far no applicants with CDL. Pay and CDL requirement are Union issues and can't be changed without negotiation.
- b. Question about UFC vacancies for Amy and Murphy (youth and general)
 - i. Boukili – not posted yet, but will work on that

6. **Somerville Avenue Bioswales**

- a. Antonino - bioswales are growing but not necessarily with desirable plants. Asked Brian Postlewaite who to contact within DPW- leverage in contract negotiation- can't coordinate youth crews with DPW for weeding at this time.
- b. Boukili - contacted Somerville Ave project manager - warranty for bioswales recently expired. But outstanding punchlist requiring planting replacement plants, and weeding to do so. Contractor has been weeding this week, replacement plants still pending. Not sure if company will install or pay and have DPW install.
- c. Longer term plan is to put maintenance on contract for green infrastructure maintenance.

7. **Species in City-owned Bump-outs - *Tabled***

- a. Dwan- Beacon Street bumpout plantings - do we have resources to help residents identify weeds? How can we encourage more people to adopt bumpouts, etc., what is formal guidance?
- b. Boukili- Ok for people to adopt spaces but should apply formally so City doesn't mow/weed maintained spaces.
- c. Dwan- Community Gardeners discussing finding more opportunities for residents to garden - bring Community Gardens and bumpout maintenance together?
- d. Boukili – maintenance for these bumpouts may be incorporated in green infrastructure maintenance contract.
 - i. Jenkins - no curb cut - may not be considered green infrastructure for maintenance by Engineering contractor.

- e. Miller - should formally adopt to avoid Highway Dept. weed-whacking maintained spaces?
 - i. Dwan - what's the protocol? Will contact Luisa Oliveira and report back.
- f. Grossman - weeded one of test plots - lots of debris - what do we do with it?
 - i. Miller - Might be able to drop at DPW. Need a good resolution if we are pushing to expand.

8. **UFC structure: Co-chair and Bylaws- Tabled**

9. **Ongoing Work Updates**

a. **Adopt-a-Tree Program**

- i. 40 new Mailchimp contacts July- August
- ii. Mertl updated map, Grossman monitoring Gmail account. Have initiated Whatsapp reminder to water during hot weather.
- iii. Need new subcommittee members. Mertl will remain on subcommittee too.

b. **Outreach**

- i. Upcoming SomerStreets tabling event on 9/7 (Strike up the Bands).
- ii. Buy plants? Antonino suggests asters, goldenrods.
- iii. Somerstreets MonsterMash will be in October.

c. **Species Selection and Planting Protocol**

- i. Grossman shares post-weeding photos from tree well pilot project, happy plants. Need some new stakes, weed earlier next year.

d. **Tree Preservation Ordinance**

- i. Dwan- conversations with better aligning youth membership with school year- regular 3-year membership may not be best fit. More in September.

e. **Somerville's Most Wanted Weeds**

- i. Mertl - Poster translated by Somerville Office of Immigrant Affairs, link for submitting photos also translated.
- ii. Distribute to tree adopters?
 - 1. Yes

f. **GLX Corridor Greening**

- i. Boukili - Properties still under MBTA control/maintenance. Until turned over City can't plant/maintain. Not sure of timeline.
- ii. Antonino - herbicide use? MBTA required to prepare yearly plan. Who do we contact?
 - 1. Boukili – not sure, maybe Viola Agustin?
- iii. Greening of the Green Line committee forming, have had one meeting, looking for members.
- iv. Grossman - thinks spraying was only one day and was targeted. Flags placed.
- v. Dwan - City doesn't want to accept responsibility prematurely until all infrastructure verified.

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

- a. July 20th, 2023

Roll call vote to approve minutes from July meeting (motion – Grossman, second – Dwan):

- v. Yay: Mertl, Miller, Taylor, Dwan, Jenkins, Grossman, Boukili, Antonino
- vi. Nay: none
- vii. Abstain: none

Motion passes at 6:25 pm (8:0:0).

11. **Adjourn:** Meeting adjourned at 6:25 pm