



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

THOMAS GALLIGANI
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Urban Forestry Committee Meeting
SEPTEMBER 19, 2024 4:30PM
MINUTES

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

Meeting notes prepared by Doris Jenkins and Vanessa Boukili

Committee Members in Attendance: Breck Miller (left at 5:57 pm), Calla Taylor, Doris Jenkins, Marion Davis, Michael Hendrix (left at 6:30 pm), Tori Antonino, Vanessa Boukili, Dorothy Suput, Leah Grossman (joined at 4:44 pm)

Associate Members Present: Rob Vandenabeele (joined 5:10), Allison Bernard

Committee Members Absent: none

Others in Attendance: Anne Ryan, Elisha Zhao, Naticia Hutchins, Alexander Taylor, Wilson Otter.ai bot

Call to Order: Antonino called the meeting to order at 4:33 pm.

1. Introductions / Housekeeping

- a. UFC members and associate members introduced themselves.
- b. Attendees were provided an opportunity to introduce themselves.
- c. Housekeeping: Boukili - committee vacancies will be posted soon – deadline for applications will be the end of October. Conservation Commission may also be looking for members.

2. Resident Concerns

- a. Anne Ryan: Cobble Hill has a new manager. Anne is still concerned about the park and trees at 90 Washington. Anne would like to talk about Union Square, in particular the plantings along the 90 Washington parcel. The Washington Street planter had great plantings, it was recently mowed. Presently the plantings in Union Square are not well maintained, some residents are not appreciating the

native plantings being used. There is trash in the planters, and they detract from the natural features. Thinking about planters that are easier to maintain may be beneficial.

- i. Antonino: Confirmed, there are a lot of invasives in the Union Square Bioswales. Last year they were replanted.
 - ii. Boukili: The planting last fall was likely the last for the contract. Engineering is preparing a Somerville GSI maintenance bid, unsure when will go out.
 - iii. Jenkins: This is a common issue, it often falls on community members to take care of because DPWs cannot keep up with the weeding and trash pickup.
 - iv. Antonino: We could have a conversation with DPW to manage these basins? Antonino will email folks at DPW to ask if they would be open to residents volunteering to care for stormwater BMPs.
- b. Hendrix: A neighbor was asking about a 311 request for tree maintenance work on a street tree. How does the City triage those / what can a resident expect when it is coming from a safety concern?
- i. Miller goes out and investigates requests, power lines mostly goes to Eversource. Anything that is in direct contact with buildings, they act quickly on, but otherwise for non-urgent requests there is a longer back-log.
- c. Davis: Does Vanessa have any updates on the dying trees in East Somerville? Some of which are supposed to be replaced?
- i. Boukili: New tree replacements should be happening in the next few weeks. Wagon Wheel did most of their replacements, Leahy Landscaping has a list of 13-15 trees that need to be replaced. If there are any more, submit a 311 request and Vanessa can aim to replace them in the fall or spring.
- d. Antonino: Two Norway Maples were removed on Prospect Hill, people are using the stumps so ideally we could keep them. Also, the irrigation system may be making the tree trunks excessively wet leading to an increase in moss / lichen growth – can you take a look?
- i. Miller: no immediate objections to leaving stumps but may get overruled
 - ii. Boukili: we are be looking to reforest these areas.
 - iii. RE the irrigation, Boukili/Miller will go check
- e. Grossman: As a resident you can look at 311 requests on the tableau dashboard, and it shows basic data
- i. https://data.somervillema.gov/Government-Finance/311-Service-Information-and-Feedback-Requests/4pyi-uqq6/about_data

3. Updates from City

a. City Tree Removals

- i. Miller: No major updates, still working through the last list

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

- i. Boukili shared spreadsheet showing the removals. All straight forward.

c. Fall Plantings

- i. Boukili: On track to meet 50% natives for fall plantings

d. Somerville Pollinator Action Plan Advisory Committee updates

- i. Antonino: The pantry cards show planting recommendations are very thorough. The final draft should be released soon. Very exciting!
- ii. Boukili: the drafts are already being used for planting lists and shared around the community.
- iii. Feedback from the community: plugs from the arbor day celebration are blooming.

4. Urban Forestry Related Job Postings and RFPs

- a. Public Grounds Caretaker and Gardener: it does call for plant identification skills
 - i. Boukili: the previous gardener moved into the tree crew, so the gardener role is now open. Salaries are set by the union.
 - ii. Grossman: As listed on the website, salary is \$880 per week plus benefits
- b. Tree Surgeon – ongoing

5. UFC structure

- a. Antonino: plan was to tackle one per meeting
- b. Grossman: last meeting we covered how are new members recruited. Next question is “who are the members of the committee?”
- c. Dorothy: This one is to get people to know one another, and know who is on the committee. Not necessarily available to the public
- d. Grossman: could be part of onboarding, we could have this be a homework assignment. Send a quick bio and picture
 - i. Hendrix is willing to organize and reach out to folks
 - ii. Boukili will send out the email list to Hendrix
- e. Taylor: This is also a nice way for us to get to know people who have not met in person
- f. Grossman: there is a UFC committee documents folder that is view only, she can share this if folks do not have it.

6. Ongoing Work Updates

- a. Removal Advice - Tree of Heaven and Other Invasives – *see Most Wanted Weeds below*
- b. Champion Tree list – *tabled*
- c. McGrath Hwy Greenspace
 - i. Boukili: MassDOT project, state is serious about moving that project forward – making McGrath a more pedestrian friendly, safe, bike-friendly route. PSUF folks met with LA firm, they are at 25% design

- ii. Antonino: do they have any contracted outreach? If so, it would be great to meet with them
 - 1. Boukili: will look into it
- iii. Alex Taylor: asked about McGrath scope
 - 1. Boukili: this is future phases of work, will be in the next few years
- iv. Davis: McGrath has the opportunity to be a great corridor, to connect Washington Street with Union Square, so getting MassDOT to think about the ecological connectivity would be ideal
 - 1. Boukili: The LA's do appear to be thinking about the human connectivity, but have also been encouraged to think about the pollinators as well as the long-term maintenance
- v. Suput: in the slides from Mass.Gov, it is showing one of the case studies from Boston as an example, and in practice that example is very difficult to cross (Casey Overpass in Boston). We should not be striving for that.
- vi. Alexander Taylor: Interested in helping to coordinate some of guerrilla gardening activity and would like to discuss ideas with the group
 - 1. Lots of members interested in participating to help clean up the areas: Marion, Tori, Anne, Rob.
 - 2. Anne Ryan: East Somerville Streets coordinator would also likely be interested, she helped to clean up the 90 Washington Bus Stop
 - 3. Davis: This could be a great opportunity to coordinate with the Somerville Gardening Club. They are interested in bringing in younger members and want to help bring people together.
 - a. The committee has seen a lot of success with this for both planting and maintenance

d. Most Wanted Weeds

- i. Allie Bernard: would like to revive the Most Wanted Weeds effort and add a piece on how to remove / if there are best times to remove. Would also like the city to adopt the tree of heaven removal guidance – acknowledges the use of herbicide is not preferable but may be necessary. Especially for developers trying to remove them, it is important to hold them responsible to doing it the correct way.
 - 1. Davis: is there a good way to tell the seedlings versus the mother offshoots? This could be helpful for people who need help. People get caught up in removing things the wrong way, that they get too scared to remove things at all. We do not want to run into this here – want to encourage people to help.
 - a. For example, if there are a bunch of them together or if you see a larger tree nearby.
 - 2. Antonino: Lots of photos of baby seedlings, could share if that would be helpful in addressing the concerns.

3. Suput: Audubon has some guidance on mechanical methods to remove tree of heaven. Suput expressed some concerns about promoting the use of pesticides to non-trained professionals - there are a lot of risks, and we often cannot trust people to take significant care to avoid them.
4. Alexander Taylor: at a prior company, worked with micro-injections. Potentially could be an option to reduce the need for spraying pesticides. The company was based in fresh pond and may be able to sell the technology to the City.
5. Grossman: A prior committee member (Jennifer) emailed to share that other organizations in Somerville are working on invasive management solutions as well.
6. Hendrix: It seems to come down to what the committee is comfortable with recommending – specifically recommending this one pesticide. The remainder of the document has a lot of important information and we do not want to hold it up too long to release it to people just because of two sticking points. Could we strike a balance?
7. Vandenabeele: could there be a reference of the Penn state research, and direct people to that resource? Instead of directly recommending a treatment, we could point them to a reputable resource?
8. Boukili: understands that herbicide use can be necessary, is the approach that Allie created simplified / condensed or does it follow the Penn state guidance exactly?
 - a. Bernard: similar, the images were pulled from there and the instructions. Added the shopping list.
9. Alexander Taylor: Magnesium sulfate (Epsom salt) poured into trunk of tree can also kill a tree. Its hygroscopic properties are used to kill stumps but can kill trees as well.
10. Suput: Penn State is not always the first to reach for sustainable approaches
 - a. Bernard: also looked at SUNY – Penn was hit first by spotted lanternfly so they have a lot of research
11. Bernard: If we removed the detailed pesticide application instructions and focused on identification and risks in the handout version, could we move it forward? Create a one page front and back version?
12. Grossman: if we could have a draft by the next meeting, we could approve it prior to the monster mash event.
 - a. Bernard: will aim for that

e. Outreach Events

- i. Monster mash (2-6 pm)
 - 1. 2-4 slot (Set up): Michael Hendrix, potentially Tori / Calla
 - 2. 4-6 slot (clean up): Dorothy Suput, potentially Allie
- f. Adopt-a-Tree Program – *tabled*
- g. Species Selection and Planting Protocol – *tabled*
- h. Greening the Greenline – *tabled*

7. Approval of Minutes from Previous Meetings

- a. August 15th, 2024
 - i. Two edits needed – changing July to August, and swapping a mistaken “native” for intended “non-native”

Roll call vote to approve August Meeting Minutes as amended (motion – Boukili, second – Davis)

- i. Yay: Boukili, Davis, Grossman, Suput, Jenkins, Taylor, Antonino
- ii. Nay: none
- iii. Abstain: none

Motion passes at 6:35 p.m. (7:0:0)

Adjourn: Meeting adjourned at 6:36 pm (motion – Boukili, second – Davis)