



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

THOMAS GALLIGANI
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Urban Forestry Committee Meeting
NOVEMBER 21, 2024 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: Breck Miller, Calla Taylor, Leah Grossman, Marion Davis, Michael Hendrix, Vanessa Boukili, Tori Antonino (joined at 4:43pm)

Associate Members Present: Allison Bernard

Committee Members Absent: Dorothy Suput, Doris Jenkins

Others in Attendance: Hunter Gates, Ruchika Madan, Eilish Brown

Call to Order: Grossman called the meeting to order at 4:35 pm.

1. Introductions / Housekeeping

- a. UFC members and associate members introduced themselves.
- b. Housekeeping: Boukili – quick update on committee vacancies. Received many applications – about 10 general members, and 6-8 youth. Looking for UFC interest in interview participation (Hendrix is interested)

2. Resident Concerns

- a. Hendrix: pin oak ADA issue on Walnut - is there a possibility for a bumpout?
 - i. Boukili - City is aware of the issue and exploring solutions. No intention of removing tree – engineering department should be able to build a bumpout and believe this is in the schedule for next year.
- b. Bernard: In past meeting removal of weeds from tree wells was discussed- what should be done with debris?
 - i. Grossman: not aware of any official answer but anything that could spread via seed in a composting facility, it is best to dispose in garbage bag.

- ii. Davis - could we consider biochar production as sustainable means of disposal?
- iii. Grossman - Grant opportunity?
- iv. Ruchicka Madan - guidelines from the city would be helpful- maybe add to invasive removal guidelines? Would require some coordination with DPW.
- v. Antonino - Need to distinguish between weeds and desirable/intentional plants when weeding tree wells. Green mulch is beneficial, may not be best practice to remove all vegetation.
- vi. Boukili - difficult for city to provide plant guidelines for “acceptable plants” that can live in tree wells. Generally OK with having some plants in tree wells within reason, as long as they aren’t causing complaints/access issues, etc. Generally if someone caring for tree well plants that suggest that they are caring for the tree as well.
- vii. Grossman - could follow up with insights from planting pilot program.

3. Updates from City

a. City Tree Removals

- i. Miller: Two emergency removals (Tremont, Bay State, Washington)- will send list.
- ii. Tufts Street tree hearing last week - one objection, pending mayoral approval of removal of 21 trees. One additional tree that was proposed for removal will be preserved.

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

- i. Boukili went over list of permits issued and exemptions.
- ii. Davis: is there any assurance that future owners won’t remove replacement trees?
 - 1. Boukili - language in ordinance that tree needs to live for 18 months, but gap in protection as tree will not be 8 inches by that time. Potential to revise ordinance. City tries to keep up with planting plans to ensure compliance.
- iii. Antonino - some properties where compliance is doubtful- can we highlight certain properties to follow up on?
 - 1. Boukili - Makes sense, especially where lots of replacement trees are called for

c. Fall Plantings

- i. Boukili - Wagon Wheel still planting and will plant 168 trees if possible before ground freezes. 180 total for season including trees planted by Somerville Tree Crew/PSUF

d. MyRWA Private Property Tree Planting Grant

- i. Boukili - Mystic River Watershed Association (MyRWA) received grant(s) to plant trees on public and private property. So far we planted 6 trees on public property this fall.
- ii. Bernard – one of resident ambassadors working on private property trees - goal of 60 trees. Need to identify 60 locations (yards) for next spring and fall. 3-year grant, could use funds for pruning after first two years. Anyone with potential locations can reach out to her directly.

- iii. Taylor - is there a way to advertise publicly?
 - 1. Boukili – yes! Can contact councilors to put in their newsletters, Somerville Parks Instagram, UF enthusiasts email list, other city newsletters, etc. Can share materials if/when they are available.

e. Somerville Pollinator Action Plan

- i. Antonino - Encourages others to spread information- UFC review pantry cards? Future agenda item for species subcommittee

f. Central Somerville Avenue Planning Process

- i. Antonino- Formerly Somernova- City is taking over process- making others aware of process- possibility of having City rep come to UFC meeting?
- ii. Boukili - can request but not sure who to invite/ for what purpose.
- iii. Antonino - landscape advice, recommendations on civic space layout, etc.
- iv. Possibility to provide guidance on zoning specs that could impact open spaces (building height, green score requirements, etc.)

4. Ongoing Work Updates

a. Outreach

- i. Grossman - presented to Cambridge Committee on Public Planting that reviews public planting projects, etc. Suggests potential for collaboration- opportunity to discuss issues like vegetation in tree wells. Also, their meetings are hybrid. Is there potential for occasional in-person UFC meetings?
 - 1. Boukili - hybrid meetings are challenging (especially for facilitator). Occasional in-person meeting sounds good.
- ii. Grossman - Cambridge master plan has great graphic (flow chart) explaining TPO, UFC could create similar. Boukili agrees this would be great.
- iii. Hendrix and Antonino report on Monster Mash - lots of enthusiasm/questions, some signups, raised SLF awareness.
- iv. Grossman/Antonino will work on table for Winter Farmers Market. Would be helpful to have UFC branded banner/tablecloth. Ruchika suggested something link [this](#).
- v. Grossman - organize outreach strategy sub chat.
- vi. Grossman/Antonino are meeting with Groundwork Somerville tomorrow to discuss collaboration, youth engagement. Students planting trees. Will have more info at next meeting.

b. Invasive Plant Removal Guidance – Tree of Heaven

- i. Bernard - shortened guidance to 2 pages, references to Penn Extension. Guide includes ID, removal guidelines, timeline, lookalikes, Spotted Lanternfly information. Will add UFC header.
- ii. Once it's finalized, can we place in mailboxes?
 - 1. Boukili - can't use mailboxes, but ok to leave on property.
- iii. Antonino - how do we handle guiding people to use herbicide (i.e., hazardous chemicals). Recommendations for PPE? Refer to manufacturer?

- iv. Boukili - take out specific directions and refer to specific resources?
Boukili -will send to legal team for opinion. Should be fine as we don't have a written official policy about herbicide use.
- c. **UFC overview and startup question answering** – *skipped this month*
- d. **Species Selection and Planting Protocol** – *skipped this month*
- e. **Greening the Greenline**
 - i. Antonino - GLX said they would spray slopes with native seed mix, doesn't look like they did it- are they obliged to do it by contract? Can a city representative come to future meeting to discuss?
 - ii. Boukili - will follow up on questions.
 - iii. Davis - desirable plants were mowed.
- f. **Somerville's Most Wanted Weeds** - *skipped this month*
- g. **Urban Forestry Related Job Postings and RFPs** - *skipped this month*

5. Approval of Minutes from Previous Meetings

- a. September 19th, 2024

Roll call vote to approve September Meeting Minutes (motion – Grossman, second – Davis)

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

Motion passes at 6:32 p.m. (7:0:1)

- b. October 17th, 2024 – *tabled*

Adjourn: Meeting adjourned at 6:32 pm (motion – Grossman, second – Boukili)