



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

THOMAS GALLIGANI
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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

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

Meeting notes prepared by Vanessa Boukili

Committee Members in Attendance: Calla Taylor, Dorothy Suput, Leah Grossman, Marion Davis, Michael Hendrix, Vanessa Boukili, Tori Antonino

Associate Members Present: Rob Vandenabeele, Allison Bernard

Committee Members Absent: Breck Miller, Doris Jenkins

Others in Attendance: none

Call to Order: Antonino called the meeting to order at 4:37 pm.

1. Introductions / Housekeeping

- a. UFC members and associate members introduced themselves.
- b. Housekeeping:
 - i. Boukili - No updates on filling committee vacancies but will reach out to applicants to know that we are still working on it.
 - i. Antonino – letter from Mayor about new reappointments process. Mayor is committed to transparency and inclusion. If you’ve served 2 or more terms, you can continue to be on committee, but you need to reapply. And preference will go to new applicants. Antonino supportive of this idea.
 1. Will apply to all committees/commissions?
 - a. Boukili – yes, I believe so.
 2. Grossman – need to streamline onboarding process to make sure people can get up to speed and feel useful faster.

3. Hendrix – Yes. Have done a lot of onboarding before and would be happy to support an onboarding process. Can put together info packet/ meet them/ etc.

2. Resident Concerns

- a. Antonino – tree on Warren Ave. with a branch parallel with sidewalk, needs pruning. 28 Warren Ave. Will put in a 311 request.
- b. Antonino – met with Groundwork Somerville – Isabella reached out to do a cleanup on April 16th for pollinator gardens around the high school. Service project for National Honors Society. (Taylor is the secretary!). Ecological gardening techniques. Flexible on dates. Tori will be in touch.
- c. Grossman - Avon St Community Garden – end of Oct “clean up” using methods from Pollinator Action Plan – clearing path and putting leaves in planting beds and creating sculptures from twigs.

3. Updates from City

a. City Tree Removals

- i. No new removals to report.

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

- ii. Boukili reviewed the list of permits issued and exemptions.
- iii. Discussed a few locations of note: 1006 Broadway, Catalpa on Powderhouse, Beech tree on Bonair.
- iv. Bernard - can we share Tree of Heaven document with folks cutting down Ailanthus?
 1. Boukili – Sure. Can add “DRAFT” for now.
- v. Discussed Beech trees and beech leaf disease.
 1. Vandenabeele – extra protections on threatened trees like beech?
 2. <https://www.fs.usda.gov/inside-fs/delivering-mission/sustain/beechn-leaf-disease-emerging-forest-threat-eastern-us>
- vi. Antonino – when is the next Tree Preservation Ordinance discussion going to happen?
 1. Some internal discussions about the UFC recommendations are in the works. Hoping to submit all the recommendations to the council early next year.
- vii. Grossman shared R.O.O.T. (“Recognizing Our Oldest Trees”) trees nomination form and map. R.O.O.T. was a collaboration between UFC and artists. Not currently active but could be reinvigorated.
 1. Vandenabeele – would be useful to see what Cambridge is doing in this field.
 2. Grossman – good idea to add to future Somerville/Cambridge meeting

c. Fall Plantings

- i. Boukili - 168 trees planted with Wagon Wheel – finished last Friday. Plus 12 trees were planted with City Staff, so 180 total trees this season.

- ii. Tree grants – Groundwork Somerville and MyWRA have funding to work with city to plant trees on public property.
 - i. Will end up planting more trees in Somerville with these grants?
 - ii. Boukili – at least as many as usual, maybe more.

4. Ongoing Work Updates

a. Outreach

- i. Winter Farmers Market Tabling – Grossman and Antonino will look into it.
- ii. Grossman – other winter activities need to get ready for Spring - bolster materials, get a table cloth, etc. Subcommittee will meet in new year to brainstorm tabling activities.
 - i. Suput would like to join this meeting.
 - ii. Antonino has outreach bag.
- iii. Grossman - brainstorming flowchart for Tree Preservation Ordinance. Shared a flowchart that Cambridge has.
- iv. Bernard – who and how to outreach to?
 - i. Boukili – UF enthusiasts, Parks Instagram, newsletters, etc. Can submit to SOIA for translation and outreach. Boukili can do all of these. Would be helpful to have blurb and materials.
 - ii. Perhaps some Whatsapp groups.
 - iii. Davis – Somerville growing center Instagram, various community groups.
 - iv. Bernard will share blurb to share around and compile list of all the sources.

b. Invasive Plant Removal Guidance – Tree of Heaven

- i. Bernard and Grossman updated the document with the recommendations from last time. Some reformatting and reorganizing, minor content changes.
- ii. Davis and Boukili suggested a few more formatting tweaks. Davis offered to work on layout a bit. No content suggestions made.

Role call vote to approve text/content of Tree of Heaven document

(motion - Boukili motion, second – Davis)

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

Motion passes unanimously @ 6:08 p.m.

c. UFC overview and startup question answering

- i. *Question 10: Is there anything the committee is obligated to do each year?*

- i. Brought info over from Tree Preservation Ordinance Section 12-105

d. Species Selection and Planting Protocol – *tabled*

e. Greening the Greenline

- i. Boukili provided a quick update. The handoff from MBTA to the city to maintain this area has not yet happened. Unsure of timeline but expected to happen relatively soon.
- ii. The City told the GLX team about the seed not taking and the need to reseed. We assume that GLX reseeded after that.
- iii. Any next greening steps will need to wait until the City oversees the property. Whatever does happen at that point will need to be limited to something that DPW can actually maintain. There are a lot of areas with really steep slopes that are hard to maintain. There are also restrictions with how high the vegetation can be. Notably, there are restrictions on putting trees in a lot of the areas because of the distance to the tracks. There are rules from MBTA that we need to follow.
- iv. We all want more and want it greener, but we don't yet know how to get there in a manageable way. PSUF folks are starting to think of ideas and opportunities for art and planting. Not focusing on how to implement yet, just where there are options. The soil is likely contaminated and dirty, so there needs to be processes in place that everyone follows to stay safe.

f. Somerville's Most Wanted Weeds

- i. Taylor - need more photos. Can look for stock photos, etc.
- ii. Check photos in i-Naturalist; may be creative commons.

g. Urban Forestry Related Job Postings and RFPs

- i. Jobs – nothing new relevant
- ii. RFP – Horticultural contract is out. Reviewed it quickly, here: <https://www.somervillema.gov/departments/finance/procurement-and-contracting-services>

5. Approval of Minutes from Previous Meetings

- a. October 17th, 2024
- b. November 21st, 2024

Roll call vote to approve meeting minutes from October and November 2024
(motion – Hendrix, second – Davis)

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

Motion passes at 6:35 p.m. (6:0:1)

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