



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

THOMAS GALLIGANI
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Urban Forestry Committee Meeting
FEBRUARY 20, 2025 4:30PM
MINUTES

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

Meeting notes prepared by Dorothy Suput and Vanessa Boukili

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

Associate Members Present: Rob Vandenabeele

Committee Members Absent: Tree Warden, Michael Hendrix

Others in Attendance: Michael Fager, Theodore Gys, Crystal Huff

Call to Order: Antonino called the meeting to order at 4:34 pm.

1. Introductions / Housekeeping

- a. UFC members and associate members introduced themselves.
- b. Housekeeping: Interviews for the committee are continuing.
- c. Co-chair nominations
 - i. Tori would like to step down as a co-chair and seeks a replacement. Co-chairs chair meetings, sign memos and participate in committee interviews.
 - ii. Calla is interested but would step down in the fall.
 - iii. No decision was made and others are encouraged to consider.

2. Resident Concerns

- a. Micheal Fager: Signed up to learn more about the tree give-a-way and received an invitation for a site visit, but wondered if we could get a tree listing first.
 - i. Vanessa put together a list and will share with Michael. Ambassadors will do the site visits and assess spot to help decide on the best species.



- b. Antonino & Vandenabeele - May be a rule to ban SGARs (second generation anti-coagulants rodenticide) on public and private property vs. existing policy discouraging it. Arlington is the leader on banning SGARs and then Belmont. Work is also going on in Cambridge to rule against its use. Getting the State to Act is moving forward (House docket 4206: <https://malegislature.gov/Bills/192/HD4206.Html>). MassAudubon is a resource to find out more and Arlington has a 'Save our Wildlife' page and Somerville does as well. The local ordinance is for city wide property. The home rule petition would allow it to be prohibited on private property as well. Local legislatures are signing/signed on the proposed State Act. Councilors Burnley and Wilson along with Save Somerville Wildlife are the point people in the City.

3. Updates from City

- a. **City Tree Removals:** Breck stepped down from role with city. There are no new removals. A large tree was removed at 16 Glendale Ave.
 - Q: How did the tree hearing go?
 - R: Held a hearing to discuss a potential removal of a tree near the Edgerly that is in the way of a future handicapped parking space, and a few tree removals related to the 299 Broadway property, with one removal on Broadway and one on Sewall. No objections received, all removals will move forward.
- b. **Private Tree Removal Permit(s) and Exception(s):** 29 Central St on church property – tree removed was hazardous and so didn't need a permit. They may have intentions of replacing them because they reached out to Boukili about green score a while back. Suggested Boukili follow up, if she can.
- c. **Spring Tree Planting:** Bid is out. Worked on species list with SSAPP and added details on priorities and modified set up so bidders see the preferred species list multiple times. The city received 4 bids and Wagon Wheel was the lowest bidder and likely to get the award. The species provided were similar to last year, but Boukili will check to see if they can nudge up the number of priorities trees.
 - Q: If Wagon Wheel doesn't have the diversity of native species desired can a certain percentage be worked into future contracts? Or, can we ask Wagon Wheel to go beyond what do?
 - R: Bid says natives have to be at least 50%, but bids are missing some of the priority trees we want to use such as Nyssa. Boukili will check with them to see if they can adjust the mix. Boukili will share the finalized plant list.

4. Ongoing Work Updates

a. Outreach

- i. Outreach committee is meeting to provide talking points and other ideas to spruce up the table and support tablers.
- ii. Grossman is working on a wonderful tablecloth and seeking feedback on it. May get two table clothes and two runners to cover all situations. If runner need a table cloth under it. Drapey longer ones need laundry. Name

needs to fit on the smaller tablecloth. We get \$1k per year for outreach – plants, supplies, etc.

- iii. Winter Farmers' Market: It was hard because no plans in terms of what we are talking about. We had so much and didn't know what to do with it. So many people were happy to talk to us. What's the thing to draw people in when we don't have plants? QR codes were very popular as well as the Tree of Heaven flier. Seeds as giveaway worked well. Need to provide for own table at the farmer's market.
- iv. Tweaks on Tree of Heaven flier is in progress, but Vanessa will post.

b. UFC overview and startup question answering

- i. Answered: What state and municipal rules or regulations does the UFC need to consider in the course of its business either about trees, code of conduct, or something else?
 - i. Committee member rules
 - a. Conflict of Interest
 - b. Special Municipal employees training (all ethics trainings that are required by standard city employees)
 - c. Conflict of interest training (ethical training)
 - d. Legal protection as a city employee (while conducting "city business")
 - e. [City Committee Code of Conduct](#)
 - f. Anti-bias training
 - ii. Open Meeting Law
 - iii. State Law Re: Trees -- Chapter 87 | Public shade trees -- requires the public tree hearings
 - iv. Native Planting Ordinance
 - v. [Tree Preservation Ordinance](#)

c. Species Selection and Planting Protocol

- i. Met and brainstormed about native species we could include in contractor lists. Discussed Nyssa, Carpinus (muscle wood), gray birch, yellow birch, Hackberry, Bald Cypress, American Linden, Sourwood, Pin Cherry, and more. Many species were already on the list, but not much availability.
- ii. Could we see more of Eastern Red Cedar? One at Morse Kelly in 2017 and about 12 Ft tall now.

d. Somerville's Most Wanted Weeds

- i. Antonino, Taylor, Grossman meeting to work on this in preparation for outreach.

e. Urban Forestry Related Job Postings and RFPs

- i. Reviewed list of job postings on City website.
- ii. Horticultural Contract went out and the low bidder was Essex Landscaping.

5. Approval of Minutes from Previous Meetings

- a. Added not using AI taking minutes to UFC overview and start up questions.
- b. December 19th, 2024

Roll call vote to approve meeting minutes from December 2024 (motion – Grossman, second – Suput)

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

Motion unanimously approved at 6:07 p.m. (6:0:0).

- c. January 16th, 2025

Roll call vote to approve meeting minutes from January 2025 (motion – Grossman, second – Taylor)

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

Motion unanimously approved at 6:07 p.m. (6:0:0).

Adjourn: Meeting adjourned at 6:10 pm (motion – Grossman, second – Boukili)