



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

THOMAS GALLIGANI  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

**Urban Forestry Committee Meeting**

**Thursday, June 12, 2025**  
**MINUTES**

**Pursuant to Chapter 2 of the Acts of 2025, this meeting was held remotely**

*Meeting notes prepared by Michael Hendrix and Vanessa Boukili*

**Committee Members in Attendance:** Tori Antonino, Marion Davis, Doris Jenkins, Michael Hendrix, Joelle Renstrom, Vanessa Boukili, Malik Drayton (Tree Warden designee, joined at 4:41 pm), Luca Choly (joined at 5:10 pm)

**Associate Members Present:** none

**Committee Members Absent:** Leah Grossman, Dorothy Suput, Calla Taylor

**Others in Attendance:** Anne Ryan, Rebecca Haley

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

**1. Introductions / Housekeeping**

- a. Co-Chair nominations
  - i. None at this time. Taylor offered to chair the August meeting. She plans for that to be her last meeting. The committee will discuss youth member search upon her departure.

**2. Resident Concerns**

- a. Antonino mentioned a white oak on prospect hill (that replaced the elm) “is failing.” She wonders if we can do something else, like plant 5 acorns, likes the idea of planting trees together as friends.

- b. Antonino shared that Bio4Climate is hosting a Northeast Miniforest Summit. This will take place virtually on July 24 & 25. Link for details & registration: [https://miniforests.bio4climate.org/?blm\\_aid=1263446017](https://miniforests.bio4climate.org/?blm_aid=1263446017)
- c. Anne Ryan asked about changes to the Tree Preservation Ordinance. And ongoing efforts to preserve the berm and the trees at Cobble hill, especially given “the 10-degree difference” in the summer temperature between Washington Street and Cobble Hill.
  - Boukili – Tree Preservation Ordinance details to be discussed later in meeting (it is an agenda item)
  - Antonino added that the 90 Washington project fell through, so there may be another development project there at some point.
  - Anne Ryan feels it’s important to pay close attention to any upcoming development, and if it’s sold to a developer. Currently, the city owns land; Anne worries Cobble Hill residents will have less voice if the city sells the land.
  - Antonino flagged a recent meeting relevant to this, and suggested her and Anne reach out to Councilor Ewen-Campen

### **3. Updates from City**

#### **a. City Tree Removals**

- i. Boukili - Nothing other than emergency removals.
- ii. Boukili reviewed certain removals, and mentioned certain trees were felled by the wind, and a couple incidents involving vehicles, including a big Linden tree involved in a hit and run that knocked off a big branch and the remaining tree was a hazard.

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

- i. Malik Drayton reviewed the permits. Similar to last month’s meeting- city has received 21 permit applications for the year, tracking at about the usual rate.

#### **c. Spring Tree Planting**

- i. The city planted 51 in parks with mystic river watershed association earlier this year
- ii. The city is also planting 125 additional trees with planting contractor. About 40-50 are already in the ground.

#### **d. Tree Preservation Ordinance Amendments**

- i. The amendments were approved. The major approved amendments included:
  - Aligned UFC youth member term with academic year
  - Added tree protection requirements for construction, both for public and private trees.

- Changed private tree removal permit process. The waiver for owner-occupied properties has been reduced from 100% to 90%, so owner-occupants now need to replant a portion of the caliper inches of tree(s) removed, or pay into the tree fund.

**e. Zoning Ordinance Greenscore Amendment**

- i. Updated the definition of large trees to 30+ tall, and 20+ *ft wide* at maturity, so that columnar trees can no longer count as “large trees” because they don’t provide the same ecosystem benefits.

<https://www.somervillezoning.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2019/08/10-Development-Standards.pdf>

**4. Ongoing Work Updates**

**a. Outreach**

Marion mentioned the most common questions UFC gets when tabling and discussed current materials used when tabling.

- i. Somerville’s Arbor Day

This will be held on Thursday, June 26th, 5-7pm, will include tabling and plant give away.

**b. UFC Overview and Startup question answering**

The committee discussed why pollinator habitat is such a big part of UFC’s conversations

- i. Pollinators are an essential part of ecosystems
- ii. UFC is concerned with biodiversity. A biodiverse, healthy ecosystem depends heavily on pollinators. Choices the city makes about trees have a huge impact on the ecosystem.
- iii. Marion is noticing a large dropoff this year in terms of bees in her yard.

**c. Species Selection and Planting Protocol**

- i. Discussed best practices and next steps for this subcommittee.

**d. Somerville’s Most Wanted Weeds**

- i. No updates. UFC has handouts ready for black swallow wort and tree of heaven.

**5. Urban Forestry Related Job Postings and RFPs**

Reviewed postings on the Somerville website.

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

- a. May 15<sup>th</sup>, 2025
- b. Feb 20<sup>th</sup>, 2025
- c. March 20<sup>th</sup>, 2025

**Roll call vote to approve all three meeting minutes** (motion – Boukili, second – Jenkins)

- i. Yay: Jenkins, Renstrom, Choly, Davis, Drayton, Boukili, Antonino, Hendrix
- ii. Nay: none
- iii. Abstain: none

Motion unanimously approved at 6:19 p.m. (8:0:0).

**Adjourn:** Meeting adjourned at 6:20 pm (Motion – Davis, second – Hendrix)