



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

THOMAS GALLIGANI
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Urban Forestry Committee Meeting

Thursday, July 17, 2025
MINUTES

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

Meeting notes prepared by Vanessa Boukili

Committee Members in Attendance: Doris Jenkins (left at 5:30), Joelle Renstrom, Leah Grossman, Luca Choly, Marion Davis, Michael Hendrix, Tori Antonino, David Jackson, Vanessa Boukili

Associate Members Present: Rob Vandenabeele

Committee Members Absent: Dorothy Suput, Calla Taylor

Others in Attendance: Alyssa, Kelly Simpson, Suzanne Warner, Malik Drayton

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

1. Introductions / Housekeeping

- a. UFC members and Associate members introduced themselves.
 - i. Suput could not attend today, but is stepping down as of this meeting. She sent a message expressing her gratitude to the committee. She plans to remain involved with outreach and tagging trees, among other things.
- b. Co-Chair nominations
 - i. Hendrix nominated to replace Antonino as co-chair starting in September

Roll call vote to approve Hendrix as co-chair (motion – Grossman, second – Boukili)

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

Motion unanimously approved at 4:50 p.m. (9:0:0).

2. Resident Concerns

- a. Residents invited to introduce themselves.
- b. Antonino described experiment burying pussywillow trunks in yard to try to grow a hedge.

3. Updates from City

a. City Tree Removals

- i. Jackson shared a list of upcoming removals of dead or hazardous trees:
 - Kenwood/ Billingham - Large decaying Silver Maple
 - Behind 12 Alpine – tree of heaven
 - Tree of heaven removal guidance was shared
 - 49 Moore St – Linden
 - Perry Park – mostly dead
 - Lincoln Park – behind skate park
 - 162 Summer St – Red Maple ~8”
 - 70 Perkins St – Norway Maple
 - Ed Leathers Park – Balsam Poplar horizontal crack

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

- i. Drayton reviewed the permits and exemptions. Have received 26 permit applications so far this year. Recent permits/exemptions:
 - 65 Boston St, undersized Norway Maple
 - 137 / 139 Sycamore St – healthy Norway Spruce
 - 60-62 Line St
 - This property involves the removal of many trees, almost all Norway Maple. Committee discussed the implications of this, and suggestions for how to get more trees in area.

4. Ongoing Work Updates

a. Outreach

- i. Somerville Arbor Day report – many UFC members present. West Branch Library was a good location, with lots of foot traffic. Many good conversations were had. Plant giveaway was successful, as was the Arbor Day bingo game.
- ii. General Outreach update: Grossman, Suput, and Davis organized tabling supplies. Set up a sample table for ease of implementation.
 - Two main tote bags with supplies. A few binders too.
 - Primary tabling bag. Distilled to most important messaging.
 - Backup bag:

- backup resource binder: info about specific things.
 - Kids activities
 - Still to do: need to work on a tabling pitch. 1-pager of messaging. Also need to create a resource page document for table
 - Next event(s): Union square farmers market. Somerstreets – August/Sept (not posted yet)
 - iii. Boukili shared update about website updates. Confirmed with mayor's office and clerks office that cannot create own website. But a member can take the lead of suggesting updates to the current website and can work with Boukili and web team to make those updates.
- b. UFC Overview and Startup question answering
- The committee answered the following question – *“How does the work of the committee change, if at all, by the seasons?”*
- i. Seasonal Change
 1. Outreach events shift though the seasons to align with somerstreets events
 2. Keeping tabs on work that happens in the city (consistent throughout the year)
 3. Disseminate information to residents
 4. More discussion about tree work during the growing season
 5. Tree Planting - spring + fall activity
 6. Tree adoption after planting
 7. Watering - summer focused activity + times of drought
 8. Project dependent work (project review - happens anytime though the year)
 9. Incorporating new members to the committee (sporadic, but not season-dependent)
 - ii. Era-change
 1. Work is dependent upon the work and interests of committee members and what they bring to the committee.
 2. Public sentiment changes - hearing new perspectives in the “Resident Concerns” portion of the meeting.
- c. Species Selection and Planting Protocol (SSAPP)
- i. Tough, hardy, native plants – list has been updated.
 - ii. Need a new project.
- d. Somerville's Most Wanted Weeds
- i. No updates. Grossman to reach out to Taylor.
- e. Additional Questions/ Updates:
- i. Hendrix – Status of updated tree inventory

1. Boukili gave a summary of the city's 3 different tree inventories (2009, 2018, and 2024). The 2024 one is still being processed (there have been many steps), but should be done soon.
- ii. Renstrom – re: subcommittees, join existing ones vs creating new ones?
 1. Grossman – Both are good. Happy to have folks join existing committees. Can also create new - want people to follow their interests. Subcommittees are evolving and open. All very flexible.
 2. Vandenabeele – tree walk tomorrow at Somerville Community Growing Center. That could be an idea for a subcommittee.

5. Urban Forestry Related Job Postings and RFPs

- a. Reviewed postings on the Somerville website; did not see anything particularly relevant.
- b. Reviewed how to find UFC handouts, which are posted on the Urban Forestry Committee website.
 - i. Native species handout: <https://s3.amazonaws.com/somervillema-live/s3fs-public/urban-forestry-native-species-somerville.pdf>.
- c. Briefly discussed the Somerville Pollinator Action Plan (SPAP), which can be found on the SomerVoice page: <https://voice.somervillema.gov/somerville-pollinator-action-plan>).
 - i. Vandenabeele created a Monarch waystation using the SPAP. May be of interest for SSAPP committee too: Monarch Watch: <https://www.monarchwatch.org/>. Also Doug Tallamy program: <https://homegrownnationalpark.org/>

6. Approval of Minutes from Previous Meetings

- a. June 12th, 2025

Roll call vote to approve June meeting minutes (motion – Boukili, second – Hendrix)

- iv. Yay: Renstrom, Davis, Choly, Hendrix, Antonino, Boukili
- v. Nay: none
- vi. Abstain: Jackson, Grossman

Motion approved at 6:24 p.m. (6:0:2).

Adjourn: Meeting adjourned at 6:25 pm (Motion – Grossman, second – Boukili)