



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

THOMAS GALLIGANI
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Urban Forestry Committee Meeting

Thursday, January 15, 2026
MINUTES

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

Meeting notes prepared by Luca Choly and Vanessa Boukili

Committee Members in Attendance: David Jackson, Doris Jenkins, Joelle Renstrom, Leah Grossman, Luca Choly, Marion Davis (arrived at 4:39), Michael Hendrix, Suzanne Warner, Tori Antonino (arrived at 4:35), Vanessa Boukili

Associate Members Present: Rob Vandenabeele, Allison Bernard

Committee Members Absent: none

Others in Attendance: Jon Link

Call to Order: Grossman called the meeting to order at 4:33 pm.

1. Introductions / Housekeeping

- a. UFC Members invited to introduce themselves.

2. Resident Concerns

- a. Grossman: Tree work in the city is encouraging, one tree near the intersection of Central St. and Summer St. was pruned but needs to be removed.
 - i. Jackson: That tree is on the removal list

3. Updates from City

- a. **City Tree Removals**

- i. Jackson listed the approved City Tree Removals – two new ones. Stanley Tree contractor is working on removals this week and next (all of which have been presented here before). About 50 trees.
- ii. Boukili: Jackson and others are working on stump removals as well. They are very time-consuming.
 - 1. Antonino: Any alternative methods for stump grinding? Can we leave stumps and snags?
 - a. In many places this is not suitable but will keep it in mind.
 - 2. Davis: Stumps are providing habitat for rats.
 - a. Jackson mentioned he does not get calls for rats so can't speak to this.

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

- i. Boukili listed 4 new private tree removal permits.
- ii. Grossman asked about permit exemptions.
 - 1. Boukili: There are no new exceptions on the list but will check with Malik and report back at the next meeting.

4. Ongoing Work Updates

- a. UFC Recommendations for Mayor Jake Wilson
 - i. Antonino says that the subgroup for forming recommendations had not met. She will set up a meeting.
 - ii. Discussion with the wider group later in the meeting ensued about this topic
 - iii. Hendrix – large development projects that cut down trees - proactive notification. Folks should also be sure to inform PSUF department. Also more cross-committee collaboration (potential overlap with UDC, Planning, Zoning).
 - iv. City resources – need more staff to maintain trees. Program gap.
 - 1. Challenge is less funding related, and more hiring related.
 - 2. Davis – potential to expand capacity through volunteers?
 - a. Jackson – volunteers are great. There could be some union pushback. And much of the work we need to do requires insurance and is not suitable for volunteers. Surely there are some things for which volunteers would be useful.
 - b. Hendrix – perhaps we can think more about hands on opportunities for outreach and community engagement.
 - c. Grossman – creating friends groups to care for parks or groups of trees would be great. These are non-governmental organizations, typically set up by non-profit with more experience to manage volunteers.
 - 3. Antonino – need a horticulturalist position. Need to elevate Rachel. Need a more ecological focus.

- v. Vandenabeele – saw a report on Cambridge tree planting mortality data. Would be interesting to look at mortality in Somerville too. Will dig more into data and share at future meeting.
- b. Outreach
 - i. Grossman: UFC could table at the Winter Farmers Market at the Armory. Listed possible dates for tabling and asked what members would be interested in tabling on each of those dates. Dates included February 7, 21, 28, March 7, 21, 28.
 - c. UFC Overview and Startup question answering
 - i. Members answered a question “What is the short history of the committee? Is there a list of former committee members.”
 - Boukili: The committee was established as part of Tree Preservation Ordinance (TPO) in 2019; the ordinance and the committee were co-formed through advocacy of Chris Dwan and a city council member, taking inspiration from other local cities. Worked with city staff (including Boukili) to ensure it was useful and enforceable. Other advocates weighed in as well, including Antonino.
 - ii. Grossman: Background on the UFC Overview and Startup document - it was created as an internal document for the committee to help new members onboard more easily. Can modify and add as needed or desired.
 - 1. Bernard: Something to include - members that are new to tabling should know what questions to ask and what to talk about with the public, to make sure outreach is more consistent.
 - d. Species Selection and Planting Protocol (SSAPP)
 - i. Grossman: This group hasn’t met recently.
 - e. Somerville’s Most Wanted Weeds
 - i. Grossman to set up meeting about the poster with the sub-group.
 - f. Grossman encouraged members to form new sub-committees.
 - i. Bernard asked if the agenda is the same for each meeting
 - 1. Boukili - There is a standard set of items that are usually on the agenda, and different items are added as needed or desired.
 - 2. Bernard suggested updating the UFC website as a potential item for the agenda. Perhaps an annual item. Also, could shift items that get pushed from one meeting to the top of the agenda at the next meeting?
 - 3. Davis - Would be strategic in how UFC runs to help city think of ways to make Somerville greener. How to increase public engagement in tree planting and native species planning. More interconnections with tree planting and other things, like heat

resilience. Neighborhood walks to more deeply assess tree situation. Can do an in-person meeting.

4. Boukili - another idea for more hands-on help would be doing warranty checks for recently planted trees (within 2 years). More of an individual task, but would be very helpful. Maybe even update tree inventory while there.
5. Bernard – Would also be fun to get together to prune. Young trees that may need a light pruning.
 - a. Boukili – would love to learn from your experience in different programs. Perhaps a training we could set up.
 - b. In Newton – training is shadowing. Perhaps a YouTube video.
 - c. Will aim to do this in March.

5. Urban Forestry Related Job Postings and RFPs

- a. Jobs – nothing new – still need two tree crew members

6. Approval of Minutes from Previous Meetings

- a. December 18th, 2025

Roll call to approve December meeting minutes (motion – Boukili, second, – Grossman)

- a. Yay: Jackson, Jenkins, Renstrom, Grossman, Choly, Davis, Hendrix, Warner, Boukili, Antonino
- b. Nay: none
- c. Abstain: none

Motion unanimously approved at 6:28 p.m. (10:0:0).

7. Adjourn: Meeting adjourned at 6:30 p.m. (Motion – Hendrix, second – Grossman)