



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
MAYOR'S OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
JACOB D. WILSON
MAYOR

THOMAS F. GALLIGANI, JR.
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Urban Forestry Committee Meeting

Thursday, February 19, 2026

MINUTES

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

Meeting notes prepared by Suzanne Warner and Vanessa Boukili

Committee Members in Attendance: David Jackson, Doris Jenkins (left at 5:06 p.m.), Joelle Renstrom, Leah Grossman, Michael Hendrix, Suzanne Warner, Vanessa Boukili, Tori Antonino (joined 4:39), Marion Davis (joined 4:39)

Associate Members Present: Rob Vandenabeele

Committee Members Absent: Luca Choly

Others in Attendance: Anne Ryan, Jaclyn Pillitteri

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

1. Introductions / Housekeeping

- a. Boukili: no further applications for UFC youth member; asking the Mayor's office to move forward with one applicant
- b. Jenkins: stepping down from the committee due to moving out of the city

2. Resident Concerns

- a. Anne Ryan – working with Miles Byrne, VP at Corcoran Jennison, on letter drafting for 90 Washington St Green Space
 - i. Letter drafted to housing/environmental nonprofit
 - ii. Letter drafted to Mayor about raising money to buy green space at 90 Washington St to remain city property
 - iii. How can this area be protected from future development?

- iv. Ask: is there a local nonprofit that has an interest in preserving the environment? Interested in finding local nonprofits that would be interested in working on this project.
- v. Is the Somerville Redevelopment Authority open to changing the package to protect the Green Space?
- vi. Boukili sent link for redevelopment partner proposal:
<https://www.somervillema.gov/news/city-somerville-seeks-development-partner-90-washington-street-mixed-use-project>

3. Updates from City

a. Native Plant Ordinance 2025 report (Boukili)

- i. Report on percentage of natives planted as required in ordinance. Will be emailed and posted online.
- ii. Document Timeline: FY 2025 July 1 2024- June 30 2025
- iii. Includes plantings completed by OSPCD PSUF and Engineering Department
- iv. Street trees have a 50% native requirement, Bioswales have a 50% native requirement.
- v. 12088 plants planted in city parks, 88.67% native
- vi. 2431 plants planted in streetscapes, 97.9% native
- vii. 547 plants planted in bioswales, 100% native
- viii. 75 plants planted in Other areas, 100% native
- ix. 388 street trees planted, 73.2% native
- x. Comparison to 2024 numbers: fewer plants planted in FY2024; higher native percentage generally across property types
- xi. Antonino, Boukili: discussion of species selection for “unicorn” tree species that are native and small in stature
 - 1. Antonino suggestions: hoptree (*Ptelea trifoliata*), sourwood (*Oxydendrum arboreum*), male pawpaw
 - 2. Boukili: looking to source both of these plants (hoptree and sourwood) at 1-2” caliper
 - 3. Grossman: sourwood can be sensitive; suggestion to use in parks
 - 4. Grossman species suggestion: single stem American Smokebush (*Cotinus obovatus*)
 - 5. Discussion of native conifers:
 - a. Generally being used in parks; form not generally good for street trees
- xii. Discussion of shade quality:
 - 1. Shade is a priority in terms of planting larger trees
 - 2. Non-native small trees like Cherries provide shade
 - 3. Antonino suggests Sassafras, Magnolia for smaller stature dense native foliage
 - 4. Boukili: The city’s planting contract encourages use of native trees

b. City Tree Removals (Jackson)

- i. 72 Powder House Blvd: Norway Maple
 - 1. Small amount of life, large pocket of decay in the center

- ii. Volunteer Callery pear on Community Path near Thorndike
 - 1. 5” DBH, Dead
- iii. Working through backlog of approved removals, but paused since snowfall

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

- i. Exemptions: Boukili informed UFC of several exempted trees due to species, condition, risk:
 - 1. 31 Houghton St – violation with mitigation required
 - 2. 94 Grant St – City is waiting on information
 - 3. 259 Lowell St – 10 trees proposed for removal / 23 proposed replanting
 - 4. 66 Oxford St – City is waiting on information
 - 5. 53 Chandler St – waiver eligible for removal of 7 Norway maples and a redbud
 - 6. 59 Pearson Rd – initial TPO violation
 - 7. 24 Webster Ave – affordable housing project with all onsite trees being removed; application listed as incomplete.
- ii. 2025 Permit Applications:
 - 1. 60 Albion St – TPO violation
 - 2. 14 Elmwood
 - 3. 185 Beacon St
 - 4. 45 Cedar St – 4 trees being removed; plans need to be resubmitted
 - 5. 26 Fellsway West – TPO violation
 - 6. 9 Summit St
 - 7. 69 Prospect St
 - 8. 88 Powder House Blvd – mitigation for removal of 1 tree
 - 9. 25 School St – mitigation for removal of 1 tree
- iii. 2026 Permit Applications
 - 1. 82 Beacon St – removal of additional trees that are not hazardous
 - 2. 7 Bedford St – mitigation for removal of 1 tree
 - 3. 84 Avon St – updated plans required, mitigation for removal of some trees
 - 4. 20 Vernon St – TPO violation
 - 5. 86 Pearl St – proposed removal of tree infringing on neighbor’s property
 - 6. 204 Washington St – TPO violation; new owner will pay mitigation
- iv. Discussion
 - 1. Antonino asked about statute of limitations on tree removals without a permit, and how long do people have to plant trees under the ordinance?
 - 2. Per the ordinance, trees must be planted within 18 months and must be alive for 18 months after planting.

4. Cambridge Young Tree Mortality Data (Vandenabeele)

- a. Summary of mortality data for trees planted in the last two years in Cambridge compiled by city interns

- b. Vandenabeele further broke down by native (MA) trees and non-native trees. Native status based on GoBotany website.
- c. Looking into biodiversity grant to look at the potential of doing something similar in Somerville
- d. Sweetgums, Willow Oaks, Black Tupelos, Scarlet Oak, Carolina Silverbell have some of the highest mortality rates
- e. Combination of street trees and park trees
- f. Boukili: potential intern in the planning department this summer could develop a similar analysis in Somerville
- g. Vandenabeele to find out if this data is publicly available

5. Ongoing Work Updates

- a. UFC Recommendations for Mayor Jake Wilson
 - i. Antonino, Vandenabeele, Davis, and Bernard have been working on document.
 - ii. Davis: organized letter thematically, added note about outreach materials and suggestion for a Tree Survival & Canopy Health Report
 - iii. Antonino: suggesting food forest language
 - iv. Pushing back against fruiting trees planting due to rat concerns: addressing trash concerns is the way to address rats
 - v. Renstrom: suggestion to shorten the letter for readability
 - vi. Ryan: suggestion to add summary of main issues, suggestion to add relevant city departments to include
 - vii. Vandenabeele: go back to earlier version of shorter document
 - viii. Davis: concerned about Boukili perspective on letter for city perspectives
 - ix. Antonino: suggestion to turn a letter into a meeting with the Mayor to present details
 - x. Boukili: suggestion to have a smaller meeting about actionable goals/improvements for city programs; send another draft before the next meeting for comments
- b. Outreach
 - i. Winter Farmer's Market
 - 1. Grossman and Warner to table Feb 28th at Winter Farmer's Market
 - 2. Davis potentially available for 1 hr of each shift
 - 3. Antonino potentially available as a backup
 - ii. Boukili: Potential to participate in Sustainaville Week event May 8th "party at a park" - Friday
 - 1. Suggestion to celebrate arbor day at this event, can source bare root trees for planting event
 - 2. Antonino: in order to maximize resident participation, suggest event on a weekend day
 - 3. Ryan: suggestion to include students from local schools
 - 4. Boukili to send email to UFC to gauge interest/participation
- c. UFC Overview and Startup question answering – *skipped this month*

- d. Species Selection and Planting Protocol (SSAPP) – *skipped this month*
- e. Somerville’s Most Wanted Weeds
 - i. Grossman to update poster to InDesign format

6. Urban Forestry Related Job Postings and RFPs

- a. Bid for tree planting
- b. 90 Washington St RFP
- c. Tree surgeon job posting

7. Approval of Minutes from Previous Meetings

- a. January 15th, 2025

Roll call to approve January meeting minutes (motion – Grossman, second, – Hendrix)

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

Motion unanimously approved at 6:38 p.m. (8:0:0).

8. Adjourn: Meeting adjourned at 6:38 p.m. (Motion – Boukili, second – Grossman)