



**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, May 21, 2026**

**MINUTES**

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

*Meeting notes prepared by Marion Davis and Vanessa Boukili*

**Committee Members in Attendance:** Tori Antonino, Vanessa Boukili, Luca Choly, Marion Davis, Michael Hendrix, David Jackson, Joelle Renstrom

**Associate Members Present:** Allison Bernard

**Committee Members Absent:** Suzanne Warner, 3 vacant positions, Rob Vanderbeebe (associate member)

**Others in Attendance:** Anne Ryan, Aaron Towers, Tyler Haas, Barbie Duckworth

**Call to Order:** Hendrix called the meeting to order at 4:37 pm.

**1. Introductions / Housekeeping**

- a. Urban Forestry Committee member introductions
- b. Co-chair nomination(s) and selection
  - i. Davis nominated Suzanne Warner, who was not present but had expressed interest. There were no other nominations.

**Roll call vote to approve Suzanne Warner as the new UFC co-chair** (motion – Boukili, second, – Hendrix)

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

Motion unanimously approved at 4:49 p.m. (7:0:0).

- c. Filling vacancies (housekeeping item introduced by Boukili)
  - i. Boukili noted that, in line with the updated City Charter, the mayor's office is conducting a review of all City boards and commissions, which is expected to last for up to a year, so the UFC should not add any members in the interim, unless there are challenges reaching a quorum (at least 6 members). Antonino agreed not to step down as she had intended, and Hendrix said that especially in the summer, he is still concerned about ensuring a quorum. The UFC will monitor the situation and, if needed to ensure a quorum, may ask to fill at least one of the vacancies.

## **2. Resident Concerns**

- a. Hendrix noted that Councilor Ben Wheeler had responded to the UFC's letter about 90 Washington St. and expressed a willingness to do a walk-through of the property. Anne S. Ryan, a resident of the Cobble Hill Apartments, said she had taken the Councilor on a walk-through that day (May 21).
- b. Antonino expressed concerns about the blue columbines in the Prospect Hill "wedding nook." She said she has planted several native Canadian columbines and has seen Duskywing butterfly caterpillars on them, whereas she has never seen them on non-native columbines. Now she has seen pink columbines there and is concerned. She asked for the blue columbines to be removed and replaced with native columbines. Boukili recommended speaking with the Public Space Planner who added extra plants in the nook to fill it in, adding that since this is meant to be a pollinator garden, it may make sense to replace the plants with natives.
- c. Davis asked whether in the future, the discussion of city tree removals should be more narrowly focused on the Tree Warden's greatest concerns and/or trends, with a full report sent in advance so that members and attendees can review it and raise questions as desired. Ryan said she has learned a great deal about trees in Somerville and about Jackson's work through the monthly reviews—though this does not mean it needs to be tree-by-tree. Antonino said she likes getting into the details as currently done.

## **3. Updates from City**

- a. **City Tree Removals (Jackson)**
  - i. Jackson presented 2 months' worth of tree removal information. In discussing a removal at 5 Greenville St. of a tree that is leaning heavily into the street, Bernard asked when a tilting tree is considered a problem. Jackson said a key factor is if the root that held it firmly in place appears to be compromised, as in this case (due to sidewalk repair). Boukili noted that the City's smart tree inventory includes the leaning angle of the tree when it was first recorded.
  - ii. The planned removal of a tree on Morrison Avenue led to a discussion of a forthcoming project for flood control that will require significant digging, with likely impacts on other trees. Boukili said the project is still under development, but it will include bump-outs around some trees, and also

incorporate new trees wherever possible—likely leaving tree wells for Boukili to fill.

- iii. Davis asked whether the city is gaining or losing more trees overall, in terms of caliper inches. Boukili said the City plants more trees than are lost, but this likely is not equivalent in caliper inches—but dead or sick trees also have fewer benefits than healthy new trees. Boukili said her team plants at least 350 per year, but this does not include trees added through Parks projects, private developers, or some streetscape projects. Since 2021, tree additions have ranged from ~450 to 800 per year, so in terms of benefits, the city seems to be gaining ground. Asked about the longevity of new plantings, Boukili said not yet, but an intern this summer is likely to be assigned to assess young tree mortality.
- iv. Antonino asked whether spaces where trees are removed are slated for replacement trees, which Boukili confirmed. Antonino also asked about leaving some snags, including with pine trees to be removed on the Community Path; Jackson said some will be left.
- v. Bernard expressed concern about the proliferation of invasive knotweed on the Community Path and what will be done to address it. Boukili said nothing is currently done. Davis noted that Arlington now has an invasive plant brigade, and said Somerville should mobilize citizens in a similar way. Bernard and Hendrix expressed support for having volunteers work on this. Boukili noted that a maintenance agreement on the new section of the path is still being negotiated, so this cannot be touched yet, but the older section could be done. Antonino said to her knowledge, knotweed can only be controlled by herbicide; she also noted that Green & Open Somerville has called for an invasive species czar at City Hall, and the Department of Public Works might also be able to do something. This might not preclude volunteer efforts, however. Jackson said he has had limited success with solarizing knotweed, covering it with plastic to overheat it. Antonino proposed creating a subcommittee to research knotweed removal, which will include herself, Bernard, Davis, and Anne Ryan.

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

- i. Boukili provided a quick overview of pending requests, but noted that all are still pending and more information is still needed.

**c. Spring 2026 Tree Planting (Boukili)**

- i. Boukili said Wagon Wheel will start planting 173 trees after Memorial Day, with sites for 75 already chosen. Native species include 3 Kentucky coffeetrees, several oaks and red maples, and serviceberries, among others.

**4. Ongoing Work Updates**

- a. UFC Recommendations for Mayor Jake Wilson - *tabled*

- b. Outreach
  - i. Arbor Day 2026 report
    - 1. Boukili and Davis said the event had been very successful, with lots of interest from the community. Boukili asked about Carnival on June 7, and it was decided that the UFC would not table due to not enough members being available.
- c. UFC Overview and Startup question answering - *tabled*
- d. Species Selection and Planting Protocol (SSAPP) – *remove from future agendas*
- e. Somerville’s Most Wanted Weeds
  - i. Boukili noted that the poster was provisionally approved at the May 7 meeting, and asked committee members to review it one final time before it is printed on posterboard.

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

- a. Two UFC-related jobs are currently open: Superintendent of Grounds and one Tree Surgeon (to join 2 existing ones). No RFPs at this time appear to be related to the UFC.

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

- a. March 19, 2026
- b. April 16, 2026 (this was postponed to the next meeting)
- c. May 7, 2026

**Roll call vote to approve March and May meeting minutes** (motion – Davis, second – Boukili)

- d. Yay: Hendrix, Davis, Boukili, Antonino, Renstrom, Choly, Jackson
- e. Nay: none
- f. Abstain: Choly

Motion approved at 6:25 p.m. (7:0:0).

**7. Adjourn:** Meeting adjourned at 6:28 p.m. (Motion – Boukili, second – Hendrix)