



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, July 09, 2026

MINUTES

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

Meeting notes prepared by David Jackson and Vanessa Boukili

Committee Members in Attendance: Suzanne Warner, Michael Hendrix, Marion Davis, Joelle Renstrom, David Jackson, Vanessa Boukili

Associate Members Present: Allison Bernard

Committee Members Absent: Tori Antonino, Luca Choly, 3 vacant positions, Rob Vanderbeeke (associate member)

Others in Attendance: Audrey Holland, Gwen Wilcox, Kira Tipton

Call to Order: Warner called the meeting to order at 4:36 pm.

1. Introductions / Housekeeping

- a. Urban Forestry Committee member introductions
- b. Housekeeping – Boukili gave short update about current vacancies. Posting is still on hold until we are in dire need (i.e., until we are unable to make quorum).

2. Resident Concerns

- a. *Davis:* Concerned about bioswales on Summer St. and Washington St/Somerville Ave being full of weeds.
 - i. *Boukili:* under contract to have plants and green space cared for (Somerville Ave specific). Summer St. is under warranty and maintenance contract. Contractor (MON) unresponsive and not doing a great job. Tufts

St. update: Still under construction. TBD (Not Boukili's contract, so not as familiar with all the specs.)

- ii. *Davis*: Questions about contractor usage: should we approach the mayor with a proposal for in-house work instead of contractors? Concerned contractors are just Somerville's go-to move for maintenance.
 - 1. *Boukili*: Great long-term solution but would be hard to implement. Highlights that there have been positive results with contractors and the difficulties with in-house staffing.
 - 2. *Bernard*: Opened up discussion around community engagement and incentivizing community members to help with trees, weeding, etc. (NY snow removal example). Discussion around options for implementation of this suggestion, actual cost of watering trees, getting volunteers, etc.

3. Updates from City

a. City Tree Removals (Jackson)

- i. **39 Tennyson** – 15.5” Red maple- dead, **29 Tennyson** – 14 inch Red maple - mostly dead, **12 Cottage Ave** – 21” Linden – significant die back, hazardous, **76 Cedar St** – 3” Cherry – mostly dead, **1 Webster St** – 17 inch Red maple - dead, **3 Adrian St** – 15” Norway maple- mostly dead, **89 Pearson Ave** – 16” Norway maple – mostly dead, **351 Summer St** – 13” London planetree - dead, **224 Highland Ave** – 6” pear tree- mostly dead, **627 Somerville Ave** (behind) – 5” hornbeam - dead, **365 Somerville Ave** – 5” Red maple – dead, **17 Lowden Ave** – 12” Norway maple – mostly dead, **6 Morrison Ave** (on Community path) – 13” elm tree - dead, **Nathan Tufts Park**: 4 tree removals through Parks Tree Health Program. All were assessed by 3+ arborists. 33” Red oak, 35” Red oak, 36” Beech tree, 10” Red maple. All were dying back and/or had large sections of decay and were hazardous to public safety. Beech Leaf Disease was also a factor on the beech tree. **34 Bartlett St** – 34” Linden – Storm damage, public safety hazard. **11 Boston Ave** – 20” Linden – Storm damage, public safety hazard.

Questions: *Bernard* - Planting question: How high should you plant? Planting with root flare a little exposed is best practice.

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

- i. Permit applications: 16 new addresses. **29 Main st** (issued), **31 Vinal** (withdrawn), **38 Governor Winthrop** (pending), **90 Gordon** (pending), **5 Wigglesworth** (issued), **41 Brastow** (issued), **34 Pickney** (approved/waiver), **3 Whitman** (issued/waiver), **17 Stanford Terrace**

(pending), **22 Harrison** (issued), **Clarendon Hill Project** (will return to discuss when ready), **30 Dickenson** (issued/waiver), **299 Summer St** (issued/waiver), **44 White St** (issued/paid).

- ii. **Questions:** *Bernard:* Is this just an FYI process? *Boukili:* Yes – proceeds to review process of private removals as described in Tree Preservation Ordinance.
- iii. *Bernard:* Discussion around tracking canopy loss, fines and violations.

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

- i. Completed: 176 trees planted (yay!). Planted through June and ran out of time for the contractor to do replacement trees this spring; those will be done this fall. % of native trees over 50%, but struggling with the success of young native trees.

4. Ongoing Work Updates

a. UFC Recommendations for Mayor Jake Wilson

- i. Draft is not quite ready. Davis swears a solemn oath to make sure this is on the August agenda. *Bernard:* invites “gig economy idea” to be added.

b. Outreach

- i. *Warner:* Subcommittee members - who is on the Outreach Committee still? No definitive committee members identified. Refreshing of Outreach Committee to happen to discuss new ideas and involve all who want to be involved.

ii. UFC Overview and Startup question answering

- 1. Almost done with document!

- 2. Answered two questions in document:

- a. **R: What are the obligations of an uncompensated City employee?**

- i. Must take conflict of interest training (annually)
 - ii. Rules about declarations of Conflict of Interest
 - iii. Must show up to meetings (to ensure quorum)

- b. **S: What are Open Meeting law requirements?**

- i. Must have at least a quorum of people at each meeting. Quorum is more than ½ of positions.
 - ii. Every meeting must be publicly accessible.
 - iii. Cannot meet without notifying the public (48-hour notice).

c. Somerville’s Most Wanted Weeds

- i. *Boukili:* Pictures may be blurry when we blow up to poster size. Suggests resubmitting pictures for better poster quality.

1. *Renstrom*: to source from Creative Commons. Also to submit pictures of easily findable weeds. Photo of Norway maple seedling to be updated so that people can ID what to remove (not encouraging large tree removal).
- ii. *Bernard*: suggests including a hyperlink to Tree of Heaven guidance on page where Most Wanted Weeds poster will be. Request Tree of Heaven guidance printed pages to spread throughout community.

5. Urban Forestry Related Job Postings and RFPs

- a. On call RFP's: Planning and Design Services
- b. Job postings: Superintendent of Grounds, Public Works. Also still have a job opening to fill the third member of the Somerville arborist team. Hiring standards have been made more accessible (fewer credentials needed).

6. Approval of Minutes from Previous Meetings

- a. April 16th, 2026
- b. June 18th, 2026

Roll call vote to approve both April and June meeting minutes together

(motion – Davis, second – Hendrix)

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

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

**Warner* chaired perfectly.

7. Adjourn: Meeting adjourned at 6:20 p.m. (Motion – Boukili, second – Hendrix)