



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
URBAN FORESTRY COMMITTEE
JOSEPH A. CURTATONE
MAYOR

Urban Forestry Committee Meeting
THURSDAY, JANUARY 28, 2021 4:30PM
MINUTES

Due to COVID-19 virus containment efforts, this meeting was held remotely.

A recording of the meeting can be accessed here:

<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/recording/3088115158689371148>

Meeting notes prepared by Vanessa Boukili

Committee Members in attendance: Althea Northcross (Co-Chair), Chris Dwan (Co-Chair), Amy Mertl, Conor Guidarelli, Jennifer Clifford, Henry Ayanna, Tori Antonino, Malik Drayton (ex-officio for Tree Warden), Vanessa Boukili (ex-officio)

Committee Members absent: none

Others in Attendance: Austin Brower, Jiin Choi, Karen Molloy, Leah Grossman, Mathias Neuber, Renee Scott, Steven J, Viola Augustin (City of Somerville), Wig Zamore, Eileen Faulkner, Melissa McWhinney

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

1. Introductions / Housekeeping

2. GLX update

- a. Viola Augustin presented overview of the new portions of the Community Path next to GLX. Overview includes general topography, access points, and slopes.
- b. Some areas will have planted slopes next to path. Portions will have guardrail and retaining walls. Other portions are directly adjacent to railroad, sandwiched between MBTA access point.
- c. MBTA maintains that trees cannot be planted in this area because of proximity to railroad, and concern about trees falling on railroad. It is MBTA land.
- d. Antonino – can plant understory trees or large shrubs? Will use erosion control cloth?
 - i. Augustin - plans are not very detailed. They show erosion control seed mix throughout – and will put in erosion control cloth or other measures in field as needed. Do not seem to be willing to negotiate on trees (even understory).

- e. Guidarelli – what distance does MBTA require trees be away from tracks? Are there some locations that are far enough away to put small trees?
 - i. Agustin: we are asking the same questions to MBTA, but are not getting detailed answers yet.
- f. Merti – were all trees that were removed on GLX land, or some on City land too?
 - i. Agustin: some were on City land, and even private property. This is being pointed out in negotiations and should be able to get some trees back, although not necessarily in same places if too close to rails.
- g. Antonino – can eliminate use of herbicides and do hand weeding/ mowing instead? Would hope to put some vines on retaining wall.
 - i. Agustin: Unsure about pesticide use along railroad, and unlikely that the City can have any say. But important to make sure planting in City maintained land is not affected by what they do along railroad. Railroad will not want vines growing down retaining wall.

3. Arbor Day Planning - ROOT collaboration (Renee Scott)

- a. ROOT - Recognizing Our Oldest Trees. Photo exhibit of “silvan senior” trees in Somerville. Currently being shown at gallery at CVS in Magoon Square.
- b. Mission to draw attention to oldest trees in town.
- c. UFC to be involved in moving the show to another location and having it be part of Arbor Day Celebrations?
- d. Deb Pacini & Northcross created a google map. Can turn into self-guided walking tour that could be launched Arbor Day week.
- e. Dwan – open door to not just largest trees, but other “important” trees.
- f. Northcross – will share spreadsheet of trees currently on the list
- g. Boukili – would be good to put out a call to ask people to apply to have their tree (or a tree they know of) be added to “important tree” list.
 - h. Subcommittee was formed, including: Northcross, Clifford, Dwan

4. Resident Concerns

- a. Mathias Neuber – question about backyard trees. Backyard trees in neighborhood (Teele Square area) have been taken down (by permit), and has noticed trend of removing trees and not replacing. Are there any programs in the works to help foster people to put trees back?
 - i. Dwan - Incentivize & help property owners to plant and maintain trees would be great. Difficult to have a City program for this that would give money to certain property owners. Non-city programs exist, like growing center giving away seedlings. UFC could help encourage planting by making planting standards, etc., available.
 - ii. Renee Scott – local organizations including Green and Open Somerville and Groundwork Somerville are working on private tree planting program. Applying for grants now.
 - iii. Melissa McWhinney - another city program that doesn't involve \$\$ could be helpful.

- iv. Guidarelli – information about suitable replacement trees could accompany tree removal permits to make replanting more tenable.
- b. Guidarelli – Craigie St near Summer – planting spaces outside of Morse Kelly. Why no plants?
 - i. Not ideal location for plants. Vehicular traffic, salt, etc. Plants did not survive.
 - ii. Antonino – some seeds from Morse-Kelly – black-eyed susans have done well.
 - iii. Guidarelli – good test site for hardy urban plants.
 - iv. Boukili – if want to have it be official site, need to apply for permission, and put up signs.
- c. Zamore – are GLX project agreements with GLX team or the T? Maintenance plans have to be submitted to DEP or state annually. Who in charge of filings?

5. *Mission of the Committee – tabled*

6. Updates from City

- a. City Tree Removals
 - i. Across from 61 Boston St – hit by truck
 - ii. Additional removals from previous lists will be done in February.
- b. Private Tree Removal Permit(s) and Exception(s)
 - i. Permits:
 - 1. 5 permits (6 trees) – all have owner-occupied waivers
 - ii. Exemptions:
 - 1. 11 addresses (18 trees) received exemptions for dead/hazardous and/or invasive species.
 - iii. Possible to share list of permits/ exemptions with UFC?
 - 1. Boukili & Drayton to discuss offline.
- c. Urban Forest Management Plan
 - i. Edits and graphic design ongoing.
 - ii. Comments from Antonino received.
 - iii. Antonino would like to make additional changes to Appendix document, particularly with regards to species selection.
- d. Butterfly Bush memo
 - i. Memo sent out. PSUF confirmed butterfly bush was on planting plans. Memo is being taken into consideration. Use Massachusetts Prohibited Plant List as guide for invasive species.
 - ii. Antonino – would be prudent to take climate change into account when considering species to plant.
 - iii. Planting & Standards Group to work with Massachusetts Prohibited Plant List group?

7. Arbor Day Planning

- a. DCR 5th grader poster contest
 - i. Clifford presented summary of contest. “Trees Out Our Window” theme this year.

- ii. Letter to send to PTA discussed. Idea is to get information out to teachers, teachers send to children and they create posters. Children submit photographs to UFC to judge. One from each classroom is sent to DCR for state-wide contest.
- iii. Potential for UFC donate supplies for children to make posters was discussed.
- iv. Letter to PTA was reviewed, and a few minor edits were suggested.
- v. Vote to approve and send out letter to PTA as amended:
 - 1. Yay: Mertl, Dwan, Guidarelli, Ayana, Clifford, Boukili, Antonino, Northcross
 - 2. Nay: None
 - 3. Abstain: Drayton
- b. Adopt-a-Tree program
 - i. Adoptive parents for most of 2019 plantings. Would like to make resource for these “parents” to help gather information on tree health. Would be helpful for checking on replacement needs. Photo-based resource - simplified tree health assessment.
 - 1. Mertl and Guidarelli to help Northcross with resource guide.
 - ii. Will need help getting tags laminated later.

8. TreeKeeper inventory

- a. Inventory is becoming out of date. How to help keep it up to date? Money for consultants to refresh? Adoptive volunteers?
- b. Boukili explained how updates are currently made – mostly by hand – one tree at a time. Have spreadsheets with information, but need to input data directly into TreeKeeper. May be able to figure out a streamlined way with consultants.
- c. Antonino – would like “native status” in the inventory. Boukili – that should be possible to add.

9. Ongoing Work Updates

- a. UFC letter for Urban Forest Management Plan
 - i. Reviewed letter prepared by Clifford and Antonino. A few edits were discussed.
 - ii. Vote to approve letter as amended:
 - 1. Yay: Mertl, Dwan, Guidarelli, Ayana, Clifford, Drayton, Boukili, Antonino, Northcross
 - 2. Nay: None
 - 3. Abstain: None
- b. Funding / Fundraising - *tabled*
- c. Tree Species Selection and Planting Standards- *tabled*
- d. Outreach- *tabled*

10. Approval of Minutes from Previous Meetings - *tabled*

- a. November 19th, 2020
- b. December 17th, 2020

Adjourn

Motion to adjourn meeting was unanimously approved at 6:38 pm [motion: Mertl, second: Clifford]

