



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

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 17, 2019, 6:00 PM  
MINUTES

MEETING AT SOMERVILLE CITY HALL  
93 HIGHLAND AVENUE  
3<sup>RD</sup> FLOOR CONFERENCE ROOM

*Meeting notes prepared by Jennifer Clifford and Vanessa Boukili*

**Committee Members in attendance:** Tori Antonino, Vanessa Boukili (Senior Urban Forestry and Landscape Planner), Jennifer Clifford, Chris Dwan (chair), Sharon Komarow, Amy Mertl (left at 8pm), Althea Northcross (left at 8pm), Sarah Sweeting

**Committee Members absent:** Tree Warden

**Others in Attendance:** Malik Drayton (Urban Forestry and Landscape Planner), Luisa Oliveira (Senior Planner, Landscape Design), Kim Schmidt (Growing Center, urban agriculture), Eric Weisman (SomerStat Analyst)

Chris Dwan called meeting to order at 6:10 PM.

### 1. Introductions / Housekeeping

- a. Intros all around; Sarah Sweeting was welcomed as a confirmed youth member of the committee
- b. Committee update: Alden Johnson has resigned his position on the committee. There are currently two positions open, including that of one more youth member, and someone with expertise in urban forestry. Advertising will go out in support of this search. There is a candidate from the previous application process whose expertise in urban forestry may be re-visited.
- c. Membership: Steve MacEachern (former Tree Warden) moved to position of Acting DPW Commissioner. The position of Tree Warden will transition to someone else. Chris Dwan asked if this position could be open to outside person (as a new position, rather than given to an individual currently employed by the city). Vanessa Boukili responded that it is difficult at this time of year because of fiscal year finances, so this probably would not happen right now. Need request to city council for midterm option for money/personnel for this. Budget gets decided at end June.

Some discussion on the date of the next meeting, which will be held Thursday, November 21, 2019, as scheduled.

## 2. Resident Concerns

No residents were present. Jennifer Clifford discussed a concern/report of unhealthy-looking Hedge maples on Beacon St. reported by a resident who commutes through that area. The trees were evaluated by Vanessa Boukili, Jennifer Clifford, and Malik Drayton. Samples sent to UMass Extension returned a diagnosis of anthracnose, a common disease of maple. No further action is required at this time, but all agreed to keep a close watch on these trees this coming spring.

Discussion on how to best report tree concerns returned three options: call 311, send email to [trees@somervillema.gov](mailto:trees@somervillema.gov), or report online at [www.somervillema.gov/311](http://www.somervillema.gov/311).

Tori Antonino brought up resident questions and concerns over Lincoln Park area flooding that occurs during and after storms. Was there any contribution due to the trees that were cut on Beacon St.? Should there be more planting in the areas that are prone to flooding? In spring, one tree was under water that stayed until June. Tori pointed out that a hardscape solution was implemented, but that softscape should also be done if there is a window of opportunity for the committee to intervene. Tori Antonino and Amy Mertl will look into this.

Chris Dwan expressed interest in pursuing the role of trees in mitigating flooding based on climate change concerns. Sharon Komarow asked how this contribution is quantified. Amy Mertl wondered if the tree wells were paved? Vanessa Boukili mentioned that Beacon Street now has more trees and larger tree wells than there were before, so storm absorption may be better than before, but this is difficult to correlate.

## 3. Mission of the Committee

- a. Monthly iteration of expressing what committee is doing and why are we doing it. Sarah Sweeting inquired as to the extent of the committee's power with city. Vanessa Boukili explained that it currently plays an advisory role, providing recommendations and making proposals. Chris Dwan added that the committee can comment on the planning phase for city facilities and city campuses as well as those in permitting process (especially true for long-term planning).
- b. Sharon Komarow, Amy Mertl, and Althea Northcross: how will we fit into the planning process? Do we have a process to do our own review of items involving trees that happen in the city? Vanessa Boukili suggested that we can have a city personnel come to talk to us about specific items or projects. Also, some committees have large processes with representatives from other committees, so perhaps we get involved in big topics by sending representatives, which helps the UFC to be better informed. Chris Dwan suggested interacting with the two council committees regarding open spaces and public utilities/public works. Amy Mertl offered to keep track of committees where these opportunities may come up for comment by UFC.
- c. What role does city play at Tufts? None, as it is considered private property. Tori Antonino may have a contact to reach out to for campus design there.
- d. Chris Dwan cautioned about creating city bodies in the context of framing ordinance. If we do good job, our responsibilities may increase.

- e. Tori Antonino suggested a visit from the architecture and landscape planners involved in Somerville High School campus design. Vanessa Boukili noted that Cortney Kirk (Public Open Space Planner) is joining our committee meeting in November to discuss this.
- f. Also, Somerville has salamanders! Amy Mertl has seen them at her house.

#### 4. Quick Updates

- a. Prospect Hill Elm: Site visit with task force was in July, 2019. Vanessa Boukili and Jennifer Clifford collected soil and tree samples. Results from UMass Extension returned a positive identification for *Ophiostoma novo-ulmi*, the fungal pathogen that causes Dutch Elm Disease (DED). Soil in pretty good shape; is lacking  $\text{Ca}^{2+}$ . Treatment plan for DED was implemented right away: pruned back symptomatic branches (by Barrett tree). Injections with biostimulant in soil to fertilize and with broad spectrum fungicide to treat for DED (and for previously diagnosed canker). 3-year treatment plan. The city is doing everything it can, but this tree may not survive.
- b. City Tree Plantings / Removals
  - i. Plantings: Spring planting was completed (since last committee meeting in July). Fall planting of ~150 trees will continue through mid-November. A total of 340 trees were tagged for FY 2019 planting. Still working on final Fall list of where trees are being planted and species, which Vanessa will provide when completed. Discussed painted “T” on street, which means a planting site. In response to resident push-back where street trees are not wanted (in front of a resident), Vanessa mentioned sidewalk is ultimately city property, but can try to switch locations when the city knows in advance. If planting is in process, it will continue. Chris Dwan suggested including information in the ResiStat newsletter to let folks know what the “T” is for, where trees will be planted, what is being planted, and what actions can be taken by residents.
    - 1) Tori Antonino expressed wish to make recommendations and check list available prior to ordering so that committee can comment on proposed. Stress on native plants is preferred, to the best extent possible. Vanessa Boukili provided the list, which includes various native species. Chris Dwan pointed out that the Urban Forest Management Plan probably has language for this in there and that the current list this is, so far, the best effort. Important to keep this on agenda for discussion and room to be heard, but let us stay on track and ahead of plantings.
    - 2) Most agreed that the list decision has to be tempered with right species for each specific location and community quality of life. Althea Northcross noted that starting the process of tree selection with suppliers and city residents is important. Sarah Sweeting offered that urban forestry is about maintaining quality of city life. Sharon Komarow brought up questions of sourcing: where do trees come from and does this go out to bid next year? Vanessa Boukili answered that trees come from a nursery in Newark, NJ, the contract does go out to bid each year, and trees received can depend on availability.
  - ii. Removals: City still working though back log of removals. Emails are sent to UFC for emergency removals. Update on 58 Willow Ave, where a tree was hit by truck and became a

hazard, so needed to be removed. Vanessa will send updated list for removals. The previous night's storm had significant damage: 40-50 311 requests were submitted (limbs, trees, etc.).

- c. Private Tree Removal Permits and Exceptions:
  - i. Permitting for removal of private trees is up and running. Malik Drayton spearheading this process. There have been 7 requests, 2 approved. An additional 9 trees that are dead/dying and are outside the permit system. To evaluate tree for removal, residents can send photos, documentation from arborists, and/or staff may check in field. Vanessa noted that requests for invasive species not subject to permit.
  - ii. Reminder that we are making progress. We are all glad to be here. Thank you Vanessa, for all of your effort.
- d. Clarendon Hill Trees: Re-doing housing development in this location. Some trees are in the way where buildings will be. The plan is to save as many as possible, and plant as many as possible. Property is owned by SHA. There will be a presentation next month on this topic.
- e. Review of Outreach: Althea Northcross reported on the informal commitment made in September on the umbrella of the outreach plan, 'Know Your Somerville Trees'. This included citizen science campaigns, grant and other funding opportunities to support education/outreach efforts, developing heat maps for Somerville to identify regions that need plantings, and fact sheets for help identifying and learning about the tree species. Jennifer Clifford shared a draft of a fact sheet. Sarah Sweeting will facilitate printing at the high school and can help find individuals who can help with translating these documents (Spanish, Portuguese, and Creole for a start). Amy Mertl reached out to Tufts to foster a partnership with those doing air quality surveys; they showed strong interest.
- f. Tree Preservation Ordinance Updates: prompted by anticipation of Vanessa Boukili parental leave and need to maintain quorum. Council will consider amendment to ordinance to allow a delegate to attend as representative.

## 5. Urban Forest Management Plan

Draft plan written by Davey Tree

Luisa Oliveira facilitated a group discussion and brainstorming/ envisioning exercise with Urban Forestry Committee to clarify priorities and goals for the Urban Forest Management Plan. Kim Schmidt observed and took notes, as she will help with graphic design of final plan, and will create new graphics to highlight significant features.

UFC members agreed to review specific chapters for this plan with deadline of October 31, 2019, with an aim to have a complete draft ready in November, 2019.

## 6. Approval of Minutes from Previous Meetings

- a. July 18th, 2019 – *tabled until next meeting*

**Adjourn:** Motion to adjourn meeting unanimously approved at 8:38 pm [motion – Boukili, second – Komorow, vote: 6:0:0].

