



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS  
*OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT*  
JOSEPH A. CURTATONE  
MAYOR

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## Urban Forestry Committee Meeting Minutes

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

*PLEASE JOIN THIS MEETING FROM YOUR COMPUTER, TABLET OR SMARTPHONE:*

**REGISTRATION URL**

<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/7021173797551729678>

**WEBINAR ID**

820-078-803

*You can also dial in using your phone:*

*United States: +1 (213) 929-4212*

*Access Code: 301-676-932*

**Thursday, April 02<sup>nd</sup>, 2020, 6:00 p.m.**

DRAFT Minutes taken by Jennifer Clifford.

Meeting was Video recorded for City records.

**Committee members in attendance:** Tori Antonino, Henry Ayanna (youth member), Jennifer Clifford, Malik Drayton (Urban Forestry and Landscape Planner), Chris Dwan (co-chair), Conor Guidarelli, Amy Mertl, Althea Northcross (co-chair)

**Committee members absent:** Sharon Kamarow, Mark Lawhorne (Tree Warden), Sarah Sweeting (youth member)

**Others in attendance:** None. Those interested in participating were provided the opportunity and the Webinar link to register and call in.

Chris Dwan called the meeting to order at 6:14 PM and introduced our first virtual meeting in light of Covid-19 pandemic. He expressed thanks to the mayor, city council, and city staff for their hard work and rapid response in this difficult time. We took the time to acknowledge and express gratitude for each other.

## 1. Introductions / Housekeeping

Introductions from each member in attendance were made.

## 2. Resident Concerns

There were no residents in attendance. Members of the committee had follow-up concerns regarding previous inquiries from residents.

- a. Tori A. requested clarification as to where to find minutes and agenda items for UFC meetings, as well as info on the UFC and its members. Suggested to get this on web site as a way to provide information to, and connect with, the public. Malik D. offered to work with webmaster to get information about meetings and the structure of the committee onto the city of Somerville website. UFC can be a strong resource and we should make conversations available so that we can help, which is what we want as a committee.
- b. Jennifer C. was contacted by a resident who had concern with neighbor's trees – a maple on 33 Partridge Ave (this resident brought up the issue at the previous UFC meeting). UFC cannot advise on this matter since it is a private tree. Since the reason that tree remains is unknown, it was speculated that perhaps it is cost prohibitive. If so, as a shared asset (with city), is there anything in place in the city for opportunity to reduce cost of tree removal on private property? Encourage residents to work out issues with neighbors; this has been an effective strategy in the past. Because of shared risk, perhaps cost of removal can be shared by neighbors. Conor G. question: can someone call in a hazard on private property? Malik D. answer: can certainly do this for public tree, but unsure how clear the situation is for private property. The question remained if the city can be called upon to remove and replace? Chris D. pointed out that is difficult for the city to provide benefit that is equitable, and suggested moving this to the fundraising discussion where a possible solution may be available.
- c. Monitoring of the Hedge Maples that line Beacon St. that were a cause for resident concern last fall is ongoing.
- d. Two dead red maples at 30 Park St. that were reported are on the removal list.
- e. Tori A. brought up a concern for a resident with weed ordinance complaints because of “weeds” growing in the yard. Resident was fined because neighbor complained of the look. What is status of ordinances for this? Who should she contact to be sure she doesn't continued to be fined for choosing to have perennials in the garden. Chris D. advised approaching city councilor with this and it is likely to be enforced on complaint basis.

*General reminder: contact 311 or [trees@somervillema.gov](mailto:trees@somervillema.gov) to report tree problems.*

## 3. Mission of the Committee

Addressing the questions of ‘Why are we involved?’ and ‘What is our obligation as a committee?’ To this end, Althea N. is creating a flexible mission statement. She proposes that the goals of the UFMP, along with the outcome of feedback from this plan, can guide and inform the mission and be rolled into a statement that we can use. Everyone is in agreement with this approach.

## 4. Updates from City

### a. City Tree Removals (Malik D.)

Urgent removal at 111 North St. tree split at 8-12' high and fell into street, leaving rest of tree compromised. DPW operations assembled quick crew for removal of tree. No personal or

property damage resulted. A 30 dbh split tree was removed at 2 Kentwood Street. DPW operations now are acting on emergency priority, so only imminent hazards will be taken on.

- i. Somerville High School Additional Tree Removals – this project is on hold. May be a community meeting held to state which trees will be removed, with an additional meeting held separately with UFC. However, there is currently no activity (due to Covid-19).

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

Malik D. received exception at 14 Wisconsin Avenue, Norway Maple removed due to hazard. Emergency pruning on 17 Flint Street. Because of Covid-19 restrictions, to gain exceptions for private tree removal, the tree has to be proven a hazard, requiring photo documentation. Tori A. to follow up with Malik D. and ISD about the 6 trees cut on Walnut St.

c. Planting

- i. Because of curtailed operations, spring planting is reduced and will be pushed off by perhaps 2 months. Will try to push planting before it gets too warm, if there is opportunity. Any unplanted trees will be stored in a nursery and planted in winter. Malik D. continues to mark sites for planting (has ~50) and plan for fall planting.
- ii. Several members of the committee expressed concern about the planting list and want to ensure that there is capacity to provide feedback and advice on planting. Malik D: there was more insight into native plantings based on previous UFC conversation and these recommendations will be used for future plantings as well. There are more native species; a larger percentage (149/340) were planted in the fall. 190 trees that were previously purchased still need to be planted. Can continue conversation on natives for future plantings, perhaps Spring 2021. Chris D. points out that UFMP is a place that we can focus and use as guide for advice on plantings. There are considerations of site selection for choosing trees. Some sites require other plantings: the placement of *Zelkova* sp., for example, along heavily salted roads. Amy M. question: Is stated specifically in UFMP that we can provide lists for native species? (guidelines and beyond)

**5. Funding / Fundraising discussion**

Discussion for considering appropriate areas for funding led by Jennifer C. Malik D. will follow up with appropriate city staff to answer questions of legality, assistance with grant writing, how funds would be allotted, and potentially working with Conservation Commission. Will inquire as to whether UFC can have own fund. UFC is in agreement that outreach, education, and training goals can be reached with more ease while research, planting, and potential staffing will take time. In order to move forward, developing a simple outreach program was proposed and agreed upon unanimously. Althea N. and Jennifer C. will work on identifying an appropriate funding sources, developing an LOI for this effort, and creating a list to identify short- and long-term goals.

Althea N. will ensure that everyone has access to Google drive.

**6. Foss Park Update**

Amy M. headed task force to draft a UFC recommendation for DCR activity at Foss Park. Since the commonwealth is currently at emergency work only, no construction activity is ongoing at Foss Park. DCR will meet with UFC for species and size recommendations; suggested to aim for trees with 2-3" dbh.

Tori A. – the angled design of Foss Park keeps trees. Chris D. and Althea N. agreed that it is premature to push a proposal until all stakeholders see Foss Park plans. We, of the UFC, can speak to the trees with our expertise, but maybe not comment on design. Recommendations for the understory are discussed: perhaps try saplings (<1” dbh) in this area to see how they fare.

Concern over health of the Green Ash tree and balancing any potential removal with maintaining as much canopy as possible was initiated by Jennifer C. Discussion over evidence (which is unconfirmed) of borer, perhaps Emerald Ash Borer (EAB), brings up issues of responsibility to curb the spread of EAB by tree removal. In order to protect the canopy, Chris D. suggests to make a 5<sup>th</sup> recommendation to not remove the Green Ash, and for DCR to have a treatment plan. The draft recommendation was discussed, edited, and adopted by unanimous decision.

**7. Arbor Day 2020 – Tabled**

Activities will not go on in April as planned.

**8. Urban Forestry Management Plan**

The UFC received documents following up after the prioritization activity led by Luisa Oliveira. Althea N. suggested signing off for the major goals for each section. Primary goals for each category should be read and verified and Althea N. to send a Google form designed to accomplish this. Vanessa B., Malik D., and Luisa O. will integrate into the document.

**9. Tree Preservation Ordinance - Tabled**

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

a. February 20th, 2020

**Adjourn:** Motion to adjourn meeting unanimously approved at 7:59 PM. Motion-Antonino, second-Mertl. Vote: 8:0:0