



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

**Urban Forestry Committee Meeting**  
**THURSDAY, AUGUST 20, 2020 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/4473599861683293197>

*Meeting notes prepared by Henry Ayanna and Vanessa Boukili*

**Committee Members in attendance:** Althea Northcross (co-chair), Chris Dwan (co-chair) (left meeting ~5:30pm), Conor Guidarelli, Jennifer Clifford, Henry Ayanna, Amy Mertl, Tori Antonino, Vanessa Boukili (ex-officio), Mark Lawhorne (ex-officio)/ Malik Drayton (ex-officio, replacement for Mark Lawhorne @ ~5pm)

**Committee Members absent:** Sharon Komarow

**Others in Attendance:** MJ Rotchard, Sherri Geldersma, Alexander Taylor

**Call to Order:** Althea Northcross called meeting to order at 4:37 pm

**1. Introductions/ Housekeeping**

- a. Committee member introductions, followed by visiting participant introductions.

**2. Resident Concerns**

- a. Antonino brings up concerns about root spaces for trees in Union Square – industrial cloth vs. silva cells

- i. Boukili states silva cells have been installed in area. Does not remember cloth wrapping around tree roots, but will follow up.
- b. Chris brings up the issue of people locking bicycles to saplings. Happens particularly during resident turnover. Brainstorming solutions:
  - i. Friendly, hand-written notes to owners.
  - ii. Outreach/community education for the issue above.
  - iii. Potential collaboration with the bicycle committee.
  - iv. Flier to disseminate to residents (content = cost of trees, level of damage to trees incurred by locking bikes with them).
  - v. Spring blitz for “adopt-a-tree” could have a seasonal counterpart in fall - reminders not to lock bikes to saplings.
- c. Concerns over the amount of empty planters, perhaps due to frequent sapling death, wonders what the main cause is?
  - i. One reason some of the older saplings died young was because contractors had no obligation to water them.
  - ii. Saplings in urban environments face many stressors.
- d. How difficult it is to establish planters in the city on a regular basis.
  - i. Potted planters in the streets - “Safe Streets” handles public potting for plants.
  - ii. City opens up new tree wells all the time.
- e. How does Somerville survey planting vacancies?
  - i. 311 requests, and tree inventory data. Recent canopy analysis (and some other analyses) from consultant that maps out canopy coverage throughout city. Will use to target planting in areas with less canopy.
  - ii. Complications with planting trees where residents do not want them.
  - iii. City is committed to equitable planting efforts in historically neglected neighborhoods.
- f. How has the committee worked with the MBTA to make the GLX area greener?
  - i. The MBTA has not been much in touch.

### 3. Mission of the Committee

- a. Northcross read the draft mission statement of the committee:  
*“The charge of the Urban Forestry Committee is to provide public guidance, foster support and outreach in order to help protect and cultivate the Urban Forest in the City of Somerville. We are your concerned neighbors, dedicated activists, environmental professionals, and community partners working together to foster an equitable urban forest for all of its inhabitants. Together we will grow a healthy and resilient forest for the future.”*

No objections to statement.

### 4. UFC letterhead

- a. Northcross presented the final design. No objections were made. Letterhead will be added to the UFC google drive folder.



## 5. Updates from City:

- a. City Tree Removals
  - i. 35 dead/hazardous trees in process of being removed. A few other trees lost in a storm recently after July meeting.
  - ii. Follow up about tree on Highland and Walnut that was damaged – Linden tree is OK.
- b. Private Tree Removal Permit(s) and Exception(s)
  - i. Several trees removed on grounds of them being hazardous.
- c. Spring Planting
  - i. 125 trees intended to be planted in spring are being planted in the fall. Preparing for planting now. Planting season is Sept. 1- Nov. 15. Can possibly plant later in the season (weather dependent), but sooner is better.
  - ii. When are trees picked out for Spring 2021?
    1. In the Spring, because will need new contract (thus possibly different contractor).
    2. Will we UFC able to have input into tree selection?
      - a. Yes.
  - iii. Urban Forest Management Plan
    1. Full draft shared with UFC, and overview provided. Four large topics: 1. Importance of Trees in the City, 2. Somerville's Trees, 3. Expand, Preserve, and Maintain, 4. The Road Map.
      - a. UFC comments on draft are due by the next meeting (9/17/20).
    2. Relating UFMP draft to UFC's goals for the document
      - a. The plan addresses specific goals suggested by committee members.
        - i. Achieving more equitable forestry development should be its own chapter
        - ii. Creating more specific ideas rather than general goals with reference to achieving equitability
    3. Will UFC still be a part of the public surveying and outreach?
      - a. Yes, absolutely
      - b. Working group (Mertl, Clifford, Antonino) for crowd-sourcing community concerns before the draft of the Plan is due in October.
      - c. Working group to meet before next month's meeting, in order to reach draft deadline.

## 6. 74 Middlesex Avenue

- i. Inquiry into the process for participation in creating the streetscape around 74 Middlesex. Antonino will reach out to Cortney. Tabled for now.

## 7. Clarendon Hill Development



- a. Compliance issue with new green zoning regulations was resolved positively. Food forest idea – next step is to reach out to Councilor Ballentyne. No update yet – tabled until next meeting.

## 8. Working Group Updates

- a. Arbor Day 2020/ Adopt-a-Tree Program
  - i. E-mail sent out, watering-based. Inquiry for translators (Haitian Creole, Portuguese, Spanish) for the email.
- b. GLX Corridor
  - i. Antonino: wishes to invite Terrence (from GLX) to the next meeting.
  - ii. Boukili: City is working to maximize new public space and ecosystem restoration along path. Viola (City's GLX liaison) has been invited to discuss with UFC and is planning to come to a future meeting.
- c. Tree Species Selection and Planting Standards
  - i. Guidarelli - will review UFMP to develop more pointed knowledge, went to a meeting of coalition between activists in order to foster relations between private citizens and nurseries.
  - ii. Antonino - suggests including a call for increased private tree plantings in the UFMP.
- d. Funding / Fundraising discussion
  - i. Need to discuss ways to fundraise. There are community grassroots funds UFC is eligible for.
  - ii. There are two tracks, the booster club track and long-term financial planning and coordination with the city.
  - iii. Is going to businesses for funding (potentially centered around the business's physical location) a viable option?
    - 1. Idea worth exploring, commendations for businesses?
  - iv. Can source planters and work with neighborhood groups.

## 9. Approval of Minutes from Previous Meetings

- i. June 18<sup>th</sup>, 2020 minutes unanimously approved at 6:30pm (motion – Northcross, second-Clifford, vote: 8:0:0)
- ii. July 16<sup>th</sup>, 2020 minutes unanimously approved at 6:32pm (motion – Clifford, second-Boukili, vote: 8:0:0)

**Adjourn:** Motion to adjourn meeting unanimously approved at 6:33 pm [motion-Boukili, second-Antonino vote: 8:0:0]