



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

**Urban Forestry Committee Meeting**  
**THURSDAY, MAY 20, 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/6933124915684425996>

*Meeting notes prepared by Tori Antonino & Vanessa Boukili*

**Committee Members in attendance:** Chris Dwan (Co-Chair), Althea Northcross (Co-Chair), Conor Guidarelli, Amy Mertl, Leah Grossman, Jennifer Clifford, Vanessa Boukili (Senior Urban Forestry and Landscape Planner), Malik Drayton (Tree Warden designee), Tori Antonino

**Committee Members absent:** Mark Lawhorne (Tree Warden), Henry Ayana

**Others in Attendance:** Murphy Langevin, Renee Scott, Timothy Dineen, Stephen Mackey

**Call to Order:** Dwan called meeting to order at 4:34 pm followed by introductions

**1. Introductions / Housekeeping**

- Introductions by all UFC members and residents in attendance
- Conflict of Interest forms are overdue.
- Possible change of meeting date for July. Unclear if will be able to do virtual meeting. Perhaps do outside in a park? It would need to be accessible.

**2. Resident Concerns**

- a. Quincy Street (Tori Antonino)
  - i. Concern about maintenance and removal of invasive species in parks.
  - ii. Boukili mentioned City's new horticultural contract to take care of plants in certain parks. Many parks have maintenance manuals, but not sure if all do. Ben Waldrip is new Supervisor of Grounds.

- iii. Interest in inviting Waldrip and Oliveira to future meeting.
- b. Lincoln Park – Nerf gun commercial today (Leah Grossman)
  - i. Is the city getting compensated? Money should go to parks! The crane operator drove over the softball field
  - ii. Boukili: Mayor’s office may be able to answer questions.
- c. Foss Park – trees are being planting this week (Chris Dwan)
- d. Beacon Street trees and bike lane (Malik Drayton)
  - i. Branches of young trees between Oxford and Rossmore were hanging into bike lane. People were bending and breaking branches. Tree damage is inappropriate - a simple 311 or tree email will get the job done.
  - ii. Dwan will let the bike community know.
  - iii. Grossman asked what the best way to report things like this is.
    - 1. Drayton: 311 for general tree maintenance needs. Trees email ([trees@somervillema.gov](mailto:trees@somervillema.gov)) for private tree information/questions or for more detailed information.
  - iv. Guidarelli asked if young tree contracts include pruning lower branches for clearance.
    - 1. Boukili: maintenance pruning is in contract for young trees, but Beacon trees were different contract and warranty period is over.
  - v. Clifford: Is this something the young tree training program can cover?
    - 1. Yes, and it is. Working to add some Beacon trees to this year’s list. The rest will be pruned next year.

### 3. Draft Invitation Letter

- a. Guidarelli: Created this letter form invitation letter to get ahead of development. Idea is that Boukili can fill out project-specific information and send to developer. Can we create a resource packet or a way to hyperlink the information?
- b. Dwan: We could put it on the website.
- c. Boukili: Yes, put on website. For now I can send link to developers when they reach out.
- d. Committee discussed various comments and edits proposed by Boukili.
- e. **Call to vote to approve amended document:**
  - i. Yay: Northcross, Mertl, Dwan, Guidarelli, Clifford, Grossman, Drayton, Boukili, Antonino
  - ii. Nay: none
  - iii. Abstain: none

Motion passes.

### 4. Dog pee stations

- a. Renee Scott: Dog pee is toxic and damaging to trees and parks. Perhaps when street tree dies, instead of removing and paving over we could leave it and have something for the dogs to pee on? Money would be saved from not covering up the old well and could prevent other trees from dying from dog pee.

- b. Boukili: It's complicated. We always try to put trees back where they were removed. Having furniture in the sidewalk could be a trip hazard. Cannot imagine residents would want to have a dog pee station in front of their house.
- c. Guidarelli: Maybe use current infrastructure, like a fire hydrant, and remove some of the concrete?
- d. Murphy Langevin: Is the hydrant connected to a well? Don't want infiltration.
- e. Mertl: Maybe add woodchips around the hydrant?
- f. Dwan: Have other communities done this?
- g. Scott: When I looked a few years ago, I couldn't find precedent. Could paint the tree bright orange or red.
- h. Northcross: Happy we're talking about this. Something that needs to be incorporated in our streetscapes. Somehow needs to be directed to sewer system. Using a tree stump might concentrate the urine to the extent where the soil needs to be intensely removed before a new tree could be planted.
- i. Guidarelli: My understanding of why dog pee is so detrimental is the high concentration of salt. Do agree that adding additional things to the sidewalk could reduce accessibility. Maybe can use other places like around street signs? Or utility poles?
- j. Scott: Would need something to absorb the pee.
- k. Boukili: A lot of different departments would need to be involved to move this forward. Traffic and Parking, Fire Department, etc. Good idea, complicated to figure out.
- l. Dwan: perhaps as a starting point we can do education and outreach?
  - i. Boukili: Signs on new trees on Beacon Street say "don't curb your dog"
  - ii. Guidarelli, could start with the residents who adopt trees?
  - iii. Northcross: This is a way for our adopt a tree program to grow. Maybe there is a secondary tree tag. Start thinking about what that message is.
  - iv. Clifford: Young trees are a great place to start. Educate and find someplace else for their dog to go.
- m. Mertl: Does it make a difference if the dog pees on a stake versus on the tree?
  - i. Boukili: excess pee in soil is bad, but peeing on trunks is worse.
- n. Mertl: Does Green&Open Somerville have a working group on this? We could start it up again. A pilot would be helpful. Prospect Hill lawn dead grass everywhere. Feels like an issue that is only going to get worse.
  - i. Dwan: Maybe PSUF could do a pilot in Prospect Hill Park?
- o. Other ideas:
  - i. Antonio: Tree wells, with fence and perimeter for dogs
  - ii. Guidarelli: Telephone poles.
    - 1. Boukili: The electric company would need to sign off.
- p. Pictures of potential dog pee station locations:



## 5. Safe Streets Design Toolkit – *Tabled*

## 6. Updates from City

### a. City Tree Removals

- i. Still working through list that I sent out a while ago. 20 of those dead/dying/hazardous trees will be removed this week and in upcoming weeks.
  - ii. Healey School project starting construction in June. Arn presented a few months ago, but there were updates. Boukili showed project area where trees will be removed, including a list of trees on the slope.
    1. Dwan: Slope was contentious. Put in a ramp to allow accessibility from Mystic Housing to Healey.
    2. Boukili: Schoolyard is currently mostly pavement. The trees on map needs to be removed to complete the project. They are primarily Norway maples.
    3. Guidarelli: We asked for the trees on the hillside to not be planted as hedgerow for slope stabilization.
      - a. Boukili: There are currently trees all along the slope, they are just not shown in the areas where removal is not happening.
    4. Clifford: These plans were designed before the Native Planting Ordinance was put into effect. Can we ask the contractor to put in native species? I wonder how many groups will choose to still go by the ordinance.
      - a. Boukili: PSUF has always tried to plant native plants where possible.
    5. Dwan: Is the Mystic Apartments being looped in?
      - a. Boukili: Yes. Several community meetings, and other communication.
    6. Mertl: Is there air quality mitigation being incorporated?
      - a. Boukili: No hard barriers.
    7. Antonio: Could you ask contractors to add more white pines for any non-native species?
      - a. Boukili: I'll look into the species list. (White Pines are incorporated.)
- ### b. Private Tree Removal Permit(s) and Exception(s)
- i. Google Sheet has been updated.

- ii. Exemptions: 119-121 Morrison, 163 Elm Street, Denied waiver for 1006 Broadway. 138 Orchard street \$3,600, 8 Homer exemption, 50 Highland is pending, 23 Belmont approved.
- c. City Tree Planting
  - i. Leahy is planting 100 trees this spring (some are warranty replacements), including many oaks which are fall dig hazards. Planting has not yet started.
  - ii. DCR - Foss Park trees are being planted this week. They updated planting list based on UFC recommendations, and now includes 28 native trees.
- d. Urban Forest Management Plan
  - i. Getting very close now.
- e. Parks Tree Health Program
  - i. Program began in 2020. First focused on 6 parks where there were damaged trees that needed to be removed.
  - ii. This year we have 7 parks where tree work is being done to make the trees healthier – Albion, Perry, Statue, Florence, Palmacchi, Durrell, Walnut. A lot tree pruning, and other tree work as well. Parks will have to be closed when work is being done. 3 dead/dying trees will be removed, including large black locust and ailanthus at Durrell.
  - iii. Antonino: Anticipating spotted lantern fly. Good to eradicate ‘trees of heaven’ like eradicate black swallowwort.
  - iv. Clifford: do you look for areas for trees to be replanted as you do your work in the parks?
  - v. Drayton: We do. We receive a report from our contractors on future work in our parks.
  - vi. Dwan: Durrell list was atwitter with excitement about the pruning in the park.
- f. Street Tree Stabilization Fund
  - i. Boukili – This Fund is the one that is mentioned in Tree Preservation Ordinance. It has existed for a long time. It was paltry for a while, but now we have about \$80,000 in there. We asked the council for \$20,000 to supplement Parks Tree Health Program funding.
  - ii. Can we use the money to buy plugs? And can we get DPW to plant them?
  - iii. Boukili: A strong maybe.

## 7. Ongoing Work Updates

- a. Arbor Day Planning
  - i. DCR 5<sup>th</sup> grader poster contest
    - 1. Clifford: The posters are still up and haven’t heard a decision by the state. Hopeful our Somerville students did well.
    - 2. Boukili: We haven’t had a Somerville Arbor Day yet. Possibly coordinate with roll-out of ROOT banner?
      - a. Other Arbor Day ideas were discussed:
        - i. Do it at park that was recently pruned in Parks Tree Health Program and talk about program?
        - ii. Mertl to do insect training?
        - iii. Antonino to do invasive species removal?

- ii. Adopt-a-Tree program
  - 1. 183 adoptions this year. 23 people signed up to monitor insects. Still have some emails to get out about watering.
  - 2. Fewer people than usual who are opening their emails. Ask people to check their spam. 60% email opening rate.
  - 3. Blog post that includes information about program was just posted under “News” tab on UFC website.
  - 4. Clifford suggests program should maybe have own tab on website. Boukili mentions that would work, just note that we can only have 6 tabs.
  - 5. Everybody thanks Althea for her hard work on this successful program!

- iii. ROOT collaboration
  - 1. Leah put together a banner with beautiful layout. It has a gallery of remarkable trees for people to see. Boukili working on getting it printed.

- b. GLX Corridor - *Tabled*
- c. Tree Species Selection and Planting Standards - *Tabled*
- d. Native Planting Ordinance
  - i. Renee Scott has done presentations on NPO to Mystic Charles Pollinators Pathways.
  - ii. Other groups reaching out.
  - iii. Cambridge wants to do similar ordinance too.
- e. Funding / Fundraising - *Tabled*

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

- a. April 15<sup>th</sup>, 2021

**9. Adjourn:** Motion to adjourn meeting unanimously approved at 6:38 pm [motion - Guidarelli, second – Boukili, vote: 9:0:0]