Urban Forestry Committee Meeting
APRIL 21, 2022 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/8235943947449379846

Meeting notes prepared by Conor Guidarelli and Vanessa Boukili

Committee Members in attendance: Tori Antonino (Co-Chair), Conor Guidarelli, Jennifer Clifford, Murphy Langevin, Breck Miller (Tree Warden), Vanessa Boukili (Senior Urban Forestry and Landscape Planner), Leah Grossman

Committee Members absent: Chris Dwan (Co-Chair), Amy Mertl

Others in Attendance: Malik Drayton (City of Somerville Urban Forestry Planner), Erica Satin-Hernandez (City of Somerville ARPA specialist), Ben Waldrip (City of Somerville DPW Superintendnet of Grounds), Crystal H., Jehanne-Marie Gavarini, Meredith Porter, Seth Hurwitz

Call to Order: Antonino called meeting to order at 4:34 pm

1. Introductions / Housekeeping
   
   a. Boukili: City is putting on a mandatory Boards & Committees training next Monday.
   
   b. Antonino: Requests promoting all attendees to participants so they can engage more easily in the GoToWebinar platform. Action completed.

2. Resident Concerns

   a. Jehanne-Marie Gavarini: Concerned about a tree that was coming down in her neighborhood. Asked the crew why it was coming down and they were very condescending. Would like to know why large trees are coming down and being replaced with small trees. This occurred sometime around the fall.

      i. Boukili: Sorry to hear about the interaction and loss. There’s a formal process for a tree hearing and risk assessment. Trees that need to come down have a notice delivered to
abutters. If this was an illegal removal, the City can look into the matter. Gavarini will follow up.

b. Meredith Porter: the tree warden and City is aware of the objections to the removal of the sycamore tree at 37 Walker Street.
   i. The tree hearing has been rescheduled for April 28th at 5pm. 

c. Clifford: concerned about the movement of Spotted Lanternfly (SLF), especially coming from Tuckahoe Nursery in NJ. What’s the procedure for inspecting the trees?
   i. Boukili - Only time that trees are inspected are when they are tagged. The nursery should be putting eyes on the trees prior to shipping. There are no quarantine procedures or follow up inspections when they are planted in the City.
   ii. Clifford - Should pest inspections be built into further contracts? Boukili agrees, as of now no auditing process except for that the nursery is usually certified as a “clean source”.
   iii. Drayton - with how devastating the pest is that it’s likely nurseries are monitoring it. Antonino pulled up resources that show certification requirements for industry professions operating inside of a quarantine zone. Would be useful to begin thinking about greater informational outreach to neighborhoods regarding SLF, emerging pests.
   iv. Grossman - Tuckahoe Nursery is in a county that doesn’t currently have an infestation. Could add this inspection into the Adopt-A-Tree tag hanging procedure and Google form.

d. Crystal - Concerned about future problems like that looming at the potential removal of the mature American Sycamore at 37 Walker Street.
   i. Boukili – since began in this position 5 years ago, have focused on planting the right tree in the right place. Hoping to get 30+yrs out of each tree or longer. The tree species planted at 37 Walker St has an aggressive root system. The issue in this case is the tree size, species, and location of tree planting. The sidewalk can be fixed. Hope to be avoiding future problems with current best management practices.

3. **ARPA Funding - Trees and Green Spaces**

   a. Erica Satin-Hernandez: City’s ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) specialist. State and local fiscal recovery fund. Somerville has $77.5 million to be used for COVID-19 recovery funding. Broad range of uses that the money can be utilized for - Public Health, Aid to Households Directly, Neighborhood, Utilities, Administrative, etc. More information can be found at https://stories.opengov.com/somervillema/published/Ic6IkUqlk. Can also participate in survey to help guide where money should be spent. Application for funding based on Mayor’s office allocation will follow.
b. Looking to hear from the committee about questions or thoughts on how to spend the money for trees and green spaces.
   i. Crystal H. inquired about being able to use ARPA funds for community gardening. Satin-Hernandez provides guidance and assists applicants for approval of funds but can’t guarantee funds will be allocated. As it pertains to community gardens and ARPA, food insecurity is a great concern so having the proposal highlight how the community garden will be used to address this concern is paramount. There is funding available for food assistance; application may be eligible for this funding.
   ii. Antonino - pollinator habitat and health is very important, lots of nature is being lost in the city. Wondering if the funds could be used for installing pollinator meadows in neighborhoods and parks. Satin-Hernandez states that any project needs to clearly state how the scope of the work will help Somerville recover from the pandemic. A combination of green space and mental health, etc. These projects require some background planning and shovel readiness for receiving funds for implementation.
   iii. Clifford - if a collaborative effort were to be done, would each group need a UEI qualification or could a singular entity/main applicant be listed for the approval?
      1. Satin-Hernandez - seems that would be appropriate but would need to verify.
   iv. Antonino - could these funds be utilized for private property through a plant giveaway for homeowners to purchase native plants?
      1. Satin-Hernandez - would have to confirm that allocation of funds. ARPA is time limited, would have to be incumbered by calendar year 2024.
   v. Antonino inquired about PSUF planning for utilizing funds. Boukili hasn’t thought of any specific projects.
   vi. Guidarelli inquired about pollution panels around high-density areas and major roadways, also funding a consultant and contractor to install approved plantings for the GLX ‘gray zone’.

c. Antonino suggests creating a working group for ARPA subcommittee prior to deadlines.

4. DPW Updated Landscaping Plans for 1 Franey Rd

a. Ben Waldrip (DPW Superintendent of Grounds): Project for this spring outside of DPW building. Three trees are in bad condition and need removal. Would replant the area with native plants. Looking to make it a focal point for the DPW. Boukili showed pictures of the trees and their present condition.

b. Antonino offered to provide guidance and help as well as a list of native plant suggestions.
   i. Waldrip – looking at street tree planters to be seasonal annuals. Several planting contracts dictate where DPW can get plants from. This project will mostly be from McCue’s nursery, which holds a city-wide plant contract. Can sometimes go out of Northeast, Mahoney’s, and Native Plant Trust.
c. Guidarelli asked for a more specific planting plant to review prior to offering suggestions.
   i. Waldrip should be able to provide this on Monday.
   ii. Antonino will provide a list to Waldrip for suggested plantings.
   iii. Walrip looking to complete project in the next two weeks or so.

d. Boukili - the trees to be removed are two 12” Japanese Pagoda trees and one 6” Zelkova. One pagoda tree is in poor condition and the other two are fair. But lots of decay and canopy dieback/damage is present. Any hesitation to the removal of these trees?
   i. Grossman – this area presents a great opportunity to plant native trees, shrubs and perennials. Is there any other usage for the area and are they light providing windows?
      1. No other usage. Windows do provide some light.
   ii. Antonino - brick wall/turf area would be a great opportunity for a meadow and to utilize species that wouldn’t normally work in a tree pit.
   iii. Clifford - agrees to the utilization of the space for more trees and native plants. Not concerned about these introduced species being removed. How will the salt issues be addressed?
      1. Waldrip suggests granite curbing will be installed to help prevent this from being an issue.

5. Ongoing Work Updates (part 1)

a. Adopt-a-Tree program
   i. Crystal H - Presenting on the adoption certificates. Several languages, the pdf will be fillable. Ukrainian, French, Spanish, English, etc. The artist helped with getting different languages, want to show that people can come here and put down roots in Somerville. Hoping that this certificate will help drive more interest into the UFC and urban canopy. Certificates will be sent following the meeting.
   ii. Clifford - Looking to have our trees tagged prior to our next meeting. Sign-up sheet has been sent out to the committee members to coordinate for Wards and zones.
      1. Boukili - sent email to print shop to get quote, will hear from them soon.
      2. Guidarelli - has packets printed, once tags are good to go will inform the group. Pickup will be from his house.
   iv. Grossman - encourages others to sign up for wards signup.
   v. Boukili - requests that if you see arbor tie from prior season’s trees, please remove it.
   vi. Gavarini - requests that some write-up could be added to the city’s website for information about how to Adopt-A-Tree.
   vii. Grossman - getting tags out prior to PorchFest (May 14, 2022) would be ideal.
6. Union Square Neighborhood Council Planting Guidance Document

   a. Antonino - please look at the document that was shared. Can have SSAPP subcommittee work on it.

7. Arbor Day Planning

   a. Primarily tree planting event - to be in May or maybe June. Could look into choosing a date soon. Arrange for subcommittee to help with making decisions?
   b. Clifford - interested in being on subcommittee. Looking to have the tree planted like last year. Somewhere like Nathan Tufts park. Work around Adopt-A-Tree program. Boukili would prefer to utilize success of prior year’s planning to be utilized again for this year’s event.
   c. Having the event during the week, in the evening (5-7pm) would be doable. Antonino looking for potential plant giveaways to the public. Boukili can look into ordering, has done seedling order in the past from the Arbor Day Foundation, but was earlier in the year.

8. Updates from City

   a. City Tree Removals (Miller presenting)
      i. List of planned removals sent to committee. Everything on the list is either a hazard or dead tree. Contractor to begin removing next week. Reach out should there be any concerns.
      ii. Antonino - Please reach out to contractor to remind them of sensitivity of the public towards tree removals
          1. Miller - new contractor has worked in this City a lot and is respectful. Doesn’t foresee the conflict to arise again but will certainly remind them.
   b. Private Tree Removal Permit(s) and Exception(s) (Drayton presenting)
      i. Exemptions: three exemptions given in last few days.
      ii. Permits: sheet has been updated with 2021 and 2022 information to date. A few new permits were issues recently, and a few are pending.
   c. City Tree Planting (Boukili presenting)
      i. Northeastern Tree is the new contractor for the city tree planting. Early May is the projected timeline for beginning planting.
      ii. Wish list of species selections was sent to them, they are currently sourcing the trees. 57% of the wish list is native trees. Will report back once more is known.
      iii. Northeastern Tree came in 200k lower than Leahy, but it’s in line with how Leahy has bid in the past. Lower rates on sidewalk work and watering; Boukili & Drayton and Malik will observe the contractors and planting work.
      iv. Gavarini - Why are there poles wrapped around the trees?
1. Boukili - They’re meant to protect the tree from any potential damage during construction.
2. Clifford - Commends the thought and care of the construction crews in protecting trees with all the construction projects, particularly the tree boxes.
3. Boukili agrees, wants tree boxes to be made standard.

9. Ongoing Work Updates (continued from above)

b. Outreach
   i. No updates

c. Tree Species Selection and Planting Standards
   ii. Grossman - Archewild quote has been approved. Home Depot quote has the addition of compost needed so that is complete. Waiting on Native Plant Trust verify update to order and send updated quote.
   iii. 56 plants to be added to Native Plant Trust order. Will look to see if Garden in the Woods can set aside these plants before we finalize quote.
   iv. Locations for tree pit trials are currently to be on Broadway.
   v. Need to make flier for adjacent neighbors asking for watering assistance. Also an informational notice for tree pit explaining purpose to people passing by.

d. Tree Preservation Ordinance
   vi. No updates. Chris Dwan absent.

10. Approval of Minutes from Previous Meetings
    a. February 17th, 2022
    b. March 17th, 2022
       i. One edit to March 17th, 2022 meeting minutes – prepared by Clifford not Mertl.

Motion to approve February 17th, 2022 and March 17th, 2022 and meeting minutes as amended (motion- Clifford, second- Boukili).

Roll call vote to approve both meeting minutes:
   (1) Yay: Guidarelli, Clifford, Grossman, Langevin, Antonino, Boukili
   (2) Nay: 0
   (3) Abstain: 0
Motion unanimously passes at 6:52 pm.

11. Adjourn: Motion to adjourn meeting unanimously approved at 6:52 pm [motion- Guidarelli, second- Boukili]