



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS CLERK OF COMMITTEES

October 3, 2018

REPORT OF THE OPEN SPACE, ENVIRONMENT AND ENERGY COMMITTEE

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
Wilfred N. Mbah	Chair	Present	
Jefferson Thomas ("J.T.") Scott	Vice Chair	Present	
Jesse Clingan	Ward Four Alderman	Present	
Mark Niedergang	Ward Five Alderman	Present	
Katjana Ballantyne	Ward Seven Alderman	Absent	
Matthew McLaughlin	Ward One Alderman	Absent	
Ben Ewen-Campen	Ward Three Alderman	Present	
Lance L. Davis	Ward Six Alderman	Present	
William A. White Jr.	Alderman At Large	Present	
Mary Jo Rossetti	Alderman at Large	Present	
Stephanie Hirsch	Alderman At Large	Present	

Others present: Brad Rawson - OSPCD, Annie Connor - Legislative Liaison, Rositha Durham - Clerk of Committees.

The meeting took place in the Aldermen's Chamber and was called to order at 6:14 PM by Chairman Mbah and adjourned at 8:05 PM.

Approval of the May 9, 2018 Minutes

RESULT:

ACCEPTED

Public Hearing on the following tree related matters:

Mr. Rawson gave a presentation on the city's Forestry Program with peer cities using information from 2014 MAPC data and spoke about most communities not having the opportunity to rebuild schools or other areas. Slides were presented on the Beacon Street project, as well. Mr. Rawson stated that quality matters as much as quantity regarding the tree program. Since 2015, the tree program has been utilized to plant more trees. Mr. Chris Dwan, a resident from Ward 2, gave a presentation regarding challenges pertaining to trees. He spoke about the purpose of trees and their contribution to the community's quality of life, e.g., helping to stabilize the soil, reducing energy costs and noise levels, and cleansing the air of pollutants. He noted that old trees, as well as some others, may suffer transplant trauma.

Mr. Dwan also provided some information about the MassDot contract with regards to the trees removed on Beacon Street, along with the size of the trees. There were approximately 65 trees removed totaling 576” in diameters. Approximately 70 trees were removed from the high school campus on Highland Avenue and 644 trees were removed from the Somerville High School back woods totaling 3,004 inches of trunk diameter. The Green Line Extension project removed approximately 1,000 trees.

Another resident, Ms. Renee Scott, gave a presentation titled “Green Space Minimum Ordinance”. It was noted in the presentation that, among cities with over 75,000 residents, Somerville ranks second in population density.

Chairman Mbah **opened the Public Hearing** and stated that the record would remain open until the close of business on Friday, October 5, 2018, for the receipt of written comments. Each speaker was allowed 2 minutes to make comments. Several members of the public spoke and expressed their concerns about the climate change with the removal of the trees, especially on Beacon Street. Some felt that it was much hotter and that the air smelled worse without the trees. There were comments about planting the right trees and planting native trees. One resident commented on the city wanting to plant Japanese trees, saying that those should be planted in Japan. Another speaker commented that Somerville has a high death rate from heart attacks and lung cancer. Another speaker talked about urban tree canopy and how it’s missing parts of the equation relating to the eco system and flooding. It was stated that to rebuild the ecosystem, it requires planting native plants. There were approximately 300 planting in the spring and only 60 of them were native plants. **The public hearing was closed.**

The committee went into recess at 7:12 p.m. and returned to open session at 7:20 p.m. Ms. Connor stated that Mr. Rawson had another engagement and was no longer available tonight. Committee members were not aware that he would not be available to answer questions after the presentation. Ms. Connor stated that Mr. Rawson and city staff are eager to speak with the BOA on the tree matters. Given that there were no staff members to discuss the items on tonight’s agenda, Alderman Niedergang suggested that the committee spend time discussing three proposed ordinances regarding: 1) native planting, 2) establishing a green space minimum, and 3) cutting trees on private property. Alderman White suggested that the Administration respond to these agenda items in writing before the next Aldermanic Committee meeting.

204887: That the Director of SPCD provide this Board by end of February with the tree planting schedule, by Ward, for Spring 2018.

Alderman Davis did not recall receiving a ward by ward breakdown for the tree planting schedule and Alderman Rossetti stated there is an interactive map at www.Somervillema.gov.urbanforestry

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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205704: That the Administration report in writing on the net change in total trees and tree inches from all projects in 2017.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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205705: That the Administration report in writing on the net change in tree inches based on all projects planned for 2018.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

206237: That the Director of SPCD finalize the long-awaited formation of the Urban Forestry Committee.

The position has been advertised and it is believed that approximately 10 people have applied it. The Administration is attempting to do the hiring and selecting of the applicant and committee at the same time.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

203365: That the City Solicitor draft an ordinance requiring native tree and plantings for all open space, to meet the goals of sustainability and biodiversity.

This item will be discharged from the OSEE Committee and referred to the Legislative Matters Committee at the next BOA meeting on October 11, 2018. Members would like the draft ordinance sent to the BOA as soon as possible. Alderman Niedergang spoke about the white papers on native trees.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

206435: That the Administration report in writing on the net change in total trees and tree inches (plantings-removals) from all city projects in 2017. (2nd request-see #205704)

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

206495: That the City Solicitor consider the attached language in the drafting of a Native Tree and Plantings Ordinance, as ordered by #203365.

This item will be discharged from the OSEE Committee and referred to the Legislative Matters Committee at the next BOA meeting on October 11, 2018. Members would like the draft ordinance sent to the BOA as soon as possible.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

206577: That the Director of SPCD explain to this Board why not a single tree was spared when they were cut along the commuter rail line, including trees far from the tracks, and what the GLX Team's plans are to replant trees to prevent erosion on the hills.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

206578: That the Director of SPCD report to this Board on whether the City plans to plant trees by the fence at the north edge of Junction Park to replace the nearby trees lost when they were cut down recently for the GLX project.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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205683: Tori Antonino submitting comments re: #203365, calling for a native planting ordinance.

This item will be discharged from the OSEE Committee and referred to the Legislative Matters Committee at the next BOA meeting on October 11, 2018.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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205807: That the City Solicitor draft an ordinance to establish the city's current green space as a minimum allowed amount, as described within.

This item will be discharged from the OSEE Committee and referred to the Legislative Matters Committee at the next BOA meeting on October 11, 2018. Members would like the draft ordinance sent to the BOA as soon as possible. Alderman Niedergang stated that he had spoken with President Ballantyne who expressed to him that this is top priority.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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206070: That the Administration work with interested community groups to implement a pilot program for native street trees.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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206393: That, in the interest of tree preservation, the City Solicitor draft a revision of the Tree Ordinance to include restrictions and regulations on cutting trees of at least six inches in diameter on private property, and explain how the proposed revision differs from the ones that Cambridge, Lexington and Newton that have already passed to protect trees on private property.

Members would like the draft ordinance sent to the BOA before the its next meeting on October 11, 2018. Alderman Hirsch inquired what percent of the city's tree canopy is on private property.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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Handouts:

- Public Comment - U. Lateiner
- Public Comment - A. Mertl
- 2018-10-3 BoA Hearing Slides OSPCD
- C Dwan Presentation
- Renee Scott Green Space Minimum Ordinance 20181003