

September 26, 2018

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to express my willingness and enthusiasm to serve as a member of Somerville's Urban Forestry Committee.

I first became involved with civic issues less than a year ago. My home is on Ivaloo Street, just off of Beacon. After the surprise destruction of dozens of trees last October, I spent many hours trying to understand how that removal could have been such a surprise to so many of us. I met with city staff and legislators, attended hearings and committee meetings, filed Freedom of Information Act requests, performed data analysis, and dug in deep to understand the facts. I quickly realized that, like the natural environment, it is impossible to understand any piece of the city without looking at the bigger picture. There were no simple answers or easy fixes to be found. Along the way I met a large number of hardworking people who were doing their very best with limited resources against an unlimited demand.

During this time, I found myself increasingly engaged with my neighborhood and community. I created a website and a mailing list for the Beacon Street community (<https://beacon-neighbors.org>) and also a nascent citywide organization tentatively named the "Friends of the Urban Forest." Renée Scott of Green and Open Somerville invited me to co-author an article in the Somerville Times this August (<https://www.thesomervilletimes.com/archives/85808>). We had the pleasure of meeting with the Mayor this week.

Through all of this, I have found a surprisingly deep affection and passion for supporting my community by serving the city.

When I have spoken with other environmentally aware residents about our priorities, making this committee effective was consistently at the top of the list. It fills an important gap in the ongoing dialogue between the city's administration and its residents. Working together, I believe that we have a chance to be incredibly impactful at a critical time for the city's ecosystem.

Even though my professional background is in life sciences and information technology, I feel that my energy, collaborative attitude, and communication skills would be a strong asset on the committee. I am excited and willing to put in time and energy working side by side with domain experts to help our city, both its citizens and trees, to thrive.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Chris Dwan _____
_____, Somerville MA