

John Long

From: MARK NIEDERGANG <m.niedergang@comcast.net>
Sent: Thursday, April 04, 2019 11:58 AM
To: John Long; City Clerk Contact
Subject: Fwd: Green & Open Somerville's response to the Native Plant Ordinance white paper

John,

Please enter this communication into the formal record and provide it with an item number so that it appears on the next CC full meeting agenda on April 11th.

Thanks,

Mark
Mark Niedergang
Ward 5 City Councilor
29 Conwell Street
Somerville MA 02143
(617) 629-8033
m.niedergang@comcast.net
mniedergang@somervillema.gov
www.MarkNiedergang.com

----- Original Message -----

From: Renee Scott <reneescott@gmail.com>
To: jtscott@somervillema.gov, wmbah@somervillema.gov, Alderman Clingan <aldermanclingan@gmail.com>, Alderman White <william.a.white@verizon.net>, Ben Ewen-Campen <benforward3@gmail.com>, Katjana Ballantyne <katjana@katjana.org>, Lance Davis <lancedavisward6@gmail.com>, Mark Niedergang <m.niedergang@comcast.net>, Mary Jo Rossetti <aldermanrossetti@gmail.com>, Matt McLaughlin <Mattforward1@gmail.com>, Stephanie Hirsch <stephanie@stephaniehirsch.org>
Cc: Tori Antonino <toriantonino@me.com>, David Falk <dfgardening@gmail.com>
Date: April 3, 2019 at 3:46 PM
Subject: Green & Open Somerville's response to the Native Plant Ordinance white paper

Dear Honorable Councilors,

We have reviewed the city's white paper on the native plant ordinance. We have a presentation we'd like to give explaining why we believe this is a vitally important ordinance to pass, but since we understand that there will not be time at tomorrow night's meeting, we want to offer our thoughts on the white paper.

* contradiction under Urban Context section - in Number 1 it says " in many urban sites, native species are not able to survive, and in others they may only be able to survive with continuance maintenance" yet in Number 4 "opportunistic native species can be problematic in highly disturbed urban areas. These

types of species can have invasive-like tendencies and can spread and grow so quickly as to choke out other desirable species". *How can we have it both ways? Let's identify the plants that will survive in tough conditions and not plant ones that won't survive. We'll find out that the majority of native species, especially those native to coastal New England, will be perfect for the harshest city conditions.*

** Climate change is mentioned as a reason natives won't survive. Many of our region's native species are native to the entire eastern seaboard and not just New England. They have already adapted as species that thrive in conditions we will increasingly be experiencing. We don't need to look far for adaptable species.*

** Natives are hard to find in local nurseries. The more demand for them, the more nurseries will want to sell them.*

** Natives won't provide enough diversity. Not only is there an extensive palette of native tree, shrub, and flower species to choose from, it is vital that we start addressing genetic diversity. Traditional nurseries grow their plants from clones, which means they all have the same susceptibility to diseases. When they are grown by seed, they naturally are slightly different than their relatives and this provides a defense against plagues and blights like Emerald Ash Borer and Dutch Elm Disease. In addition, Somerville now has two native plant nursery vendors who grow their plants from seeds.*

** Native species might not be large enough to survive in street scapes. All young street trees need to be protected for the first few years, no matter whether they are native or not. Whether accidental, intentional, or from dog's peeing, street trees, especially young ones, need protection. We have an idea to protect trees from dogs, while providing dogs appropriate places to urinate, if anyone is interested.*

** 311 receives calls of complaint about naturalistic plantings. This is a prime opportunity to educate Somerville residents about the importance of restoring the ecology and bringing back our decimated pollinator population. People tend to use 311 to complain so we don't know how many others are excited and pleased by the naturalistic plantings.*

We understand that 100% natives are not supported by the city. With that in mind, we have come up with an alternate plan:

Priority 1 - along the Mystic River, the Community Path, the GLX corridor, and city parks will serve as the foundation for our native corridor. These areas should be 100% native species. Homeowners should be encouraged, educated, and supported to plant natives.

Priority 2 - medians, bioswales, and roadsides will be the secondary connector areas and planted with natives. Tree wells should also be planted with native groundcovers and flowers, as recommended by Steven Handel.

Priority 3 - street trees should be native wherever possible, but we acknowledge the concerns of the city staff and understand some street trees might not be native.

We look forward to presenting our take on native plants to you and hope we can schedule that in the near future.

Warmly,

Renée Scott and Tori Antonino
Green & Open Somerville

John Long

From: Sophie Bignet <sophie.bignet@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, April 04, 2019 12:07 PM
To: City Clerk Contact
Subject: Items 203365, 205683 and 206495

To Whom it May Concern,

It has come to my attention that the Legislative Committee of the City of Somerville will be discussing a 'Natives Only' plant ordinance today. I am currently a resident of the City of Somerville and have been in the gardening/landscaping industry for 10 years working in both urban and rural settings. I would like to raise my concerns with regards to this ordinance as I fear it may, in the long run, cause more harm than good to the streetscapes and greenspaces of Somerville.

While I do appreciate the concern for and also believe in re-establishing native biodiversity, I also know and understand that it is not as simple as just planting natives, this is language that sells more than succeeds. Planting natives which will not survive is not sustainable and will result in tremendous waste as it takes a lot of water and energy to grow, transport and plant them.

The City of Somerville is overrun with invasive species and still allows many invasive species to be planted within its city limits. These problems are more important to conserving and maintaining biodiversity, the time and energy spent on a natives only plant ordinance would be better spent on setting up programs to help remove these invasive species.

From my many years of gardening/landscaping experience, I have learned that one of the keys to sustainability and healthy biodiversity is not just what is planted but how it is maintained. Healthy maintenance practices should be a top priority for the City of Somerville, and the City would best focusing its energy on establishing proper maintenance programs.

Urban landscapes often lack the native soil needed to support native species of plants, rather than focusing on the plants alone I would propose the first step to be establishing programs to promote and develop healthy soils throughout the city. Healthy soils are the key to healthy landscapes and also key to healthy biodiversity!

Thank you,

Sophie Bignet
Resident of Union Square Somerville

John Long

From: Sharon Komarow <skomarow@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, April 04, 2019 12:47 PM
To: City Council; Mayor; City Clerk Contact
Subject: Native Plant Ordinance

Hello,

I'm re-sending an email that I'd previously sent to Councilors Davis, Niedergang, and the Councilors-at-Large so that it will be seen by all involved in the discussion and entered into the formal record.

Thank you,
Sharon Komarow

Dear City Councilors,

I'm not able to attend the meeting tonight, but it's my understanding that the Council is considering adopting an ordinance restricting new plantings exclusively to native plants and I hope my comments can be considered in this discussion. I'm writing as a citizen of Somerville and also as a landscape architect working primarily on park and streetscape projects in urban environments around New England.

Although I support promoting the use of native plants, I believe this ordinance is unnecessarily restrictive. In particular, street tree plantings are subject to environmental conditions that are vastly different from the native habitat for their location. With limited soil volumes, limited access to moisture, highly disturbed soils, frequent dog urination, and higher soil temperatures due to the surrounding pavement, street trees need to grow within a pretty inhospitable environment. While there are some native species that can survive in these conditions, the list is short, and in my opinion, it is more valuable to have a robust, diverse street tree canopy than to limit street trees to only native species. As our street trees face additional pressure from climate change and the introduction of exotic pests (e.g. Emerald Ash Borer and Asian Longhorned Beetle), canopy diversity will prove even more important.

I want to mention again that I support the use of native plants in the right location and I agree that they contribute to supporting wildlife in unique ways, but I don't think that it makes sense to limit new plantings to that palette. There's a larger set of species that aren't native, but also aren't invasive, that also can provide substantial benefits to the urban environment, including shade and pavement temperature reduction, stormwater absorption, and carbon storage, in addition to beauty and contributing the greenery. I think it would be misguided to preclude the use of these plants in Somerville.

Thank you for your consideration,
Sharon Komarow
57 Chandler St.