

From: Maureen Barillaro [<mailto:somclimateaction@live.com>]

Sent: Monday, June 20, 2016 10:23 AM

To: Mayor

Cc: John Long

Subject: Budgeting for our Urban Tree Canopy

Dear Mayor Curtatone,

Somerville is a strong community and a wonderful place to live, in large part due to your leadership. Somerville Climate Action thanks you for your efforts to support regulation, perform strategic planning, and develop initiatives that highlight and uplift sustainability efforts and environmental action.

Being the most dense city in New England, one of the proven key ways we can immediately provide mental and physical wellness to our citizens is through a healthy urban tree canopy that is now at risk.

We applaud the City's initial efforts but are now critical that they have been discarded and left unorganized without someone internally changed to manage the process and get more trees in the ground.

In 2009 the City got off to a great start with the draft Urban Forestry Initiative, and the subsequent Tree Advisory Committee. These helped inform and guide the later SomerVision to protect and increase the City's tree canopy, diversify and guide its species selection, and strategically plant trees in areas of need.

At the time, an initial inventory suggested there were 11,000 trees on Somerville streets and in parks. Seven years later this amount hasn't grown enough and Somerville Climate Action's position is that the City needs an internal point person to continue to implement and grow the initiative and effectively manage a robust and informed Tree Advisory Committee. As seen in recent public meetings, we need better and more outreach and engagement of the community. The most recent standing room only West Branch Library meeting, scheduled for two hours of time, ran 40 minutes long specifically due to the issue of loss of trees and greenspace. There doesn't seem to be a connection to the City's goals and what is happening project by project.

Since 2011, we have not seen any organized action on the goals and findings from a 2009 report that outlined a Five-Year Urban Forest Management Program to plant 2,000 trees by 2015. The City is falling far short on its own goals. For example, in a May 2016 statement, you are quoted counting just 12,000 trees, representing only half of that original goal reached.

How will we make up this shortfall? How will we plan for the next five year goals are and how they will be reached?

Further, the FY2017 budget does not increase any funding over FY2016 amounts for trees. How can we provide for the community and the environment without increased funding required to manage, plant, and maintain an urban canopy?

Somerville needs a full-time arborist and we need to bring back the Tree Committee immediately. The recent public meetings on the Ash Borer disease shows that there is deep frustration and public desire for better communication, planning, and implementation to not only see that the City reaches its SomerVision and sustainability goals but also to ensure a healthy environment to our community that a strong urban forest can provide.

Please consider this request as you finalize the FY2017 budgets and department work plans. We look forward to working with you on this issue and would be happy to meet to discuss further.

Sincerely,

Maureen Barillaro

Somerville Climate Action and Green & Open Space Representative

cc: Board of Alderman