



City of Boston Urban Forestry Division

Urban Forestry Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

September 15, 2026

6:00-7:30pm

PURPOSE

The Urban Forestry Advisory Committee is an intentional way to engage residents from diverse neighborhoods and backgrounds. The number one goal of the City's Urban Forest Plan was to put equity first as we work to expand the urban forest canopy. The lived experience and knowledge of committee members will help to shape the plans and actions of the Urban Forestry Division. We want the benefits of our urban trees available and accessible to all residents of the City.

NOTE: The suggested out of sequence meeting for July 15th did not occur due to lack of availability of committee members.

ATTENDANCE

Present:

Urban Forestry Division: Todd Mistor (Director), Kaliopé Marske (admin)

Committee: Patricia Alvarez, Marie Fukuda

Absent:

Committee: Lilian Bonilla-Reyes, Anthony Brewer, Jaedin Feaster, Shamilia Lloyd, Gideon Neave, Grace Richardson, David Venter

AGENDA

1. Urban Forestry Division update
2. Presentation from the Meeting Procedures Sub-committee
 - a. Discussion of the sub-committee work
3. Brainstorming ideas from the Urban Forest Plan that the committee is interested in pursuing



URBAN FORESTRY DIVISION UPDATE

New organization within Parks Department leadership

- 6 Deputy Commissioner Roles with specialized functions
- Azzurra Cox is Deputy Commissioner of Planning, Ecology and Stewardship
 - Urban Forestry is within this vertical

Fall Planting Season

- Work will start in Oct.
- Planting 600 street trees this Fall
- Fewer trees in the fall because of shorter weather window and limited nursery supply

Tree pruning

- Goal is 6-8 year rotation for ALL street trees
- Before UFP, pruned 2,500 a year
- 5,000 street trees pruned so far this year

Semi permeable pavement installation

- Finishing up small contract to install in high traffic areas
- e.g. Hanover st in the North End
- Next spring will use Inflation Reduction Act funding for some pavement installations with new tree planting

Spotted Lanternfly

- Found in parks across the city
- Information with resources from state sources on the Urban Forestry webpage [HERE](#)



DISCUSSION

Public Engagement:

- Want to allow a way for the public to share comments to the Committee, even though not required by the Ordinance.
- After June meeting, the UFD made a comment form linked on the UFAC webpage.
 - Comment form is the most accessible way to have public engagement
 - It is better than privileging only people who can physically turn up on a specific day at a specific time.
 - Any comments will be circulated to all Committee members before each meeting.
- There have been no comments submitted through the form, as of the meeting.

Sub-Committee Presentation

- Presentation is attached at end of the minutes.
- The presentation contains proposals for Committee structure and action. It is not an official document and has not been ratified by any City body.

Discussion of UFAC Purpose, Structure

On the past two years

- Significant drop-off in Committee attendance and participation
- Difficulty 1: Lacking Commissioner for much of the time the Committee has been active.
- Difficulty 2: Infrequent meetings.
- Difficulty 3: Members may have been focused on short-term, action-oriented goals that are outside of the Committee's purpose.

On Committee creation

- No matter how the decision-making process evolves, this Committee will exist because of the Ordinance.
- In the Urban Forest Plan, there was a proposition for an Equity Council, which may have been an influence on the Ordinance wording.
 - The final text of the Ordinance is what governs the Committee, regardless of prior influences.



- The Committee is not related to the functions of a Tree Board as a component of the Tree City USA requirements
 - The Urban Forestry Division staff fulfill the objectives and mandates of a Tree Board.
- The Committee was created to advise the Parks Commissioner on the implementation of the Urban Forest Plan.

On Committee composition

- The Committee is at the two-year mark.
 - All members are at the end of their terms.
 - Opportunity for renewal.
- Question of who to seek out for the Committee.
 - Go into neighborhoods, looking for people interested in the environment?
 - Have members from every neighborhood?
 - If seeking racially and economically diverse composition, how to find those members?
 - Agreed that in-person meetings are most effective. However, how to find a location that is accessible to members from all over Boston?
 - How to promote comradery among members?
- Prior membership requirements were developed with Commissioner Woods.
- Thoughts on having professionals on the Committee.
 - Prefer to prioritize lived experiences of community members to bring to the Committee.
 - Emphasis on having many neighborhoods represented.
- Scope and process of committee work should be available to all prospective members.

On Committee scope

- Ordinance created the Committee to advise the Parks Commissioner on the implementation of the Urban Forest Plan.
- Expectations are the number one problem to solve.
- Frustration from past Committee members largely due to disconnect between personal goals and the Ordinance's directive for the Committee.



- The Ordinance does not direct *how* the Committee is to advise the Commissioner.
 - Many ways to approach advising.
 - The Committee may advise on whatever it chooses with the understanding that *the Commissioner may not [act on / accept] the advice.*
 - The Committee can still choose to advise the Commissioner about development.
 - Must understand the advice is advice – not binding.
- The advice must be on the implementation of the Urban Forest Plan which is itself guidance, not a dashboard.

On Committee meeting structure

- The Sub-Committee's presentation provides great ideas for frameworks going forward.
- Research vs. Concerns.
 - Up to Committee members how to give advice to Commissioner.
 - Committee may determine how often to advise and in what manner.
- The Committee will only move forward on topics that have consensus.
 - Must be respectful of other Committee members.
 - Welcome the different perspectives that each member has to offer.

Thanks given to the members present and the work of the Sub-Committee. Next steps are for Todd Mistor to share Sub-Committee's suggestions with the Commissioner.

MEETING ADJOURNED.

Boston Urban Forestry Advisory Committee

9/15/26

Subcommittee Presentation: Committee Structure and Processes

Pat Alvarez, Lilian Bonilla-Reyes, Marie Fukuda

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Boston Urban Forestry Advisory Committee: Enabling Language

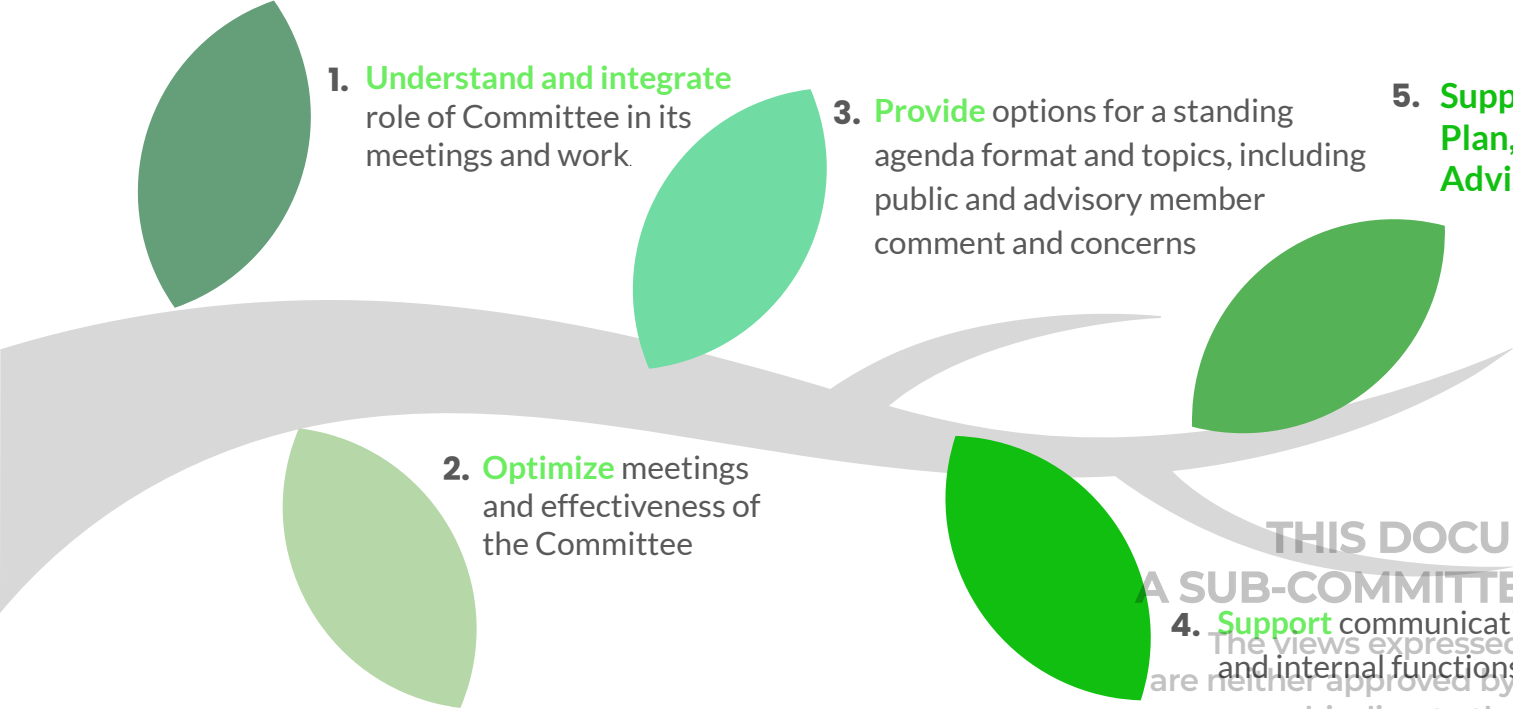
The Commissioner shall convene an Urban Forestry Advisory Committee **solely for the purpose of advising the Commissioner with regards to implementation of the Urban Forest Plan.** The Advisory Committee's purview shall be **limited to implementation of the Urban Forest Plan and exclude matters relating to specific removals or implementation of M.G.L. c. 87.** The Advisory Committee shall have at least seven (7) members. All members of the advisory committee shall be appointed by the Commissioner. The Advisory Committee shall be staffed by the Department. The Commissioner shall prioritize participation from residents from historically marginalized or under-canopied neighborhoods and invite participation from residents between the ages of fourteen (14) and seventeen (17). **The Commissioner may establish subcommittees, working groups or any other forms of subordinate organization of the advisory committee as may be necessary and useful to carry out its advisory functions.** The Advisory Committee shall be convened within the first six (6) months following the adoption of this subsection and shall **present an annual report of its activities to the Commission.**

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Subcommittee Brainstorming

GOALS

- 
1. **Understand and integrate** role of Committee in its meetings and work.
 2. **Optimize** meetings and effectiveness of the Committee
 3. **Provide** options for a standing agenda format and topics, including public and advisory member comment and concerns
 4. **Support** communication and internal functions
 5. **Support the Urban Forest Plan, Urban Forestry, and Advisory Committee work!**

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Meetings: 6/30,
7/6, 7/13



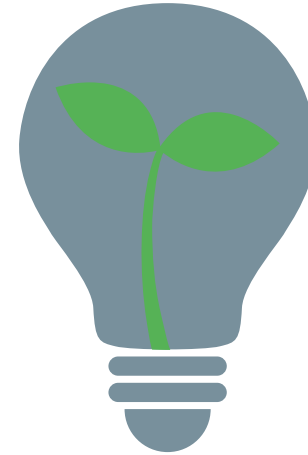
Meeting 1

Brainstorm and discuss Advisory
Committee Roles, Structures, and Internal
Functioning



Meeting 2

Synthesize ideas and review items for
presentation to the Committee

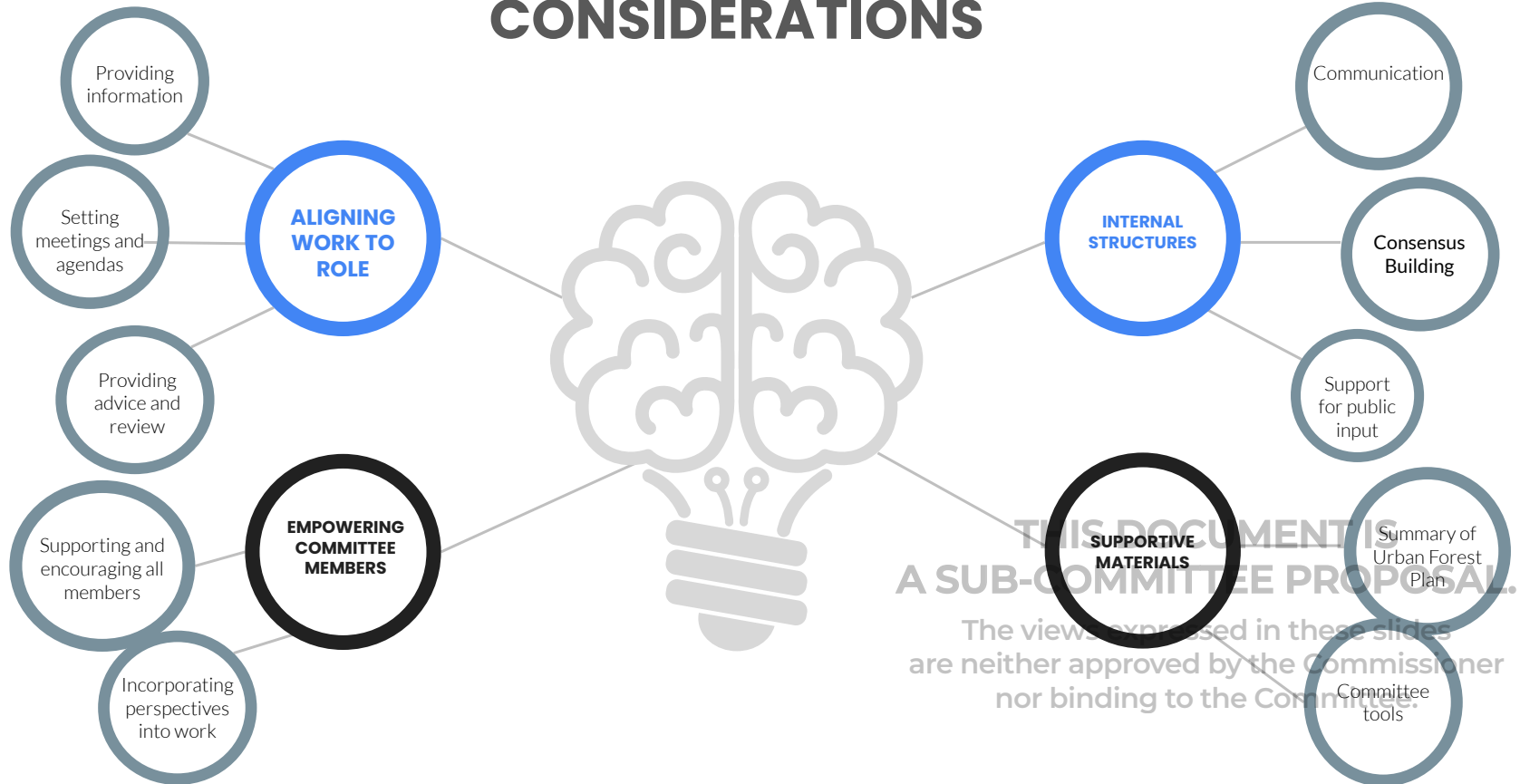


Meeting 3

Review presentation for Committee and
integrate feedback from the UF team

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CONSIDERATIONS



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Topic 1: Role of the Committee

Recommendation: With the role to advise on implementation of the Urban Forest Plan, we recommend Committee agendas and presentations connect to the specific strategy of the plan. Meetings should ensure the Committee can understand the UF plan goals each year so that they can provide advisory opinions.

Decisions: How often do we provide recommendations/advice to the Parks Commissioner?

Options:

-  Every meeting
-  Every other meeting
-  Quarterly
-  Annually

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Topic 2: Number and Length of Meetings

Recommendations: Quarterly meetings do not provide much time for our role. We recommend meeting every other month, with added subcommittee work added as needed. We recommend 1.5 hours meeting length to allow adequate review and discussion time.

Decisions: In person or virtual meetings?

Options:

-  In person
-  Virtual
-  Rotating

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Topic 3: Agendas and Feedback

Recommendations:

1. Presentations and updates are critical; framing them within the plan would be helpful.
2. Members should have a way to either include issues of concern in the agenda or raise items for discussion and consensus within the meetings
3. Public comment should be included and discussed at each meeting

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Topic 3: Agendas and Feedback

Recommendation 1: Presentations and updates are critical; framing them within the plan would be helpful.

Use a tool that helps Committee members understand the UF plan and context of presentations. [This tool](#) is an example of how members could track the plan, annual updates, and benchmarks.



Spreadsheet sorts each strategy by tab

Tabs are sortable by timeline and priority

Additional columns could be added to track progress and discussion items of the Committee

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Topic 3: Agendas and Feedback

Recommendation 2: Members should have a way to either include issues of concern in the agenda or raise items for discussion and consensus within the meetings

Options:



Agenda is circulated, members freely suggest amendments/additions



Standing rule that members may submit suggestions to upcoming agendas using a strict cutoff time for doing so (e.g., 2 weeks before the meeting)



Topics raised as part of new business, consensus by the group would elevate the topic for discussion at the following meeting or initiate a subcommittee for further work

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Topic 3: Agendas and Feedback

Recommendation 3: Public comment should be included and discussed at each meeting.



Public comments should be reviewed at each meeting, but time limited in discussion. We recommend circulating the full texts of public comments a week ahead of the meeting so that they can be discussed efficiently

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SAMPLE AGENDA

1

REVIEW OF PREVIOUS MEETING MINUTES

2

URBAN FORESTRY PRESENTATION FOLLOWED BY COMMITTEE DISCUSSION

This includes any consensus opinions leading to recommendations and/or advisory opinions for Commissioner or subcommittee work

3

NEW BUSINESS – MEMBER DISCUSSION

Provides members a way to raise new issues or recommendations

4

PUBLIC COMMENTS – REVIEW AND DISCUSSION

Provides members ways to understand community concerns and integrate into work

5

RECAP OF MEETING AND NEXT STEPS

This includes any consensus items/advisory opinions for Commissioner, subcommittee assignments, and direction for next meeting

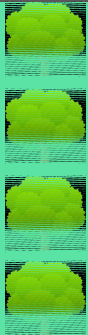
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Topic 4: Committee Communication and Internal Functioning

Goals: Inspire and uplift everyone's voices and participation, make sure we are working efficiently, and ensure good participation by the committee

This includes:



Expected Committee responsibilities

Tools to optimize Committee empowerment

Simple guidelines for meetings

Understanding and integrating consensus processes

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Topic 4: Committee Communication and Internal Functioning

Goal: Ensure and support Committee member participation

Recommendation: Upon missing 2 meetings, Urban Forestry checks with member to see if they would like to continue service or if there is a barrier to participation.

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Topic 4: Committee Communication and Internal Functioning

Goal: Empower Committee members

Recommendation: Use a rotating list of members to co-facilitate meetings with the Urban Forestry Chief. Members are encouraged but not required to co-facilitate. This can include serving as timekeeper, supporting discussion and consensus building, and supporting agenda and minutes creation

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Topic 4: Committee Communication and Internal Functioning

Goal: Establish guidelines to keep Committee efficient and on task

Recommendation: Circulate and adhere to meeting guidelines which include timeliness, talking/listening, staying on topic, and mutual respect and support

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Topic 4: Committee Communication and Internal Functioning

Goal: Support consensus building

Recommendation: Use consensus building tools for all discussions, mutually practice ways to support the process of discussion, brainstorming, evaluating and consensus

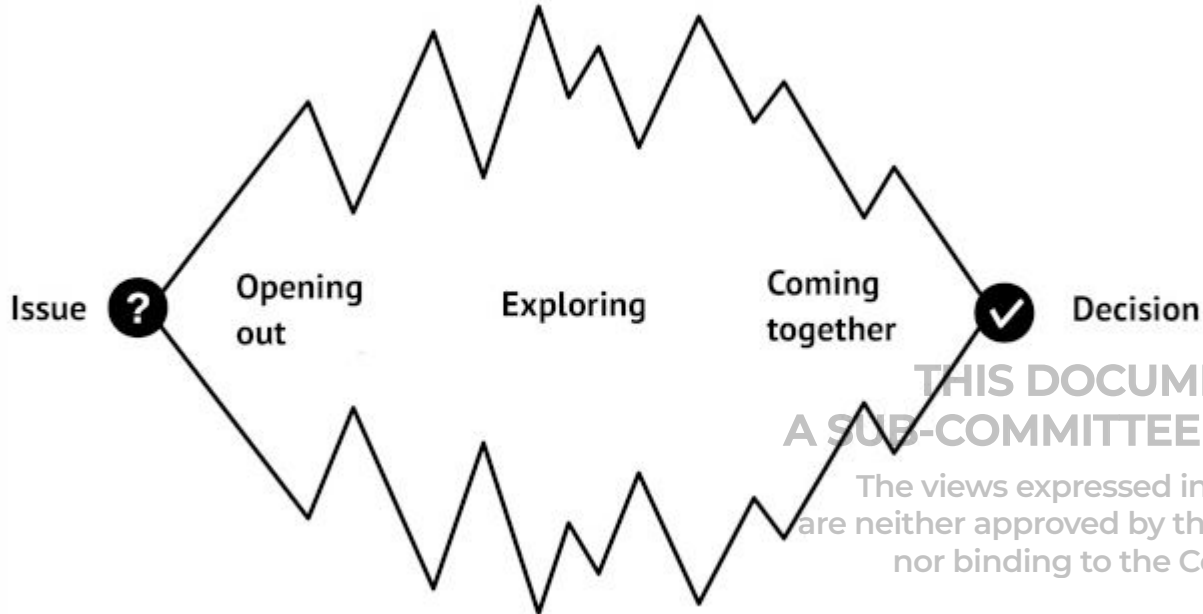
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Why use consensus?

Consensus enables a group to share power - everyone who is fundamentally affected by a decision can work together to find solutions that meet everyone's needs. It's about working with each other rather than for or against each other.

It helps to build a stronger community. Consensus relies on us respecting other people's needs and opinions, and being open and honest about our own needs. This it turn leads to better relationships in a group.



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RECAP OF COMMENDATIONS AND DECISIONS

ROLE OF COMMITTEE

1

Recommend: Structuring all presentations around the UF plan

Decisions: How often to provide advice to Commissioner? Each meeting, every other meeting, quarterly, annually

2

NUMBER/LENGTH OF MEETINGS

Recommend: Meetings every other month, 1.5 hours duration

Decisions: In person, virtual, or rotating?

3

AGENDAS AND FEEDBACK

Recommend:

- Frame presentations and updates within the Urban Forest plan
- Provide Members a way to include issues of concern in the agenda/raise items for discussion and consensus within the meetings
- Include and discuss public comment at each meeting

Decisions:

- Member feedback:
 - Agenda is circulated, members freely suggest amendments/additions.
 - Standing rule that members may submit suggestions to upcoming agendas using a strict cutoff time for doing so (e.g., 2 weeks before the meeting)
 - Topics raised as part of new business, consensus by the group would elevate the topic for discussion at the following meeting or initiate a subcommittee for further work

COMMITTEE COMMUNICATION AND INTERNAL FUNCTIONING

4

Recommend:

- Have UF team reach out to Committee members who have missed 2 meetings
- Employ round robin co-facilitation of meetings by members; participation optional
- Employ committee guidelines and consensus tools

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