

Urban Forestry Commission (UFC)

August 10, 2011

Meeting Notes

Seattle Municipal Tower Room 2750
700 5th Avenue, Seattle
3:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

The Urban Forestry Commission was established to advise the Mayor and City Council concerning the establishment of policy and regulations governing the protection, management, and conservation of trees and vegetation in the City of Seattle

Attending

Commissioners

Matt Mega (MM) – chair
Tom Early (TE)
John Floberg (JF)
John Hushagen (JH)
Jeff Reibman (JR)
Peg Staeheli (PS)

Staff

Sandra Pinto de Bader (SPdB) - OSE
Brennon Staley (BS) - DPD

Public

Steve Zemke (SZ)

Absent- Excused

Nancy Bird (NB)
Gordon Bradley (GB)
John Small (JS)– vice chair

Call to Order

MM called the meeting to order

Chair report

Tom Early was confirmed by Council on Monday, August 8. He is now formally joining the UFC.

Tree Standards Position Paper

JF – Worked with JS and PS on this. The draft was presented and explained. It has four sections: tree selection, planting and establishment, protection, and pruning and maintenance. These standards are to be applied to all trees in the city. We'll need to define 'establishment' vs. protection and tighten the section a bit.

PS – SDOT and DPD have been working on the tree selection list. Need an update on where this issue is.

SPdB – SCL, Parks, and SDOT had a meeting to make sure aggressive/invasive species were removed from the list, and also to remove species that are too large to be planted under power lines. I can send out the new Street Tree list.

PS – In 2009 they were also meeting with DPD and trying to coordinate and have one place to look and street trees are within that. Include the ROW manual. Now it's been updated and it's pretty good on tree location. Guidance on where private property trees should be placed is not in the ROW manual.

BS – the Green Factor doesn't regulate location of trees in the ROW.

JF – does the ROW Manual cover all issues relating to borders and ... because they are not all ROW issues.

PS – they don't cover private property

JF – this is the basis, the ROW manual, but maybe we can add to it? The UFC is trying to make one list.

BS – I think we have only one list, trees used for the Green Factor and Street Trees but we don't regulate the location for planting trees is private property at all. We do regulate how trees interface with the ROW.

PS – I think a lot of it is information. If my tree infringes on the ROW it's clear what happens there. Generally there not enough information. It's not intuitive for planting trees. The public tends to plant trees to close to things.

TE – it would help if the list were to include general tree size next to the species on the list.

BS – the current list has that information already. It's categorized by size.

JR – is there any footnote section to the list with additional information.

BS – the last column is a comment section

JF – we need to give the list a title that would encompass all trees and be easy to find

PS – I will look at it as a resident instead of as a professional.

MM – maybe have another piece to be written specifically for the home owner.

JR – if you go to Google and look for 'planting trees in Seattle' you do find information

JF – Everybody talks about what should be done but not what shouldn't be done. Do we need to include in here? Or is it already covered by following the standards?

JH – Could include after bullet 2 i) do not plant tall trees under power lines. Include a horizontal distance instead of a vertical distance

PS – that's well covered in the ROW manual in detail and spec and in the tree list

TE – Dream out what you are going to end up with. It's important for people to visualize how big a tree is going to get and think about whether this is the right spot.

JH – I tell people to think 40 years down the road.

MM – maybe be added to the introductory paragraph.

JF – can people visualize that?

TE – they could get a helium balloon and figure out what the mature height of the tree looks like. It would be a healthy reminder.

JF – we need to conceptually frame all of this

JR – include a bullet point under tree selection include something considering 40 years down the line.

SPdB – maybe include considering competing uses?

PS – We need to figure out how to encourage private planting in private property. When I tag ‘how do I plant a tree in Seattle’ I’m getting SDOT’s list. I thought they were combining the list and the top was going to say Seattle and then go down to SDOT.

JF – there is a regulatory approach if the tree permit is implemented and then there is the Seattle reLeaf program encouraging people to plant trees.

MM – this would be part of the ordinance eventually, right?

JR – this document is not a public document, it’s a position paper.

MM – I’m wondering if we need to have some bullets under it to talk about having one Seattle tree list. How do we incorporate it?

JR – I think this would go on the Outreach position paper

MM – we don’t have it scheduled yet, we are supposed to discuss it.

JR – it’s important to determine how we engage the public and submit information.

JR – include a city-wide list. I tested it. I get consistently the SDOT street tree list.

JF – a clearly accessible city-wide list

MM – we can get to it in the outreach paper

JR – maybe say something like ‘to be guided by city combined tree resources’

TE – AINSI 300 standard

JH – this will not mean much for a home owner

TE – the standard has to be purchased.

JR – It’s copyrighted and the City can’t just put it up on their website

PS – There isn’t anything in the code to say how you plant. There isn’t guidance on the City side.

BS – there is a standard tree planting

PS – there is a gap there. On the outreach for homeowners side there is the OSE information and it needs to be linked. SDOT’s site gets pulled very easily for people. Maybe SPU. The webmaster can use key words and it can be cleaner so people can find information easily.

JR – we should make available in an accessible form some guidance on these things. Not that we expect the homeowner to read AINSI 300.

PS- I don’t think current DPD standards protect the root zone. We save the tree but then it’s up to the design tree to protect the tree. It’s not clear what happens after. SDOT said they try to prune street trees three times in their first ten years, and I don’t remember writing a spec to that effect for trees not planted by SDOT. Some cities have a bonding to come back and do work on the trees.

JR – as a recommendation for pruning and maintenance some form of required bonding and follow up for trees planted in the ROW. This would not apply to trees on private property.

TE – nitty-gritty details, we might want to touch upon with the IDT

JF – the audience is City Council and Mayor and this might be too detailed for them?

JR – keep the same structure on our position papers, tag lines for decision makers and the bullet points are for department level and central staff. The position paper needs to be independent of the permit system. It should apply even if there is no permit system

MM – I agree, let's remove reference to a permit system

TE – these are standards that need to apply to all trees in Seattle

JR – it needs to be accessible to home owners

PS – I like the idea of staying a little bit high. Ultimately to get to 30% we'll need another incentive, such as drainage incentives. We need to focus on the early thing: tree selection, planting and establishment. What time period are we talking about for 'establishment' Best practices looks at 2-3 years. Most projects fall around three months. From the City's standpoint, in the context of the goal, we need to move to at least a year of establishment.

MM – I think we can be a bit flexible and look at it later on. I would say 1-3 years.

PS – if we do years, we'll have the ability to require pruning in those initial years.

MM – educate people on how to use gator bags. Any tree should be pruned three times the first ten years, is this for every tree or just for SDOT?

JH – every tree

TE – Up by the Roots uses cubic feet. Refer to soil volume (bullet 2) using cubic feet.

UW Innovation Zone letter draft – possible vote

MM – GB sent the draft along and asked for us to discuss it. Wanted to build some bridges.

JF – A couple of comments: in the third paragraph, change enumerable to many. Change compliment to complement. Efforts have vs. has. Talk about trees that have died by removal?

MM – he is referencing trees that have been lost due to development

JF – if there was damage to trees due to the development. The next sentence could say 'we see your proposal as a way to replace trees lost to recent development in the U District and even to advance the City's efforts to increase tree canopy in Seattle. In the last paragraph talk about the realization of your innovation zone proposal, instead of the 'evolution.' That way you have the idea of replacement and adding to it.

The meeting had no quorum and waited for more commissioners to join the meeting in order to vote.

JH – how long are we supposed to wait for quorum?

MM – my understanding is that the meeting can continue on without voting.

SPdB – there could be advancement of issues that then could be brought back at the next meeting for vote. I wanted to propose cc'ing City Council because the UW president actually briefed City Council and that was what prompted the article.

JF – I wondered if the meeting with Council was recorded

SPdB – yes, all meetings are. I will send out the link

Once JR joined the meeting the proposed amendments were read out loud and he was okay with the changes.

ACTION: A motion was made to approve the letter as amended. The motion was seconded and carried.

UF IDT/UFC meeting agenda items

JF – when is the meeting with the IDT?

SPdB – it's October 12 at Camp Long from 1:00 – 5:00 p.m. I will send a reminder.

TE – Is this the first joint UFC/IDT meeting?

SPdB – yes

MM – Part of the rationale to do this is to get everyone in the room and have a conversation and have work plan alignment and that sort of thing. Sandra and I met just before this meeting and I'm struggling with the fact that a lot of the agenda items we have thus far are too detailed. I would like to be more focused on the big picture. What can those big pictures might be. Maybe send out a couple of questions to the IDT as homework or background.

TE – the first meeting could be about relationship building. Four hours is not a long time to learn who these people are. The IDT is a group of City agencies that are working on UF issues. Maybe the UFC could be an objective third party to review issues and see if there is any assistance we can provide?

JF – find out what they are struggling with and offer help?

TE – being this the first meeting they might not shed light on all the issues... It might be as simple as asking them how the UFC can help.

MM – we have already met them. This is more of a coordination meeting. I like the idea of what the barriers and challenges are.

SPdB – read the proposed items for the agenda thus far:

1. Pruning standards for new trees – both for City and developers
2. Development standards
3. SPU's overall tree role
4. Set backs from utilities

5. Each department to present cost/benefit analysis of the urban forest to their organizations. What are their costs if canopy cover is 15% vs. 30%?

MM –my concern is going into that meeting and start talking about pruning standards or development standards.

JF – it's a bit in the weeds

JR – This might be something to address individually with different departments

JF – we talked about whether or not we can share a canopy goal. You were saying that getting into the numbers might be a bit much?

MM – maybe start meeting by solidifying canopy goal

JR – do we have a list of who is going to be representing the IDT

SPdB – I have a list of all members

JR – just a heads up on each department that is involved

JF – I couldn't find anything in the website for the IDT.

SPdB – There is no website. They used to be the Urban Forest Coalition and are the creators of the Urban Forest Management Plan

JR – I would like better understand who is representing the departments and for example, why the Zoo and not UW

SPdB – this is a group internal to the City. All departments that have tree management responsibilities are members of the IDT. I will send out a list of IDT members.

JR – Port of Seattle, is that City owned land?

SPdB – no is not. The IDT meets once a month to exchange information and properly coordinate

JF – DPD because they are part of the IDT they can determine what happens in commercial lands?

SPdB – they have a regulatory role

BS – DPD is the regulator

JH – how long has the IDT been meeting about these issues already?

BS – since 2005 prior to the creation of the UFMP

JH – six years later we are meeting to talk about issues. Why are we meeting with them? After six years they should know what they are doing? When are we involving other players, Feds, housing, core of Engineers, UW, community colleges and other mayor institutions? There is a lot of the urban forest that is in institutional land.

MM – the UW and other players are not in charge of implementing the UFMP. We are meeting with the IDT to get to a point where we can look at the updated UFMP and see how those other players can influence it. DPD can create rules that UW has to follow. That's why it's premature to bring those other players to the meeting.

JR – there are jurisdictional nuances to that other are regulated

MM – this is a meeting for UFC to meet with the IDT in a more public setting. Getting a relationship established and common goals started and then involve some of those other players. It's a conversation on how the City directs them to implement the UFMP

JR – I would like to get out of the meeting a clearer understanding on how these departments are functioning in relationship to the UFMP. The functions and activities that they are actually carrying out.

JH – a lot of them react. The Zoo tends to react. City agencies react for the most part. SDOT prunes and plants, Parks prunes and plants, SCL prunes and everybody hates them. I spend part of every day defending SCL. Do you want power or do you want outages? At some point we have to get off the dime and stop talking to each other and start talking to other players or we'll get so far behind on the canopy goal.

MM – So John, you are saying you know how these departments work already?

JH – yes, because I work with them. Include in the agenda how can we get the rest of the players involved? How they view trees in relationship of their goals? What are the costs of managing the urban forest.

JF – how can we get the rest of the jurisdictions involved. We realize the urgency of this issue. How they view trees in light of their goals...

MM – maybe we can invite those other groups to UFC meeting?

JR – Parks has a proactive management plan, apparently the Zoo does too. It could be interesting as part of the UFMP update to look at the strategy of identifying large parcels. For those that are owned by the city management plans should be developed as examples, and for those now owned by the city and regulated by DPD see if management plans should be developed. That might be a way of putting this together under the umbrella of the UFMP.

MM – Agenda item at the IDT, how do we involve other players

JR – how do we have effective management of large parcels both private and public. Include the Port, or the Locks.

JH – Core of Engineers is cutting down trees at the cemetery. This group that is protecting herons is reaching out to UFC and we have no questions.

MM – our hands are tied. We can't force the feds to come and talk to us. We invited them in the past.

JH – the City of Seattle should have enough muscle and have a say when the UW removes many trees to expand the HUB.

MM – that’s what Jeff was getting at with the management plans, that would intersect with institution overlays...

BS – Overlays are different from Major Institution overlay plans. They do have policies around trees, could become more robust.

MM – some of these major institution plans have goals and the details are worked out down the line. We need to intersect and add a percentage canopy cover to remain.

BS – it’s possible.

JR – There is very little honey in the regulatory process. But there are tree giveaway programs that are currently targeting individual home owners. They are spending a large amount of resources trying to plant one tree. If you target major institutions you can plant many trees in one swoop.

JH – some institutions are doing a good job like Seattle University and Seattle Pacific University. We need to stroke those folks and ask them what the City could do to help.

JR – places to get conifers on the ground. When talking to Jana about her program there was so much time spent on the outreach getting people to accept the tree and that investment is pretty high. Put a bit of honey and tell institutions that if they put together a management plan they will qualify for a tree giveaway program.

SPdB – the reason why the Trees for Neighborhoods program is focusing on residential property is because that represents 67% of the land in the City. Institutional parcels represent 2% of the land in the City. As the program matures and we saturate the residential land use, then we can focus on other management units/land uses. Jana has been exploring opportunities to work with the School District and develop partnerships with other organizations. That’s why I shy away from taking the total budget for the program and dividing it by the number of trees given away because what she is doing is much more than the tree giveaway piece.

MM – On the conifer angle it make sense to get universities involved and get students to do the work.

JR – if we were looking to expand her program major institutions would be a good idea.

SPdB – The Trees for Neighborhood (T4N) applications went out this Monday (8/8) and as of this morning we had 170 applications. Now the work begins assessing the applications and educating the residents. The program is having a great reception.

MM –getting back to agenda items. Jeff would like to get a better understanding of what the departments are doing. Maybe sending out key questions for them to answer?

JR – maybe we can just ask what are specific urban forest goals for departments. The cost/benefit exercise will lead to activities and cost and what benefits they can quantify. If benefits are not accruing to them.

BS – City departments can apply for stormwater discounts.

SPdB – The piece that doesn’t get billed for impervious surface is SDOT’s right-of-way.

JF – Who is the head of the IDT?

SPdB – I convene it. I call for agenda items. When I'm aware of issues that might need to be discussed I bring them up. I keep them abreast of the UFC work.

JR – this is like an annual retreat

SPdB – this is a working meeting. My understanding is that this is following up on the UFC request that Council adopt the UFMP. Council issued a resolution recognizing the UFMP as the guide for both the IDT and the UFC work plans. They are expecting close collaboration by both groups. That's why we put together this meeting, after the Mayor has presented his budget. This would help us coordinate the work plan and for all of us to find ways to collaborate in a productive manner to accomplish the UFMP goals.

JR – that was very helpful because we can look at this agenda we need to focus on creating an updated UDMP that will be adopted by Council. That's the goal.

SPdB – my ulterior motive is that, as the groups work together, we develop a relationship that is complementary with no surprises. We are both towards the same goal in a collaborative manner and not a confrontational manner. I would like to know what the UFC would like to know so the IDT can be prepared with answers instead of saying I'll get back to you on that.

JR – One broad agenda item is a wish list for the UFMP update. Whether it's a tweak to a number or a new goal

JF – do they have minutes? Can we see them?

SPdB – Yes, I can send them out.

MM – That was helpful, Sandra. I like the wish list too. Do it early in the process and pick 4-5 and have a deeper discussion.

JR – open from small tweak to a land use goal, to major new initiatives

MM - Sandra and I talked about me doing a chair statement about bringing the groups together, do an introductions/ice breaker. Early agenda item for an opportunity for Q&A. A big picture conversation to see how this departments interact with trees and then talk about barriers to implementing goals and then talk about the wish list.

SPdB – that's why we discussed a couple of meetings ago the UFMP, the Five-year implementation strategy, the 2011 work plan and the 2010 progress report. Then I sent out the table with all the goals from 2007 to 2011 with a comments column to see what's next for the 2012 update, and I also sent out the land use calculator. All of this has been in preparation for this joint meeting and the 2012 UFMP update.

MM – that makes sense. We can also define major categories within the UFMP projects and policies. Some of the data that we collect... we planted 1,000 trees, but where those might be and do follow up on where they are after five years.

Public comment

SZ – on the UFMP update include more detailed discussion with other entities. Have a specific section on how to approach them. What are they doing to achieve the City's canopy cover goal?

The Commission could present at the end of the year a good steward award. Issue a press release commending people or organizations that have done a good job in supporting Seattle's urban forest.

Great City is looking into the wiki tree inventory. The UFC could become a proponent. This would be an opportunity for community groups to participate, neighborhood councils. There is an iPhone app that you can take a picture of the leaf and it will tell you what tree species it belongs to.

Delivering position papers incrementally might be good. The UFC could ask for feedback from the IDT in a non confronting manner.

Next month's agenda items

Adjourn

Community input

From: John Hushagen [mailto:john@seattletree.com]

Sent: Friday, August 05, 2011 4:37 PM

To: Pinto_de_Bader, Sandra; 'Bird, Nancy'; 'Gordon Bradley'; 'Jeff Reibman'; 'John Floberg'; 'John Small'; 'Matt Mega'; 'Peg Staeheli'; 'Tom Early'

Subject: RE: UFC - new documents posted, UFMP goals table, and canopy calculator

Hello all,

I'm hoping we can agree to continue the conversation about who should be at the big October meeting with the IDT. I feel strongly that sooner rather than later many of the other players in the city that manage trees and large landscapes need to be at the table. It's great for us to gather and laud Parks for planting trees, and stroke SDOT for their work, and applaud Jenna and the OSE folks for their efforts, but to some extent we will be "preaching to the choir." The other players that I believe should be there, among others, are The UW and the Community Colleges, the federal government and the Corps of Engineers, Childrens Hospital, Seattle U and Seattle Pacific U, Boeing, and I'm sure I've left some out. Our mission is to advise the city concerning how the urban forest should be nurtured and grown, but that does not mean, in my mind, that our work should be limited to just advising city government agencies. The City should be making sure that all these players are on the same page about what the Urban Forest Management Plan is all about. I don't agree that this is a Plant Amnesty type of venture. PA is an activist groups that does a lot of education about what should be done, but they have limited influence on the large institutions and businesses.. The vision for what we want the Seattle urban forest to be should start with us and be implemented and promoted by the City agencies, among others. Perhaps we are fixed on what the October meeting is all about, but very soon after that we should be holding another larger summit with more of the players mentioned above so we can move this process forward. Just engaging city agencies to plant more trees and do more tree management will not get us very far toward the stated canopy goals. Have a good weekend.

John Hushagen