

SEATTLE URBAN FORESTRY COMMISSION

John Floberg, Chair • John Small, Vice-Chair
Gordon Bradley • Tom Early • Leif Fixen • Matt Mega • Jeff Reibman • Erik Rundell • Peg Staeheli

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

April 3, 2013

Meeting Notes

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

Attending

Commissioners

John Floberg (JF) - chair
Gordon Bradley (GB)
Tom Early (TE)
Matt Mega (MM)
Jeff Reibman (JR)
Erik Rundell (ER)
Peg Staeheli (PS)

Staff

Sandra Pinto de Bader (SPdB) - OSE
Brent Schmidt (BS) - SCL
David Bayard - SCL
Sarah Calvillo-Hoffman - FAS
Jana Dilley - SPU
Mark Mead - Parks
Nolan Rundquist - SDOT
Brent Schmidt - SCL

Absent- Excused

John Small (JS) – vice-chair
Leif Fixen (LF)

Public

Steve Zemke

NOTE: Meeting notes are not exhaustive. For more details listen to the digital recording of the meeting at: <http://www.seattle.gov/urbanforestrycommission/meetingdocs.htm>

Call to Order

Public comment

Steve - reminded people that Friends of Seattle's Urban Forests has a Facebook page. They are trying to promote communication with people. Has a few comments on the Street Tree Ordinance which was introduced to Council last week. It's important to also keep in mind the private tree ordinance. Has a problem with the issue of major pruning. The ordinance talks about the maximum percentage of foliage that can be removed but doesn't talk about percentage of roots to be removed. There might be a need for a definition in this area. Two inches might not be the measure to consider in the ordinance. Severe crown reduction – very technical area. Nolan – took it out of national standards. Street tree inventory – there is no mention of the importance of native trees in terms of providing habitat value. Last area – there is nothing in here about private trees – see what Portland is doing with tree replacement – The document doesn't talk about size of the trees being removed. There is no inch for inch replacement like in Portland. This is moving before City Council, if UFC wants to give input this is the time.

Approval of March 6 and March 13 meeting notes

ACTION: A motion was made to approve the March 6 meeting notes as amended. The motion was seconded and carried.

ACTION: A motion was made to approve the March 13 meeting notes as written. The motion was seconded and carried.

2012 UFMP Progress Report and 2013 Work Plan

UFMP 2012 progress report:

GB – It's hard to get a sense of what the magnitude of accomplishments compared to the goals. When the report talks about number of trees maintained there is no context in terms of what percentage of parkland trees we are talking about.

JF – With the Green Seattle Partnership it looks like things are going quite well but you wouldn't know that without context being provided. Some of this could benefit from setting the context.

PS – could it be that you change it to clarify.

JF – would be great to have a green light – red light approach.

Mark – the level of detail you want to see is a matter of looking at the amount of information that you put in a report of this type. Accomplishing the work of GSP is supported by multiple partners.

JF – is it possible to set the context?

JR – I think this is a city-wide summary of all departmental actions. A lot of this could be easily put in context with a quick parenthetical explanation.

JF – when looking at this numbers I wonder how this is helping reach the ultimate canopy cover goal.

JR –It would be unrealistic to attach a canopy impact to reLeaf. Would it be canopy impact today or in the future?

GB – some of the measures would be more difficult to put into context. The number of volunteers, what's the goal and how the accomplishment feeds into that.

Mark – industry standard for pruning is 5-years. We maintain trees based on budgets, we are currently on an 18 year cycle. We've discussed this in the UFMP and Budget Issue Papers. Don't have an accurate measure of the impact maintenance has on tree health. That's one of the issues in the field of urban forestry.

JR – I assume that maintenance is dedicated to developed parkland and for forested parklands you don't prune.

Mark – we do hazard tree mitigation and do tree trimming along properties. Don't have a regular program to that.

JF – Curious about the pruning cycle for SCL. We have 18 years for Parks and 14 years for SDOT. We will probably hear about it during SCL's budget briefing coming next in the agenda.

JR – it seems like this is not necessarily a progress report for the 30 year progress. It's more for the goals for the year. Larger context should be set at the time when goals are being established.

JR – for example, the 18 year pruning cycle is something to discuss when budgets are being discussed.

JF – good working agenda item for later in the year if IDT is amenable.

2013 Workplan:

PS – high level question: when we give a dollar figure in the budget how is that different than when you say 'within existing staffing resources'?

SPdB – when there is a line item in the budget dedicated to the work described, then we state it as a number. The rest of the work is considered to fit inside the salary of current staff.

JF – Within existing staff resources, the question is what the amount being allocated for this work is? In order for Seattle to sell UF program it might be a good idea to aggregate that number. It could also be a bad thing to do if something is highlighted and then it's left out.

PS – What are we going to report to the public that we spent on UF? Is it like 1% for the arts? Is there roughly a % for SDOT that is spent on vegetation and trees? That might be an exercise that is not within staff resources.

TE – Is establishment and maintenance part of the tree unit cost for the capital project?

Nolan – sometimes we get maintenance for establishment, but after the project is closed out we are not given extra funds for O&M.

JF – is that a problem?

Nolan – yes.

PS – this could be a 2013 task to then make a recommendation for 2014 recommendation.

TE – how to identify capital project budget and expenditures as well as upcoming maintenance program needs.

JF – we can recommend it but if it's not funded.

TE – it would be helpful to identify the lack of funding that follows capital projects.

PS – could be an evaluation of tradeoffs to use certain funding for tree planting for example in SDOT, do an undeveloped ROW planting where maintenance is more likely.

TE – provide staff training on tree protection practices.

Include in the May agenda – recommendations on UFMP 2013 Work Plan.

SCL Budget presentation

Brent – We just received certification as a Line City USA. Took several months last year to go through the process to show that we educate our workers, do tree planting, follow ANSI ISA standards and BMPs for transmission work and tree work.

GB – Arbor Day Foundation is reaching out to entities that impact trees. UW is a Tree Campus.

Brent – wanted to clarify Peg’s question on our budget. Under \$5M includes transmission dollars; most of that money goes to contractors for vegetation work. Some of the work includes notification and assessment. To answer John’s question, utility pruning budgets tend to swing up and down. Until 2008 budget was hot-spotting and addressing hazards. In 2008 there was a major storm and management committed to a three-year cycle. I can see the difference, in areas where trees are just getting under the wires is very different from maintenance being done on trees that have not been touched in a long time or poorly pruned in the past. Historically budget cycles swing.

Hard to separate how much we are spending in the City and other suburban areas. Feeder systems run from a sub-station into neighborhoods and are based on growth patterns from the past and cross city lines. 159 feeders, try to get around them every three years. Managing that ROW is inside the \$5M.

Work is feeder-based. Have 3 contractors. Cost per mile and cost per site. Nationwide 7% is side trimming. We do 70% of our work as crown reduction (we have more of an impact than most utilities).

Urban Tree replacement program partners with SPU to support the reLeaf program with \$80,000; partners with SDOT for neighborhood street tree plantings for \$75,000; and provides tree replacement certificates for removed private trees with a value of \$75.00/tree.

ER – how many certificates are issued per year?

Brent – varies, before they were done for transmission lines. The number of certificates doesn’t represent number of trees cut down because they are given to people who want them. It takes sometimes more than one year for those to come back.

TE – for transmission and distribution lines?

Brent – yes. Some of our system runs through back yards.

PS – regarding the dollars spent on distribution tree maintenance, could you take a look to see if removing those trees at a faster rate would reduce tree trimming costs in future years?

Brent – we are having that type of discussion every year.

JF – after this meeting are you going to refine the \$5M figure?

Brent – yes, we can make it clearer.

JF – it's difficult to figure out how much you are spending in the City. Will you give it a shot?

Brent – not at this time. Most of the records are pen and paper.

PS – This would be a good thing to get into the UFSP action agenda. (Sandra to ask Brent for language). Automate data gathering of work done. Do advanced planting now for later removals.

GB – In the report we just hear we asked for context. You are saying that you have 1,785 miles of lines and you are working on roughly 600 each year, that means you are going through the system every three years, correct?

PS – IT guys could determine how many miles are in Seattle and get an average cost per mile to figure out how much is being spent in Seattle.

Brent – it depends on the mix of feeders. Industrial areas have fewer trees but you are still counting the miles.

JR – when you are rotating through your network, do you focus on geographical area?

Brent – we prioritize areas with higher number of outages.

JR – you are not working by quadrant.

PS – how do you compare to PSE in terms of data gathering?

Brent – I haven't seen their data lately.

JF – looking at inviting people from Portland to visit us.

GB – if Sandra could lobby for funding for the UFC going to Portland.

TE – have you advertised trees available for planting?

Brent – yes, and interest increases.

PS – I have a neighbor that didn't agree with the scale of the pruning done by SCL. Are certificates offered for that?

Brent – yes, this is done on a case-by-case basis.

Recommendation to DPD on tree preservation in small development projects – initial conversation

JF – Irene put together an email capturing the issues identified during DPD's presentation. WE are working on putting together a letter. What are most important points?

PS – train reviewers (for plan review) and inspection (for the field). Reviewers should be competent to evaluate tree protection plan and its feasibility in the project. Basic training should be that an arborist should be involved.

TE – keeping trees as a conscious element all reviewers are looking at.

PS – if they are saving the tree it has to be show in all the plan documents (with drip line). In all sheets.

JR – update plan standards to include any trees to be saved with drip line. Within plan in erosion control plan include tree preservation plan or notes area. Show things all the way through. Be part of the civil plan standards (would say, identify existing tree to remain, protection, and practices that will be implemented in the field to protect the tree – show fence, how high, how far away, no excavation within this zone, etc.) Show a section if they are on a slope.

Civil plans should include tree protection notes and details. (City of Seattle site planning notes).

MM – need an audit process to see if the review is being done.

PS – a letter from UFC to DPD would help brush up on this training.

JR – it would be most powerful to propose BMPs for review to be implemented:

- DPD arborist (or arborist supporting from other department) train reviewers when to use consultation tree resources
- How to evaluate tree protection plan to see if it's adequate and viable within the context of the larger development

Field inspection staff should be trained to evaluate the tree protection plan implementation and should be flagged as an item to be in place before excavation would begin. Add to pre-construction check-list.

Differentiate three levels of trees:

Trees being protected

Exceptional trees being protected and

Trees being used for Green Factor

Peg will put together a first draft. Jeff to review.

GB – signs to protect trees, signs to face inward and outward so builders and public are aware of the need to protect the tree.

UFSP update process

(Moved to next meeting)

New business and announcements

Adjourn

Community input:

From: Dolores Ranhofer [mailto:d.ranhofer@gmail.com]

Sent: Tuesday, March 19, 2013 9:43 PM

To: Pinto_de_Bader, Sandra

Cc: stevezemke@msn.com

Subject: Tree removal in Seward Park

Dear Ms. Pinto de Bader,

I attended a meeting tonight in which Steve Zemke was a participant and as an aside to the meeting he mentioned that he was part of an organization that advocated saving trees in the City of Seattle.

After the meeting, I asked him if he was familiar with the CSO Project in Seward Park in which a 2.4 million gallon overflow tank was to be incorporated into Seward Park. There are two alternatives for the location. The recommended alternative is under the tennis courts and the second alternative is under the South Parking Lot. Both of these alternatives will result in tree removal; however, the Tennis Court option results in the removal of 43 trees while the South Parking Lot option results in the removal of 26 trees. See the Final Environmental Impact Statement Henderson Basin 44 CSO Reduction Project dated January 2013, Section 7 figures 7-1 and 7-2. None of the trees are considered significant. Some are not native. However, they all provide habitat for a large bird population that resides in the park. Once removed, even if some of trees are replanted, it will take a number of years for the trees to reach maturity thus having an impact on the wildlife and bird populations in the park.

Mr. Zemke suggested that I ask you to send this information to all the commissioners, and I would appreciate your doing so.

Thanks you,

Dolores Ranhofer

d.ranhofer@gmail.com