

SEATTLE URBAN FORESTRY COMMISSION

Leif Fixen, Chair • Tom Early, Vice-Chair

Gordon Bradley • Donna Kostka • Richard Martin • Joanna Nelson de Flores • Jeff Reibman • Erik Rundell • Steve Zemke

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

May 13, 2015

Meeting Notes

Seattle Municipal Tower, Room 2750 (27th floor)
700 5th Avenue, Seattle

Attending

Commissioners

Tom Early – vice chair
Gordon Bradley
Donna Kostka
Richard Martin
Joanna Nelson de Flores
Jeff Reibman
Steve Zemke
Erik Rundell

Staff

Sandra Pinto de Bader - OSE
Deborah Brown – Parks
Garrett Farrell - Parks
Andy Sheffer - Parks

Guests

Councilmember Sally Bagshaw

Public

Linda Murtfeldt

Absent- Excused

Leif Fixen - chair

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>

NOTE: Due to a technical malfunction there is no digital recording for this meeting.

Call to order

Tom is acting chair and called the meeting to order.

Chair report

Tom read the Commission's mission and the agenda.

Tom also talked about the agenda for CM Bagshaw's visit. Mainly he will give an update of work done since her last visit and will mention the items the Commission will be working on in the next couple of months.

Councilmember Sally Bagshaw visit

Tom updated CM Bagshaw on work done by the UFC since her last visit in January.

The UFC has been working on:

- Parks' Supplemental Use Guidelines for Natural Areas and Greenbelts
 - o UFC was briefed by Parks staff
 - o UFC participated in focus groups and Mini Summit
- Seattle reLeaf

- Commission was briefed on program accomplishments: Tree Ambassador project and Trees for Neighborhoods project
- Green Seattle Partnership
 - UFC was briefed on timeline for the GSP 20-year Strategic Plan update
 - UFC will be providing input on this update
- Arboretum Multi-use Trail
 - The Commission was briefed by Project staff
 - Commissioner walked the site
 - Project staff came back to answer questions for the first draft letter of recommendation
 - Commission is revising the letter and voting on it today (5/13)
- Cheasty Greenspace Mountain Bike Pilot Program
 - UFC was briefed by project supporters
 - UFC did a site tour
 - UFC decided to issue a letter focusing on concerns about the site hydrology
- Environmentally Critical Areas update and Low Impact Development update
 - UFC was briefed by DPD staff
 - UFC will provide input once draft documents are available
- Comp Plan update
 - UFC has been working with DPD to provide input
 - UFC visited with Planning Commission representative and will be working together on Comp Plan update
 - Initial focus on the ECA element

Upcoming briefings:

- Pruning for views – Parks
- DPD current tree protection code enforcement – DPD
- Trees and Sidewalks Operations Plan – SDOT
 - This is the third briefing on this plan. The UFC has been providing input all along.
- Stormwater Code update – DPD
- Right-of-Way Improvement Manual update – SDOT
- Freight Master Plan - SDOT

CM Bagshaw wanted to include green gardens and green streets as part of this conversation. CM Bagshaw thanked the UFC for the very important work they do.

She went to Vancouver last year and visited their green gardens (they have close to 800 of them). They are promoting gardens that neighbors take care of. She approached SDOT and SPU to consider hiring a volunteer coordinator to lead this work in Seattle. In Vancouver, garden spaces are up for adoption and neighbors commit to taking care of a space for one year. If they don't want to continue then the space goes up for adoption. These spaces are community gathering places. CM Bagshaw believes this idea ties nicely with green streets and with SDOT's Greenways (non-arterial streets for biking and walking). Portland has 65 miles of greenways. Friends of Trees groups in Portland help neighbors with maintenance. In Seattle we now have 23 neighborhoods that are part of the Seattle Greenways. The first priority would be to take care of existing trees.

UFC question: Is there a difference between green streets and greenways?

CM Bagshaw's answer: Greenways are non-arterial for bikes and pedestrians. Green gardens are spot locations. In some cases they have taken asphalt out in order to introduce a garden.

UFC comment: it's important to clarify that there is a tree requirement. When we had a briefing from SDOT and realized they had not included trees in their greenways. That can be confusing when they use the 'green' term. If it's a green street it should have trees as an element.

CM Bagshaw's answer: that's why she asked Parks and SPU to add a position to coordinate this effort. She introduced this idea as part of the eco-district effort taking place in neighborhoods such as Capitol Hill. She would like to see the UFC participating more actively in these efforts.

UFC question: do gardens in Vancouver include flowers and food?

CM Bagshaw's answer: yes. Both.

UFC comment: it's important to look at the health implications of planting edible plants close to streets.

CM Bagshaw's answer: they were very sophisticated and they had clear guidelines.

UFC question: in terms of getting more space available, the UFC is currently working with SDOT on the Right-of-Way Improvement Manual. Maybe the UFC could bring that message about green gardens and green streets back to SDOT. Would there be incentives provided to encourage such installations maybe through GreenFactor or stormwater credits?

CM Bagshaw's answer: GreenFactor needs to be strengthened so planting St. John's Worth doesn't provide all the points required. Somehow Vancouver has it figured out.

UFC question: are Vancouver's gardens located mainly on residential areas?

CM Bagshaw's answer: yes, mostly in residential areas. Young people are very involved.

UFC comment: maybe apply these ideas to SDOT right-of-way? Tree Ambassador might work on landscape renewal projects? reLeaf reported that there is a lot of interest in the program and would be great to grow and empower the program.

UFC comment: reach out to businesses like Loews and Home Depot maybe through a Council resolution encouraging all business that sell plants to stop selling invasive plants. There have been efforts in the past from the Washington Plant Society and others. The time is ripe to try and do this again. King County Native Plants have great links to recommendations for what to plant and what not to plant.

UFC Comment: the Mayor came to a recent UFC meeting and he said that he is going to give direction to DPD to resume work on a tree ordinance for private property. There are good opportunities to strengthen compliance. SDOT is already using permits for tree pruning and removal.

UFC Comment: We are looking forward to the canopy cover assessment that will be done in July.

UFC Comment: The Commission is interested in having a strong tree component in the new Comp Plan update.

Steve mentioned that he believes DPD has a conflict of interest when overseeing the Comp Plan update and the tree protection for trees on private property.

Architects and developers tend to avoid being creative in the ROW because they want to avoid issues with SDOT standards. Hopefully the ROWIM update will take care of that. The Commission has made recommendations to SDOT and DPD to provide enough canopy space to accommodate a tree's canopy and enough soil to accommodate a mature tree. One of the challenges is the engineering component with very strict application of standards where they are not necessarily applicable which impede design solutions that would be more creative and better for trees. Empowering reviewers to be more flexible would be good.

Sandra will request a briefing as a way to provide information to SDOT plan reviewers in order for them to understand issues that preclude creative solutions.

CM Bagshaw also recommended the UFC get involved on the Vine Street project. Neighbors are very engaged to apply Bell Street elements to Vine Street.

UFC Comment: need to look at the language on tree removal dependent on property owner being able to develop the property to its fullest potential. Language should be revised.

CM Bagshaw's answer: could do a *quid pro quo* so if someone takes out a mature tree they need to plant "x" amount of trees elsewhere. That would be a policy to support ongoing tree planting.

CM Bagshaw asked Jeff Reibman to help her make recommendations to SDOT on these issues.

UFC Comment: would like to calculate how many trees we need to plant to get to our 30% goal once we have the most recent canopy cover.

CM Bagshaw comment: She has an idea related to the Arboretum. Asked the UFC to visualize putting a connecting bike/ped trail from Foster Island for people to walk and bike all the way down to Madison Park. This is an upcoming issue for the UFC to be aware of.

Sandra to find out who would provide a briefing on the pollinator pathway.

Parks briefing on pruning for views – Deborah Brown (Parks)

Deborah Brown from the Parks Department briefed the Commission on the current practice for pruning for views. Current practice:

- They have a 3-page document describing requirements. This is a comprehensive document but not very clear for home owners.
- Refers to ISA and NAA standards but doesn't give specific requirements or specifications.
- Includes a maintenance agreement where the home owner is expected to do restoration work but this is very hard to enforce.
- Based on City of Seattle tree policy from 2001.

Goals include:

- Maintaining healthy trees and the urban forest

- Protect steep slopes
- Provide a clear permitting process for homeowners, tree care companies, and Parks staff.
- Bring in line with other City departments. They used to refer people to a DPD Client Assistance Memo that had a lot more information that was not specific to Parks property.
- Be fair to all applicants.

Parks accommodates views if it can be done in a way that doesn't harm trees. Parks want to be good neighbors. They would like to have a pictorial guide in the permit application so that people are clear on what will be and won't be approved. Parks will not allow tree topping.

If more than 25% of the canopy is removed that would be over pruning and wouldn't be approved.

Timeline for policy update:

- May – December 2015 to review policy changes internally
- Parks Board Review late summer 2015
- Public/UFC review late fall 2015
- Sprint 2016 issue revised permit policy.

UFC Comment: is part of the process reviewing what other cities are doing in the region? We might not necessarily base the update on how we've done things in the past. Where does the DPD ordinance fit into this policy?

Answer: Haven't thought of that but will consider doing it. Parks will not be removing trees to accommodate views. The new policy will be more restrictive than past practice.

Currently there is a \$130 fee. They will move to higher fee that will include site visits to talk to the homeowner to manage expectations.

UFC question: what happens if the home owner tops trees anyway?

Answer: fines will be assessed and the amounts are being considered.

UFC question: who does the work?

Answer: private tree care companies that should be certified.

UFC question: do you have a list of approved tree service companies? It will be important to give more teeth to the policy.

Answer: not now but might use a similar method to what SDOT is currently doing with a registry.

UFC question: would Parks prune windows for the public to be able to see nests of endangered species?

Answer: At this time Parks crews work on preserving view corridors.

UFC question: Could this work be paid for by a community group if they come up with the funds?

Answer: that could be considered.

UFC comment: Would like to encourage Parks to join SDOT's tree care company registry to have a more concerted effort for good tree work to be encouraged citywide.

UFC question: do Parks receive geotech reports to evaluate slope stability?

Answer: not at this point but will consider including in the future.

Revised Arboretum Mixed-use Trail letter of recommendation – discussion and possible vote

Andy Sheffer and Garrett Farrell joined the Commission and mentioned that they appreciate the interaction with the Commission. They stressed the importance that clearly state that this project is part of the Arboretum Master Plan. They understand the concerns the Commission has.

The last Master Plan was from the '70s, the most recent is in 2001 and they might be looking at the 20 year mark.

Steve talked about his concerns from a habitat point of view. It would be important to have the conversation about the impacts and the current city context. Some of these trees are pretty old.

UFC comment: did you consider incorporating the current pedestrian trail?

Answer: that trail is a historic path from the Olmsted plan. It couldn't be used for multi-modal transportation. The project team responded to comments from Friends of Olmsted.

UFC comment: our native trees need to be removed in order to accommodate foreign collections. Maybe the Arboretum could consider ways to work on the transition between the native matrix and the collections?

UFC question: How did you arrive at 14 ft width? Burke Gilman is 8 ft wide.

Answer: they have been getting a lot of complaints about the Gilman trail not accommodating current standards.

UFC Comment: we might need to be creative and look at context and find a way to slow people down.

Answer: the project team included curves on the trail to slow people down and to avoid removing more trees. They are working to accommodate all the users. They decided not to follow AHSTO guidelines in order not to make the path even wider. It's a difficult situation.

UFC question: are there other significant projects coming up that the UFC should be aware of?

Answer: The North entry. This is the area where the ramps from 520 go in and out of the arboretum. They are hoping that the property will be passed on to parks.

UFC question: have they considered options to make the trail narrower?

Answer: they used a multi-modal transportation engineer as a consultant. The width is determined by ASHTO standards.

UFC question: how do you compare with the Greenlake trail?

Answer: they don't expect nearly as much traffic. They have upright signage. If there is enough use they'll introduce the center line and more specific signage.

Bylaws update and protocols review

Moved to next meeting.

Public comment

None

New business and announcements

Joanna: she will be absent from May 25 to August 25. She also invited everyone to the Forterra Annual Breakfast.

The Commission would like to invite Jessica Finn Coven (new OSE director) to a meeting.

Gordon: in 1991 the Grove Management Plan was put together – Gordon participated. They put together a tool box to incorporate urban forestry elements to the Comp Plan. Gordon will scan and distribute the document.

Adjourn

Public input:

From: Cass Turnbull [mailto:cassturnbull@comcast.net]

Sent: Saturday, May 09, 2015 6:47 AM

To: Pinto De Bader, Sandra; o.rhyan@gmail.com; 'Amber Vora'; 'Andrea Okomski'; 'Andrew Kirsh'; 'Armando Paz'; 'Barbara O'Halloran'; 'Becky Chaney'; Bradburd, Bill; 'Bonnie Miller'; 'Brian Ramey'; Bultmann, Jan; 'Cheryl Trivison'; Clifthorne, Evan; 'Crescent Calimpong'; 'David Miller'; 'Elizabeth Campbell'; 'Eric Carlson'; 'Heidi Siegelbaum'; Murphy-Ouellette, Jeanie; 'JeanieMurphy'; 'John Dixon'; 'Kathy Colombo'; 'Kathy Holzer'; 'Kay Shoudy'; 'Ken Yocom'; 'Kyle Stetler'; larrylange36@comcast.net; 'Lauren Urgenson'; 'Linda Murtfeldt'; 'Liz Kearns'; 'Manly Norris'; 'Margaret Thouless'; 'Mark Ahlness'; 'Mary Fleck'; 'Matt Lee'; maxsilver@gmail.com; McConaghy, Eric; 'Melissa Poe'; 'Michael Oxman'; 'Mike Ruby'; 'Paige Hulse'; 'Pat Naumann'; 'Pat Whempner'; 'Patrick Mann'; 'Richard Ellison'; 'Rory Denovan'; 'Ruth Williams'; 'Sara Welch'; 'Shelly Leonard'; 'Siegelbaum, Heidi'; 'Stephen Schreck'; 'Steve Zemke'; 'Susan North'; 'Susan Zeman'; 'Tatiana Choulika'; 'Toby Ross'; 'Toby Thaler'; 'Vera Giampietro'; 'Wallis Bolz'

Cc: 'Cass Turnbull'

Subject: Comprehensive Plan and Urban Canopy

[Open Letter to the Urban Forestry Commission](#)

Re: The Comprehensive Plan update

This is our once in 10 year chance to get it right. Please check out these suggestions.

In my opinion, goals are best set by thinking of what should be done, not by what is likely to be achieved.

Thank you for all the good work you do. You are our best hope. Please see below.

Cass Turnbull
206-783-9093

05-08-15

Written the help of several ‘tree people’ in the larger community, here is a 14 item wish list for the new Seattle Comprehensive Plan.

1) The most essential element for urban forestry in the comp plan is **retaining the canopy goal of 40%**. All the major cities in the nation have canopy goals. For comparison Philadelphia's goal is 30%, Washington D.C.'s is 40%, and Pittsburgh's is 60%. Similarly we should retain the **no-net loss of canopy** cover goal.

2) Add a more **comprehensive list of Urban Forestry benefits** to in the vision statement. Sample. "*the Urban Forest is one of Seattle's most valued capital and cultural assets. It is an integral component of a healthy, livable, environmentally responsible, and economically robust city. It provides essential green infrastructure, social and ecosystem services. Because of the pressures of urbanization and population density we recognize that maintaining a diverse, healthy and sufficient Urban Forest requires more than just tree planting. It requires commitment, human and political intervention and ongoing stewardship.*"

3) Add **specific Urban Forestry goals to each separate element of the Comprehensive Plan**. Those elements are: transportation, land use, utilities, health, environmental sustainability, livability, social justice, and economics. The benefits of trees cross-agency but the canopy is administered and funded per single agency budget. The urban canopy should be referred to as an **essential public service** and a **capital asset** which is both publically and privately owned.

4) The comprehensive plan or the UF ordinance authorizes the creation of a **Tree Fund for the promotion, protection and expansion of UF**. The fund is not to be used in lieu of regular department funding. Funds may consist of donations, grants, general funds, taxes, collections of tree related penalties and fees, mitigation fees, fees in lieu of tree-replacement or preservation. Funding is tied to amount of development and gray infrastructure (concrete) investment.

5) Comprehensive plan recognizes the Urban Forestry Commission and The Urban Forest Stewardship Plan.

6) The City, working through the Urban Forestry Commission, will create an annual **State of Urban Forest Report**. To do so, the named authority (Commission or DSE) is authorized to require **regular inventories**, collect data through the use of a tree removal permit system and track tree planting. Tree canopy impact assessments are required for changes to building codes and city policies. The State of the Urban Forest Report may include assessment of customer service and enforcement practices.

7) Comprehensive plan authorizes the Urban Forest Commission's updates to **the Urban Forest Stewardship Plan and sees that recommendations are incorporated** into City planning, budgets, laws and enforcement practices.

8) **Revise open space goals upward**. Since the amount of potential canopy cover is determined by the total amount of planting spaces (the combination of public and private open space) we should revise these goals upward, not downward. The nationally recognized goal for public open space is cities 1 acre for every 100 residents. The current proposed comprehensive plan proposes .5 acres per every 1,000 residents in **Urban Villages**.

This goal should be revised heavily upward because the UVs lack the private open space. Simultaneously, they are subject to intensified effects of urbanization such as increasing storm water runoff, the heat island effect, lack of habitat, particulate air and noise pollution.

Similarly the comprehensive plan lacks sufficient open space goals in **manufacturing-industrial** area. Current recommendation of *no open space requirements* should be replaced. The zone land is closest to water courses and wetlands; has increased amounts of concrete that produces stormwater run-off overloads; and which exacerbates the Heat Island effect; and these areas are the least ‘livable’ of the lower income wage earners who work there and reside nearby.

9) **Authorize creation of the Department of Sustainability and the Environment to achieve Urban Forestry goals.** OSE becomes DSE and it is the official lead agency and advocate for Urban Forestry in Seattle. DSE receives the authority, responsibility, and fiscal support which will be sufficient to reach canopy goals.

10) DSE (or other entity) **is** authorized to appoint a **City Forester who will have singular authority** over all City Department arborists.

11) **City Forester coordinates goals and activities** between departments and other City institutions, and the City's many UF stakeholders.

12) DSE or OSE is mandated to **create a tree preservation ordinance** with input from all stakeholders.

13) **DSE is tasked with oversight** and integration of various planning documents, ordinances, codes and policies with regards to the Urban Forest.

Respectfully,

Cass Turnbull

TreePAC/PlantAmnesty

Founder/President