

## SEATTLE URBAN FORESTRY COMMISSION

Tom Early, Chair • Steve Zemke, Vice-Chair  
Weston Brinkley • Leif Fixen • Mariska Kecskes • Donna Kostka • Richard Martin • Joanna Nelson de Flores  
Erik Rundell • Andrew Zellers

*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 13, 2016**

### Meeting Notes

Seattle Municipal Tower, Room 2750 (27<sup>th</sup> floor)  
700 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Seattle

#### Attending

##### Commissioners

Steve Zemke – vice-chair  
Leif Fixen  
Mariska Kecskes  
Donna Kostka  
Joanna Nelson de Flores  
Erik Rundell  
Andrew Zellers

##### Staff

Sandra Pinto de Bader - OSE  
Kevin O’Neill - SDOT

##### Public

Peter Donahue

#### Absent- Excused

Tom Early – chair  
Weston Brinkley  
Richard Martin

**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

Steve Zemke chaired the meeting. He adjusted the agenda and moved the SDOT presentation to 4:00 p.m.

#### Public comment

Peter Donahue – He is a volunteer with GSP. He has been volunteering at Mount Baker for three years. He has been having trouble with a homeowners association that wants to remove the trees he has planted as part of a restoration project. Jon Jainga from Parks is the person in charge of GSP. Parks doesn’t have a clear policy on this. He is trying to better understand the issue and the Commission’s take on it.

#### Chair report

Forterra is having its annual breakfast on April 27 and would be delighted to have commissioners attend.

Steve mentioned upcoming urban forestry trainings:

##### [“Urban Forest Symposium”](#)

*May 17, University of Washington Center for Urban Horticulture, Seattle*

The 2016 Urban Forest Symposium will explore approaches to sustaining the urban forest in the face of this rapid densification.

### [“Quality Trees, Quality Cities”](#)

*June 21, Bellevue, WA*

Communities are cleaner, healthier and more livable when trees and other public assets are well cared for. Adopting best practices for trees can improve the quality of your city while saving time and money.

### [“2016 Community Tree Management Institute \(CTMI\)”](#)

*Sept, Oct, Nov 2016 – Three sessions each month, 3-days each*

CTMI is an intensive training and professional development course covering topics relevant to urban and community forestry management in the Pacific Northwest.

### **Adoption of March 2 and March 9 meeting notes**

**ACTION: A motion to approve the March 2 meeting notes as written was made, seconded, and approved.**

**ACTION: A motion to approve the March 9 meeting notes as amended was made, seconded, and approved.**

### **Curb Space allocation and trees – SDOT**

Kevin O’Neill is a manager in SDOT’s Policy and Planning division. SDOT is leading the Transportation Element of the Comprehensive Plan. He will talk about the right-of-way (ROW) allocation piece that will inform the Comp Plan.

The study has done detailed analysis of curb space use downtown. SDOT worked on the Move Seattle plan to inform the transportation levy. The Move Seattle Plan was closely coordinated with the Mayor’s Office to describe what was really important to the Mayor, specifically how to develop an integrated transportation system. Move Seattle laid out a set of priorities, including priority capital projects which ended up being funded by the levy. The idea is to find ways to bring the different modal plans to actual applications on a corridor.

The next step was to include some of these elements to the Comp Plan (which is adopted by Council). The ROW has three essential zones: pedestrian realm, travel way (dedicated to movement), and the flex zone often at the curb line (loading, access, parking, green stormwater infrastructure, etc.). Different demands are placed on the ROW increased by the need to provide open/green space. There is a host of needs for the ROW that go beyond mobility. Demands for the ROW are expanding and they also have to accommodate the tremendous growth the Comp Plan expects.

There are six primary functions to be accommodated in the ROW (27% of the land is ROW):

- Access for commerce
- Access for people
- Activation
- Greening

- Mobility
- Storage

UFC comment: would like to recommend using 'mitigation of environmental impacts' instead of 'greening' because this is not just an issue of aesthetics. Trees are extremely important.

Response: the way policies are written suggests that greening is an essential function of the ROW.

Seattle ROW allocation goal: allocate space on Seattle's streets to safely and efficiently connect and move people and goods to their destinations while creating inviting spaces within the ROW. The outcome is making the best use of the streets we have.

They are working to determine what essential functions can be accommodated in the ROW.

UFC comment: it's going to be important to shift the discussion to include the space above and the space below the ROW which end up impacting the urban forest. Trees also help increase commerce and make the city more pleasant.

Response: that's a really good point and will work on incorporating that.

UFC comment: SDOT has used 'green' in some cases such as green streets that don't really involve trees.

Response: that term can be confusing such as the way it's used on Greenways and Green Streets.

UFC comment: in some areas we could flip things around so greening and activation take precedence.

The Comp Plan is going to Council in May. Then Council will begin their public process.

### **Current Tree Issues – discussion**

#### **- West Seattle clearing for private views**

Sandra shared the news release from the City Attorney's office. She will keep an eye on this and will bring back to the Commission to discuss.

#### **- Mount Baker GSP restoration planting and private view**

The UFC will put together a series of questions to hand out to Parks to prepare for a briefing:

1. How many agreements are being enforced?
2. What properties are encumbered with this type of agreement?
3. Who are the parties to these agreements?
4. What's the authority under which they were issued, what's their durability and how can they be terminated?
5. Are the agreements even valid and enforceable?
6. Was the representative of the Parks department who signed the agreement holding the authority to relinquish view rights of City owned lands?
7. How are these agreements recorded and information passed down from staff to staff?
8. What's the City's current policy on entering into these types of agreements? How do individual agreements conform or conflict with current Parks and City (UFSP) policy?
9. Is it time to stop pruning trees for views?

10. It seems that the HOA referenced in the article might not be upholding their side of the agreement in terms of maintenance – is GSP receiving funding from that HOW?

- **Street Tree removal on Fremont**

Sandra shared the information she received from SDOT about this issue;

The adjacent property owner has been issued a permit from SDCI to make changes to the structures on the property including a new driveway approach to support a permitted Accessory Dwelling Unit. SDOT was asked to review an Arborist's report and approve the removal of the street trees before construction began.

SDOT approved removal and replacement of the trees based upon several factors: structural shape/integrity of the main leaders, their proximity to the new driveway approach to support a permitted Accessory Dwelling Unit, their proximity to the intersection, and lastly the invasive nature of the Ailanthus tree, also known as Tree of Heaven. The Tree of Heaven is classified as a Class C Noxious Weed by King County weed board, and is recommended for control for a variety of reasons. For more information visit: <http://www.nwcb.wa.gov/detail.asp?weed=174>. Replacing this tree can help reduce current and future impacts to other parts of our urban forest.

Though, none of the reasons mentioned above alone would necessarily warrant removal, the combination of factors led SDOT to the conclusion that the replacing these trees with large healthy, structurally sound trees grown specifically for the urban setting would be a better long term outcome for the community.

SDOT will be providing a two for one replacement of these trees and will work with the neighborhood to identify locations and suitable tree species for at least 10 additional street trees for fall planting that will accelerate a portion of SDOT's citywide street tree management plan. Planting in the fall gives the trees the greatest chance for rapid establishment and ensures we make the best possible investment in tree locations and species.

- **Toll Brother's development of former Seattle Children's Home property – SEPA appeal by Future Queen Anne**

Leif might be able to attend and affirm what the Commission stated in the letter of recommendation. Sandra will send the email to Jeff Reibman to see if he would be interested in participating as a witness. The Commission discussed the issue. Sandra will reach out to Jeff, Leif and Tom to see if anyone can participate.

- **Joint management of trees by Parks and SDOT (example: Oxbow Park)**

Donna mentioned that commissioners were surprised to learn, during the SDOT tour of Oxbow Park, that trees in very close proximity are maintained by different departments. Trees planted during the 2015 Arbor Day celebration inside Oxbow Park are maintained by the Parks Department while trees planted on the sideway right next to the Park are maintained by SDOT.

Sandra mentioned that this type of coordination had been brought up by the Commission during then Mayor McGinn's visit with the UFC and that he mentioned that there are issues related to funding sources ('color of money') and unions.

**Public comment**

Peter Donahue – regarding the issue of the Parks contract with the Mount Baker home owners association to protect private views – he would like to understand these types of contracts. As a forest steward he doesn't want to be put in conflict with homeowners associations.

### **New business and announcements**

None

### **Adjourn**

Public input

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**From:** Ellie Rose [mailto:elro11@yahoo.com]

**Sent:** Monday, April 04, 2016 12:52 PM

**To:** dePlace, Brian; Dewald, Shane; Steel, Angela; katie.kowalczyk@seattle.gov; Beaton, Kristine; hanna.macintosh@seattle.gov; Morgan, Darren; Sawant, Kshama; Rundquist, Nolan; O'Brien, Mike; Pinto de Bader, Sandra

**Subject:** Considering contacting local media about lack of consideration of citizen input on neighborhood tree removal

To Seattle Mayor Ed Murray, Darren Morgan and Nolan Rundquist -

I and other neighbors are in the process of deciding about contacting local television and print media to draw attention to the fact that public input on neighborhood tree removal is being ignored. I base this on the fact that that despite over 30 emails and calls of protest about the tree removal on N. Motor Place, the public comment appears it have been no more than a pro-forma letter-writing exercise, as we still have one day left in the public comment period, and no parking signs for tree removal already ring the site.

Tree removal in Seattle neighborhoods is a hot-button issue in light of the recent West Seattle clear cut. I believe citizen concerns will be heartily received by the public.

Of the four remaining trees, if only the two western-most Horse Chestnuts were to be removed, the home owner could still proceed with all her development plans. I implore you to revoke the permitting of the removal of the two remaining eastern-most trees on the parking strip. The homeowner has told me that the Horse Chestnut on the farthest east end of Motor Pl. (illegally removed due to improper notice protocols) did not need to come down, as she realizes she won't have the view she wanted anyway, due to the presence of other trees not on her property. So the remaining Horse Chestnut and Tree of Heaven could stay, allowing heavy equipment to get in and out of the property with minimal damage, if any, to the Tree of Heaven.

The Tree of Heaven and eastern-most Horse Chestnut would at least preserve some sound and sight protection from nearby Highway 99 as well as preserving some of the canopy, habitat, stor water mitigation and air-cleaning properties much needed in our increasingly de-nuded neighborhood.

Replacing these mature trees with small trees is not in any way a solution to maintaining the City's stated goals of increasing tree canopy and creating livable neighborhoods. Keeping some of the canopy will also reduce the negative impacts on

surrounding property values. I and two other of my neighbors moved to this corner in great part because of the tree coverage in the immediate vicinity.

There is no pressing need to remove the easternmost trees. As for the Tree of Heaven being invasive, we are in a highly developed urban environment in which every square inch is being tended by someone. I have offered to pay for having someone remove any sprouts on the homeowner's property, as well as raking the leaves myself. This tree is doing a great service to the neighborhood in a variety of important ways, including meeting Seattle's Climate Action Plan for slowing global warming and maintaining a desirable and livable neighborhood.

I prefer not to spend my time advocating for tree preservation, but I and others are deeply committed to this issue and will do whatever is necessary to draw attention to fact that citizen input is not being properly considered. PLEASE preserve at least two of these important street trees which no not need to be destroyed.

Sincerely,

Ellie Rose

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**From:** Future Queen Anne [mailto:FutureQueenAnne@outlook.com]  
**Sent:** Monday, April 04, 2016 3:17 PM  
**To:** Pinto de Bader, Sandra  
**Cc:** terri@johnstonpartnerships.com  
**Subject:** Appeal of City approval for Toll development

Dear Seattle Urban Forestry Commission,

Future Queen Anne has filed an appeal of the City's approval of Toll's redevelopment of the former Seattle Children's Home campus. The Streamlined Design Review is not appealable, but the SEPA decision can be appealed.

One of the SEPA issues is the trees. We will argue that the City failed to adequately assess the impacts of this large development on the trees. We will also argue that the trees in the Right-of-Way should be considered as part of a grove, given their location adjoining the property, not in the parking strip.

We appreciated your letter dated December, 2014 which addressed this and asked DPD and SDOT:

"3. DPD and SDOT Directors to review and approve whether or not the grove designation applies to this American Elms site. The Commission believes the Director's Rule intended the statement on street trees not being part of a grove to protect the ability of the City to do improvements in the right of way according to city infrastructure standards and not be encumbered by the grove definition. Specifically these particular trees are located back of sidewalk and do not impact the city's ability to make improvements within the right-of-way."

The preliminary hearing is scheduled for this Thursday, April 7. The Appeal Hearing will be held May 17. We are putting together our witness list and a representative from the Commission would be helpful. Would a representative be willing to be a witness to give expert opinion on the grove question?

Thank you for your input along the way, and for your consideration. We continue to work to shape this development into a more balanced outcome.

Please let us know at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,

Terri Johnston  
on behalf of Future Queen Anne

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**From:** Barbara Candiotti [mailto:imagine007@msn.com]  
**Sent:** Sunday, April 03, 2016 9:50 PM  
**To:** Henry, Brian; Kubly, Scott; Pinto de Bader, Sandra; O'Brien, Mike  
**Cc:** dePlace, Brian; Dewald, Shane; Steel, Angela; katie.kowalczyk@seattle.gov; Beaton, Kristine; hanna.macintosh@seattle.gov; Morgan, Darren; Sawant, Kshama; DOT\_SeattleTrees  
**Subject:** Objection to tree removal on N. Motor Pl.

**Subject:** Tree amnesty request for four (4) mature, healthy trees.

*Note: This would have been a request for amnesty for five (5) trees had one not been destroyed improperly.*

**Location:** Four (4) Horse Chestnuts and one (1) tree of heaven located on the parking strip of 4253 Woodland Park Ave N.

**History:** On March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2016 the property owner of 4253 Woodland Park Ave. N, Kerstin Gleim, sent a notice of her intent to remodel her house to the neighborhood block watch email list. In her notice she indicated that "2 or 3" parking strip trees on Motor Place would come down." She also stated that "construction is scheduled to start on March 21".

As a neighbor directly across the street east of this location, I was deeply concerned about the potential removal of these mature, healthy street trees. I looked up the City of Seattle's municipal code pertaining to street tree removal and discovered the trees would need to be posted with a 14-day public comment notice. City of Seattle Municipal Code 15.43.030, [15.43.030 - Street Use permits required](#).

Every day after the block watch notice, I looked for the proper posting to appear on the trees so I could express my concerns per city code. As each day passed with no posting I became increasingly concerned. I emailed and called the city arborist, Timothy Griffith, about my concerns. Timothy apologized for not putting up the proper postings as he had run out of printed notices the day he visited the site.

On Monday, March 21<sup>st</sup> (one day before the trees were to be destroyed) I sent out an urgent email to several City of Seattle officials informing them that proper notice had not been placed on these trees and voiced my opposition to the destruction of the trees.

On Tuesday, March 22<sup>nd</sup>, SDOT destroyed one Horse Chestnut tree on the east end of N. Motor Pl. without proper 14-day comment notice. The tree removal operation stopped and subsequently the remaining four trees, three (3) Horse Chestnut and one (1) tree of heaven were properly posted with 14 day public comment notice.

**My Public Comments regarding this matter:**

First, I am outraged that one of the Horse Chestnut trees was [illegally] destroyed without proper 14-day notice as required by City Code.

The remaining four (4) trees together provide a huge canopy and also support a large bird population, as well as storm water mitigation. This canopy covers the majority of the street, N. Motor Pl. adjacent to them. The benefits of this canopy is substantial. Here are just a few points:

1. *"Studies have documented reduction of temperature in urban heat islands on an annual and daily basis. At the household level, if you shade a house during the hotter times of year, especially if you shade the air conditioner itself, people see a significant reduction in their warm-weather power bills. At the neighborhood level, the tree canopy has been shown to moderate urban heat island effects. Most urban and suburban areas have open landscape and pavement structures that absorb heat and reemit heat. A tree canopy over the same environment diminishes heat through shade and evapotranspiration. That is the process by which the tree canopy produces water and water cools the air,"* – Dr. Kathleen Wolf, Ph. D, University of Washington, College of the Environment School of Environmental & Forest Sciences, [Networx.com](http://Networx.com)
2. *"Metro nature - including trees, parks, gardens, and natural areas - enhance quality of life in cities and towns. The experience of nature improves human health and well-being in many ways. Nearly 40 years of scientific studies tell us how."* [Green Cities: Good Health](#), Urban Forestry/Urban Greening Research University of Washington.
  - Livable Cities
  - Social Strengths
  - Local Economics
  - Place Attachment & Meaning
  - Crime & Public Safety
  - Safe Streets
  - Active Living
  - Reduced Risk
  - Wellness & Physiology
  - Healing & Therapy
  - Mental Health & Function
  - Lifecycle & Gender
3. [Green Cities: Good Health – YouTube video](#) – a project by the University of Washington, USDA Forest Service, and the National Urban Community Forestry Advisory Council. Some points regarding the remaining 4 trees:

#### **Tree of Heaven:**

1. Of course you would not plant a tree of heaven in a parking strip today as it is prohibited. However this tree was planted before regulations were in place. According to what I can discern, it has grown to a near worldwide record age.

This particular Tree of Heaven measures 24.7 inches in diameter according to the 14-day comment posting provided by Tree Solutions Inc. This would make its circumference 77.597 inches. A rough estimate of the age of this tree would be 78 +/- 10y old ([how this was calculated](#)), according to the [Monumental Trees](#) website. The documented worldwide age records for a Tree of Heaven range from 96 +/- 10y to 145 +/- 30y. The Tree of Heaven on N. Motor Pl. is pretty close to a worldwide record! The closest being the 96 +/- 10y old Tree of Heaven located in Wilhelminapark, Utrecht, Netherlands.

Why is the City of Seattle allowing a tree of this stature to be cut down? Why not instead, honor this tree and submit it to the Monumental Trees website? In other words, create value rather than detriment by preserving, rather than destroying, this unique neighborhood tree.



2. According to the 14-day comment posting provided by Tree Solutions Inc. “the tree-of-heaven does not directly conflict with the site improvements.” There is no need to destroy this tree in order for the property owner to do site improvements!
3. The Tree of heaven “is a bio indicator of ozone pollution, to which it is sensitive. When subjected to heavy ozone concentrations, the leaves show spotting damage and drop off” – [Encyclopedia of Life](#). Why not use this tree as an ozone pollution spotter, much like a canary in a coal mine?
4. The location of this tree of heaven is only two streets away from Highway 99, a very busy air-fouling arterial. The tree of heaven “is among the most pollution-tolerant of tree species”. They have been used to re-vegetate areas where acid mine drainage has occurred”. - [Wikipedia](#). These attributes are of benefit in this location.
5. From a practical perspective I would argue that the invasive nature of the tree is greatly lessened in an urban environment as opposed to a meadow or forest. Anecdotally I’m not aware of another tree of heaven in the near vicinity of this particular tree. In addition, I have lived across the street from this tree for 29 years and have not had any issues with tree of heaven seedlings in my yard.

**Tree of heaven together with the 3 remaining Horse Chestnut Trees:**

1. Together these trees create significant urban environment health benefits. “*Trees in urban areas are substantially more important than rural trees.*” - [The Health Benefits of Trees, Atlantic Magazine](#).
2. The location of these trees is only two streets away from Highway 99, a very busy, noisy, air-polluting thoroughfare. My house sits directly east at 4230 Woodland Park Ave N. The removal of these trees will negatively impact my property value. I fear increased noise from Highway 99 as well as visual distraction and increased pollution impacts if these trees are destroyed.

**Suggestion:**

Mature trees in an urban environment can incur cost for property owners such as sidewalk repair and tree maintenance. However the benefit for all far outweighs these inconveniences. However there may be home owners such as elderly or low income who could benefit from City of Seattle provided compensation for these expenses.

I suggest that the City of Seattle install old coin parking meters near mature tree sites at citizen’s requests. These parking meters can be turned into “donation meters” which provide income for tree maintenance and sidewalk repair as well as funds for Urban Forestry projects.

This is not a new idea, other cities are using parking meters as donation meters. - [Arty parking meter helping pay for silver lake chandelier tree](#). [Cities revamp parking meters as donation stations](#).

**Final words:**

Please grant amnesty to these mature, healthy trees for the well-being of our community. In closing, I would like to share some photographs of these wonderful trees.

**Tree of Heaven:**

Sincerely,

Barbara Candiotti  
 4230 Woodland Park Ave N.  
 Seattle, WA 98103

206-427-3579

**From:** Steve Zemke [<mailto:stevezemke@msn.com>]  
**Sent:** Monday, March 28, 2016 11:29 PM  
**To:** Pinto de Bader, Sandra  
**Subject:** News articles on Seattle Parks and trees

Could you please forward these to the other Urban Forestry Commissioners. It seems Seattle Parks and view issues is still an ongoing problem. Articles are on trees cut in greenbelt in West Seattle and another on views in Mt Baker area.

<http://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/crime/the-guts-of-some-people-public-greenbelt-in-west-seattle-cut-down-without-permits/>

<http://westseattleblog.com/2016/03/outrage-after-100-trees-cut-without-permission-on-city-owned-west-seattle-slopes/>

<http://westseattleblog.com/2016/03/followup-where-east-admiral-tree-cutting-investigation-stands-city-attorneys-office-says-could-be-a-felony/>

<http://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/crime/homeowner-responsible-for-chopping-down-153-trees-told-city-about-destruction/>

**A Forest Steward Faces Off Against Homeowners Fighting to Maintain Their Grand Views**  
<http://www.seattleweekly.com/news/963513-129/story.html>