

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

July 6, 2016

Meeting Notes

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

Attending

Commissioners

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

Absent- Excused

Richard Martin

Staff

Sandra Pinto de Bader - OSE
Jay Rood - Parks
Rich MacDonald - DON

Guests

Mark McPherson
Adiel Kaplan – Investigate West

Public

Mary Fleck
Linda Murtfeldt
Cass Turnbull

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

Tom began the meeting by reading the Commission’s mission and the agenda.

Public comment

Mary Fleck – she is with the Seattle Green Spaces Coalition. Wants to hear what the UFC has to say about Myers parcel (30 acres in South Seattle). The City is not meeting its open space goals. 1,700 people have signed the petition asking Council not to sell the land. They want the UFC’s support.

Adoption of June 1 and June 8 meeting notes

ACTION: A motion to approve the June 1 meeting notes as amended was made, seconded, and approved.

ACTION: A motion to approve the June 8 meeting notes as amended was made, seconded, and approved.

Urban forest Carbon Registry

Mark McPherson briefed the UFC last year when he was participating in the California cap and trade protocol. Unfortunately, that protocol was overly complex and has not had any projects.

One lesson was to make sure an urban forestry (UF) protocol is not too complicated. The carbon markets provide an opportunity to bring much needed funding to urban forestry.

He is focusing on how to connect urban forestry projects to the money.

UF in the US is poorly funded. Of the \$265M the Department of Natural Resources, no state funds are allocated to the Urban and Community Forestry Program. The funding comes from the US Forest Service.

He is trying to connect UF to a funding source. That source is the voluntary carbon buyers.

- \$700M in the last decade in the US; \$4.5 billion worldwide
- Voluntary dollars go to forest land in Surinam, wind, other offset project types
- Voluntary carbon buyers cannot invest in urban greening because there are no certified credits

Key challenges

- The entire urban forest must be included in the US carbon market
 - o Urbanization is a major demographic trend
 - o Urban land area increasing from 3% to 8% of total in the lower 48 states
 - o City trees provide multiple ecosystem services to largest concentration of population

What's needed for certified credits?

1. UF carbon protocol
2. Registry to administer the protocol: issue certified credits
3. Promotion of UF projects and connection to carbon buyers

Will carbon buyers want UF credits?

- Big buyers spend 80-90% on 'bare' carbon, 10-20% on charismatic credits
- UF is highly charismatic
 - o Customers and staff live and work in urban areas
 - o UF projects continue for many years
 - o Social and environmental justice

Who will do this?

- Greg McPherson, Ph. D – internationally recognized scientist who pioneered the quantitative analysis of urban forest benefit-cost analysis and led development of the Climate Action Reserve's Urban Forest Project Protocol in California.
- Mark McPherson, J.D., PhD. – lawyer and business person in Seattle who drafter the first conservation easement for the City of Seattle Heritage Tree Program over 25 years ago.

Why Mark and Greg?

In 2013 and 2014, Mark and Greg served on the working group at the Climate Action Reserve that attempted to develop a streamlined and workable urban forest protocol. They know both carbon protocols

and urban forestry. Mark's legal and business experience and Greg's scientific and technical expertise make them uniquely skilled to execute this project.

Board

- The Nature Conservancy (Bill Toomey, who directs TNC's urban forest programs in 18 cities)
- American Forests (Ian Leahy, who directs their urban forest programs in 14 cities)
- Arbor Day Foundation (Jared Carlson, Director of Strategy)
- Gerry Gray, the former director of the national Alliance for Community Trees and Policy.
- Forterra in the Pacific Northwest (Managing Director Skip Swenson).

Current Status

- Funded to start development of a national urban forestry carbon protocol
- Assembling drafting group for protocol
- Protocol done March 2017
- Then build registry as phase 2
- Phase 3 will be promoting and administering

Sample projects

- Palo Alto, CA – they have been mapping their canopy and are working to address the canopy gap between wealthy and poor neighborhoods
- Austin, TX – will be buying carbon credits. Want locally sourced carbon credits.
- King County Million Tree Campaign – It has been announced.
- 130,000 schools and colleges in the US – there could be a curriculum that integrates the biology of trees and carbon. Carbon clubs with students planting and maintaining trees to get carbon credits.
- Watershed, parks, golf courses, etc.

Mark is in the process of developing the protocol. Would like to come back in the fall to present the draft and get input from the UFC. As the UFC does its work every day, think of the type of projects that could be incorporated into the protocol.

UFC question/comment – is it looking at improved forest management of just new tree planting?

Answer – start with new tree planting. Would like to do more but there are challenges in terms of quantification and confirmation. Start with the easy piece and move to more complex.

UFC question/comment – it's not just new trees planted but preservation. Maybe use conservation easements that would be protected over time.

Answer -need to meet the needs of the carbon buyers. Want to create a product that we can sell. If we can monetize easements on existing trees, then it would be possible to use. Also need to comply with the additionality requirement. Could do an 'avoided conversion' but the conversation is that if it's not a huge scale it won't motivate buyers. Carbon credits are not enough to motivate people to preserve urban land (because it's so expensive), so you would have to find other funding sources to support the preservation. The cost to preserve urban land is so great that carbon credits are not going to be a meaningful driver for such preservation.

A mature tree might produce 100 CO2 tons/year – probably generates \$2 - \$4/year. Carbon revenues would be nice to support maintenance of urban trees.

UFC question/comment: how big does a project need to be for it to be worthwhile.

Answer – those wanting to be involved would be so because of the interest to doing ‘good’ and not in there for the profit. If here is a net gain on every tree, then it’s worth doing.

UFC question/comment; Steve did some calculations years ago based on the number of trees needed in Portland. We would need to plant 12,000 medium sized trees/year in Seattle to get to our goal of 30% canopy cover by 2037.

UFC question/comment: is there a jurisdictional boundary for the protocol and registry?

Answer: it would be national. They would use mapped urban areas (based on the census bureau).

Marra-Disenmore Park

Jay Rood from Parks is providing a briefing on the project. The site is in South Park. It’s an 8.5 acre park site.

Project vision:

Create an engaging and welcoming urban park that provides open space and educational benefits to the South Park community, meet the operational needs of Marra Farm Coalition programs and offer an agriculturally-based educational resource/model for the City of Seattle.

Jan showed aerial photos of the location showing the development of the farm and community garden areas.

Following a 2008 master plan, the Desimone area was graded. The plan showed farm expansion. The community asked for gathering, play, and agriculture areas.

They are currently working on Phase II: pathways, site grading and landscaping.

UFC question/comment: are you considering trees that will provide habitat for birds that can eat insects affecting the crops.

Answer: that’s a good idea.

UFC question/comment: Will you be expanding the canopy once you are done with the project? It sounds like there a number of cottonwoods (which tend to drop limbs).

Answer: there are both cottonwoods and Lombardi poplars. The old farm road lines by poplars, that’s where they are putting the access to preserve ag land. Poplars also shade the ag land. They are going to remove those trees and re-plant complying to 2 for 1.

UFC question/comment: will there be a net increase of trees? What about the size of the trees?

Answer: we are going to plant 2 for 1 or more. The Beech trees will provide greater canopy, but they will also be planting fruit trees, which are smaller.

Some of the trees being removed will be chipped and used on site. They will also use Parks system wide.

The p-patch has 40 families involved.

UFC question/comment: will community members be involved with tree planting? It would be good to build a sense of ownership.

Answer: that's a good idea.

UFC question/comment: it looks like a great project. Have been hearing about it for years and it's nice to see that it's moving forward.

Answer: they have been working very hard to get the community involved. They have been providing translation services to make sure the community expresses its interest. They will irrigate the new trees and hope that the community will take on maintenance of fruit and nut trees. Along the riparian corridor they might plant fruit bushes as part of a working buffer.

Currently going through a Master Use Permit. Expect to begin construction in the Spring.

Discussion items:

- **Backyard cottages and impacts to trees – move to next agenda**
- **UF budget – move to next agenda**
- **Myers Parcel sale**

The UFC discussed the proposed sale of the Myers parcels.

This site is 33 acres that were bought in 2003 to build a training facility. The City wants to sell it to pay part of the loan and to fund address homelessness. Sounds like the development that would go in there would be warehouses. This is an undeveloped land that could provide open space to the south area of town and it's an environmental justice issue.

Open comment currently underway. The draft proposal shows part of it being developed as part of the training facility. Part of it would remain as natural area. Part of it would be sold for commercial use. Community members would like to see parts of it developed into a grocery store or something else that benefits the community. Others would like to keep it as open space. The community thinks that the City has not done proper outreach.

Mariska wanted to bring this to the UFC because ultimately it will be City Council deciding. Steve thinks that with a parcel of this size there should be a planning effort to decide what to do with it, instead of opening it to the highest bidder.

Adiel Kaplan – reporter with Investigate West provided additional information on the background of the land purchase from Nintendo.

City Council is currently working on this. The UFC has this month to provide input.

Need to clarify a couple of things:

- There should be a public process – they had it but not properly advertised
- This decision is to be made by the owner department (FAS)
- Should discuss more salient considerations about this issue based on urban forestry outcomes.

- This is inconsistent with the promises of the EEI.
- Has the RSJI toolkit been applied to the site and potential sale
- Looking at the condition of the site (cost or remediation). Understand the tradeoff between the quality of the site for UF purposes. Would this be the highest and best use of funding for UF?

ACTION: A motion for the Commission to weigh in through a letter recommending extending public comment and wait until White Center annexation has been completed, use the RSJI toolkit to evaluate the opportunities, wait until the EEI assessment has been done in order to take into consideration the findings, consider the results of the canopy cover assessment, take into consideration the 30% canopy cover goal, was made, seconded, and approved.

Mariska will take the lead producing a first draft to be discussed at next week's meeting.

Public comment:

None

New Business:

None

Adjourn