

SEATTLE URBAN FORESTRY COMMISSION

Weston Brinkley, Chair • Joanna Nelson de Flores, Vice-Chair
Tom Early • Megan Herzog • Craig Johnson
Sarah Rehder • Sandra Whiting • Andrew Zellers • 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

April 11, 2018

Meeting Notes

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

Attending

Commissioners

Weston Brinkley – chair
Joanna Nelson de Flores – vice-chair
Megan Herzog
Craig Johnson
Sarah Rehder
Sandra Whiting
Andrew Zellers
Steve Zemke

Staff

Sandra Pinto de Bader - OSE

Guests

CM Rob Johnson
Steven Fry – 2030 District

Public

Carolyn Rodenberg
Michael Oxman
Joyce Moty
Richard Ellison
Jim Davis
June BlueSpruce

Absent- Excused

Tom Early

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

Weston called the meeting to order.

Public comment

Carolyn – she is here to root for trees. They provide the oxygen we breath. A robust urban forest is critical to a healthy city. Talked about the importance of trees. Encourages Seattle to have a strong tree ordinance. Stop allowing clear-cutting.

Joyce Motty – She is a member of TreePAC. Seattle is long overdue for a tree ordinance. We need to have big trees where we live and work. Important for the health of the city.

Michael Oxman – He is on the Board of Seattle Green Spaces Coalition, and a member of TreePAC committee working on a new tree ordinance. Since 2009 we were supposed to have a new ordinance. It’s been delayed every year. Now we are in a rush to get a new ordinance. The City needs a more complete and current tree inventory, better maintenance records, and better tools to determine value and benefits of trees. We have proposals to up-zone our city to put buildings where trees are. MHA EIS being appealed as a

reflection of citizens fears that our government is being run by developers. Hope that this tree ordinance increases protection for trees.

Richard Ellison – There is a real need to control invasives. When properties go into development there is an opportunity to remove invasives (especially in critical areas). Trees keep slopes stable. Low-hanging fruit to control invasives during development. In winter-time when trees have invasives on them are at risk of failing. We now have a chance to make it mandatory to remove invasive vegetation. Heritage trees should have greater, mandatory protection. There should be greater protection for exceptional trees and tree groves. A parcel in his neighborhood has already removed 11 trees. They leveled the site and are building a triplex.

Jim Davis – lives in Magnolia. Enforcement is the key on a tree ordinance. He is concerned that SDCI doesn't have enough arborist support for the technical issues. Homeowners bring in arborist that say that a 30" tree is actually 29.5" and is thus not exceptions (as an example). Enforcement and staffing levels are key.

June BlueSpruce – lives in SE Seattle. Seattle needs guidelines to replace trees in low income areas. The 2016 canopy cover assessment showed that there is a statistically significant inverse relationship between canopy cover and residents of color and lower income. Can't lose any more trees, we need to grow the urban forest. Residents are being deprived of the benefits of trees: stabilize slopes, clean air, lower crime, carbon sink, etc. Trees help reduce respiratory illness. Should include environmental equity in all elements of decision making.

CM Johnson visit

CM Johnson shared a wealth of information. For full conversation content please visit the digital recording at: <http://www.seattle.gov/urbanforestrycommission/meetingdocuments>

CM Johnson wants people to understand his perspective. He is a 5th generation Seattleite. Urban planner (focus on transportation) by training. Worked at Transportation Choices Coalition.

He wants to internalize the cost of all the externalities of our transportation network. His children talk to him about the importance of trees.

He brought up trees when he first got elected. Asked Mayor Murray to work with him on tree protection regulation. Started having conversations with all the City departments and realized that it was going to be difficult. He waited and waited. He then started working on something in-house. Mayor Burgess signed a good EO. CM Johnson wants to introduce legislation at the end of this month to have it adopted by the end of the year. He acknowledges that there are a lot of things that need to take place (SEPA checklist, etc.).

What he wants to do:

- Address opportunities for improvements by consolidating City departments. One department to focus on public and one on private trees. This effort includes improving the interface with residents.
- Spend more time thinking of code definitions and update them. Create a gradation of trees that contribute to canopy (trunk size, habitat, canopy). Set up better definitions in the code.
- How to rationalize a system to protect trees: permit system, carrots/sticks to have a gradation of fines and responsibilities. Highest fine: people cutting down trees to improve view; lowest fine: someone dealing with a sick tree about to fall on their property.

This is an opportunity to use the development cycle to incentivize homeowners and developers to care for their trees. As an example: the developer of a new apartment building, University Heights (50th and the Ave.) was planning on building 3 stories. The community wanted to preserve a significant tree. The developer

asked the City for increased height in exchange for preserving the tree. This is an example of a win-win situation where we are building housing and saving trees. Wants to set up more opportunities to do the same.

He hopes to have a draft for public consumption in late April. Go through legal department vetting. Pass in September before Council adjourns for budget. If unable to do before budget cycle, then would kick out early in the 2019 new year.

The Commission asked questions and made comments: for details please refer to the digital recording.

2030 District

Steven Fry, from 2030 District, shared information on the organization and his interest in trees to support their stormwater management goals.

2030 District is a non-profit based in downtown focused on reducing carbon and energy use in the built environment. They have over 100 members participating in this effort. They are working on reducing stormwater runoff by 50%. They did a study with King County and SPU to establish a baseline.

They did an intensive study in Belltown, which is fully built. As they look at ways to increase green on neighborhoods, trees are a big piece of the effort. UW students have made proposals to bring more greenery to the area.

Steven's focus is trees in the ROW, especially in dense neighborhoods. He is working with community stakeholders and community developers to increase healthy trees. He is currently exploring partnerships with SPU, SDOT, and King County as well as partnerships with the private sector.

UFC question/comment: people working on aurora North are using Silva cells. Have you gotten feedback on the results?

Answer: Tree cells are not included in the code so developers are not using them. 2030 District is encouraging developers to take the risk in order to get more data.

UFC question/comment: if you encourage green roofs are they going to prioritize them at the expense of street level landscape?

Answer: his goal is not either or, he wants to manage more stormwater.

UFC question/comment: ideally you would encourage both. Trees have many more co-benefits besides stormwater.

UFC question/comment: look at opportunities to include understory plantings (as allowed by pedestrian traffic levels).

Answer: wonder if SDOT is looking into conditions in terms of grates, etc.

Tree Ordinance discussion continues

The UFC discussed the most appropriate process to provide input to Mayor and Council on the tree ordinance.

ACTION: A motion to approve the Tree Ordinance letter of recommendation as amended was made, seconded, and approved.

Public comment

None

New Business

None

Adjourn

Public input

From: Cynthia Slate <cynthiaslate@gmail.com>

Sent: Thursday, April 12, 2018 3:39 PM

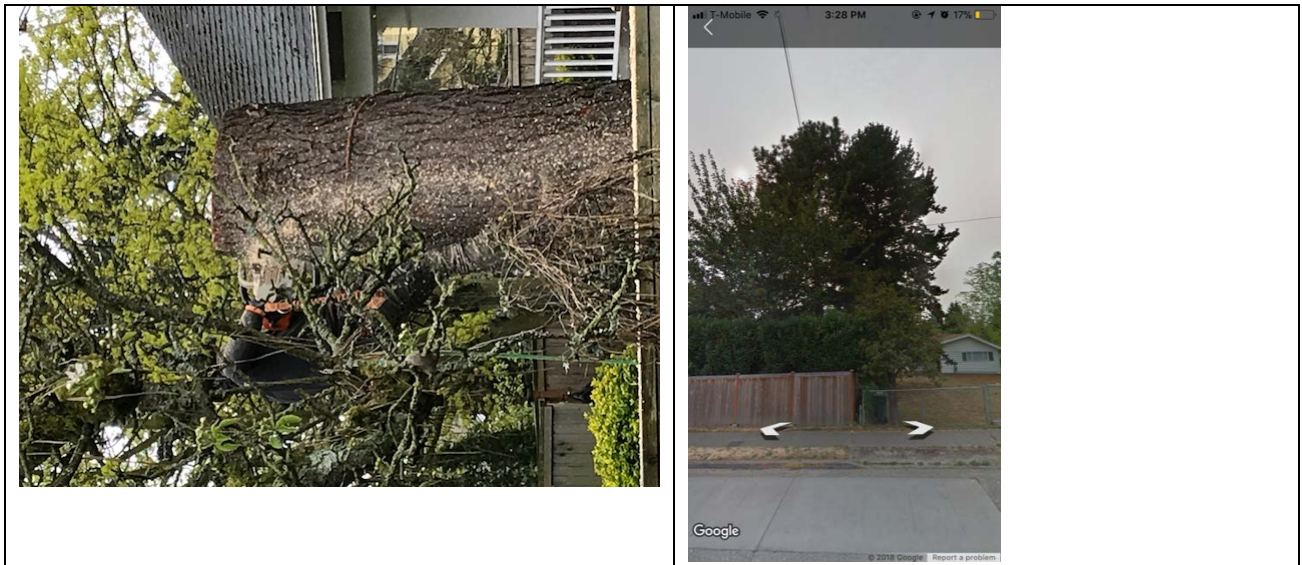
To: Pinto de Bader, Sandra <Sandra.Pinto_de_Bader@Seattle.gov>

Subject: Re: New documents posted on the Urban Forestry Commission website

Could you please tell the commission that arborist companies are lying and saying trees are a different species and threshold measurement than they really are.

What policy can ensure that companies, and homeowners that contract with the companies, are held liable? Unless every tree taken out is inspected first, like in other cities, we will continue to loose exceptional trees.

An, example: The homeowners said this tree was under 24 inches, (at threshold) if it really is a white pine, so I went home and got a tape measure and the rings being cut at even 10 feet off the ground are 25 inches. I bet if I could have measured the other rings they would be over 25 inches. It makes me sick that homeowners and arborists are lying about trees.



Cynthia

From: seattleposa@googlegroups.com <seattleposa@googlegroups.com> **On Behalf Of** Michael Oxman
Sent: Monday, April 16, 2018 5:12 PM
To: Lumsden, Faith <Faith.Lumsden@seattle.gov>; Brown-McGarry, Deborah <Deborah.McGarry@seattle.gov>; Harrell, Bruce <Bruce.Harrell@seattle.gov>
Subject: [SeattlePOSA] Complaint 1042437 - Tree Damage

<http://web6.seattle.gov/DPD/permitstatus/project.aspx?id=1042437>

Howdy Faith,

- 1) I have some comments about DCI's lack of enforcement of the tree ordinance regarding the exceptional cedar tree at 9690 A 51st Ave S.
- 2) This tree is within 4' of Kubota Garden, in a 40% steep slope area, and I'm concerned that failure of the tree may affect slope stability of the city park.
- 3) Please see additional comments and photos that I sent to the DCI inspection manager.
- 4) The notes that were in the project file during the investigation are now absent.
- 5) The investigation notes were incorrect, as it was stated the project was in compliance with tree protection standards because no large roots were visible to the inspector in the face of the excavation.
- 6) The correct statute is that the project may not permit excavation within 2/3 of the circumference of the outer critical root zone of an exceptional tree, without an approved plan, and under the supervision of a certified arborist.
- 7) I have asked for the arborist report, but I understand the report was prepared after the excavation.
- 8) The excavation exceeded the limit of 2/3 of the circumference of the critical root zone, to about 50%, and excavated part of the inner critical root zone.
- 9) After failing the 2nd inspection, the newly installed stairs were removed and replaced with soil, and retained by a stacked block wall that still occupies about 40% of the circumference of the critical root zone.
- 10) The soil that has been backfilled into the excavation does not contain roots, and the removal of the roots has injured the tree by increasing risk of property damage and personal injury, and reducing its ability to withstand wind loads, impairing biological function, and shortening its lifespan.
- 11) This injury constitutes damage to the tree.
- 12) The appraisal of the value of the tree would now indicate a reduced value of the tree as a monetary asset.

13) The code allows fines in the amount of \$5,000 plus



the appraised value of a tree. The reduction in value of the tree after the incident of damage would be an appropriate fine.

Thanks for listening to my concerns.

Michael Oxman

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