

Urban Forestry Commission (UFC)

April 13, 2011

Meeting Notes

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

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

Attending

Commissioners

Matt Mega (MM) – chair
John Small (JS) – vice chair
Gordon Bradley (GB)

Absent- Excused

Nancy Bird (NB)
John Floberg (JF)
John Hushagen (JH)
Jeff Reibman (JR)
Peg Staeheli (PS)

Staff

Sandra Pinto de Bader (SPdB) - OSE
Roy Francis (RF) - SDOT
Joe Bell - SDOT
Darren Morgan (DM) - SDOT
Mark Mead (MMead) - Parks
Brennon Staley (BS) - DPD

Public

Steve Zemke (SZ)
Michael Oxman (MO)
John Dixon (JD)

Call to Order

MM called the meeting to order once quorum was present

Chair report

MM – has a concern that the work plan was put in the back burner and it's not getting done. UFC priorities have shifted but don't want to lose sight of the opportunity to influence a tree ordinance.

JS – agrees that it's important to think about the work plan

GB – Would like to work around the implementation of the Urban Forest Management Plan (UFMP) and recommend changes to the UFMP as it is being updated in 2012. Asked what the timing for the UFMP update is.

SPdB – Has begun to talk about this with the Urban Forest IDT (UF IDT) and they will begin review of short- mid- and long-term goals and evaluate what has been accomplished, what needs to be re-evaluated and adjusted and how are we doing accomplishing the UFMP goals.

The UF IDT welcomed the UFC's letter and members were looking forward to a working session with the UFC in the fall. It will be important to set an agenda that is conducive to a good working session. In preparation for that meeting, Sandra believes that it might be better to do

the analysis on UFMP accomplishments in advance so that findings by the UF IDT can be shared with the UFC and can inform the meeting.

MM – it will be good to have the UFC work mesh with the UFC

SPdB – the UFC advice to the UF IDT would be very helpful

Update on SeaFair’s request to prune trees along Fourth Avenue to accommodate the Torch Light Parade Balloons – Roy Francis (SDOT)

RF – Introduced Joe Bell, Urban Forestry Division Director and Darren Morgan, Field Operations Manager. He mentioned that the last time he briefed the UFC was at the end of 2010. Back then he told the UFC that the Seafair Committee was asking for a 24 foot wide vertical space to accommodate the Torch Light Parade helium balloons. There is concern about the impact constant pruning will have on mature trees along the parade route. He mentioned during that briefing that he was going to send a letter to say that SDOT would not tie back or prune branches along Fourth Avenue to accommodate the 2011 parade. In that letter he mentioned that the City has set a goal to increase canopy cover to 30% and that pruning those mature trees was not in alignment with the City’s goals.

They recently met with the Seafair Committee and agreed to prune specific trees in 2011 and would attempt to tie back some branches and if not possible, then they would prune the trees. From Denny to Wall Street Fourth Street is heavily canopied and they have not been asked to prune that section. Seafair would like SDOT to pruned some blocks along the route.

SDOT will accommodate them this year but there is an underlying problem that needs to be resolved. As younger trees mature they will have more canopy. Seafair and SDOT will meet again in early February 2012 to discuss a long-term plan for a corridor. This time around the Executive and Council will be involved.

GB – the letter sent by SDOT in February 2011 was emphatic that SDOT would not prune. Are there now compelling reasons to allow this?

RF - As long as the parade takes place on Fourth Avenue there will be a problem. The difference now is that the Mayor and Council are involved. The initial letter was done at the staff level. Now the necessary players are aware of the issue.

MM – This might be too detailed but who walks the corridor and decides what branches are going to impact the balloons? Is pruning done for the health of the tree or mainly to allow balloon passage?

RF – Darren Morgan, Field Operations Manager, walks the corridor and has participated in the discussions. They have walked the corridor with the Seafair officials. We’ll find out what they are asking for and we’ll tell them what we think it’s doable with the intention to protect the trees.

DM – He has a good sense of where the pressure points are along the route. Minimizing pruning is ideal and will tie back where possible. He will try to preserve structural limbs of trees and will have the health of the trees in mind.

MM – are the reports done over the years to assess the effect of such frequent pruning on the trees and impacts of the parade?

DM – They don't have such report. The trees are healthy. This is more of a canopy cover loss issue.

MM – In these budget crisis are they paying for the pruning or is the City going to be paying for this pruning?

RF – Seafair will pay pruning costs

MM -there might be a mitigation fund that can be put in place for Seafair to pay into.

JS – What species are the trees and how well do they do being pruned after they leaf out?

DM – they are mostly Northern Red Oaks

JS – that species that should be pruned in the winter for disease and other reasons. Has the Seafair Committee expressed to you why is the Fourth avenue corridor so important for Seafair? Looking at Google Earth he can see that it would be a fair number of years before bumping into this problem if using First and Third would be more workable.

RF – The trolley overhead wires would be a problem. Fifth is out of the question because of the monorail. Second and Sixth would work. Seafair feels that the Seattle Police Department and Fire try to coordinate the parade along Fourth avenue because they have been able to control it in the past.

Sixth Avenue is a fairly wide street the problem is that as you get down and have to turn west to go back to Fourth Avenue to get to Westlake Plaza it can be a complication and I don't know how difficult this would be. Then when you go further south and start encounter hills they would be stressed.

MM – now that SDOT has met with Seafair doe they have a plan moving forward? Do you need support from the UFC?

RF – Came to update the UFC. SDOT is not recommending any kind of action from the UFC.

MM - might be a good idea to send a letter to support canopy health.

Green Seattle Partnership briefing – Mark Mead (Parks)

MMead – Asked the UFC if they are familiar with the Green Seattle Partnership (GSP). It was discussed when the Commission was first established a year and a half ago.

GB – There are so many green... the Green Cities, the CLC and Green Seattle Partnership. Spend a moment of two explaining how the GSP fits in the scheme of all things.

MMead – one of the issues he was going to bring up with the program. GSP is a large umbrella organization focused on returning forested areas and parklands to a sustainable condition. This is a forest restoration effort. The partner is the Cascade Land Conservancy (CLC). CLC made a commitment to raise \$3 M in a capital campaign and they did.

CLC, as part of their regional agenda has replicated the program in other five cities. Regarding the project in Seattle, CLC is reaching the end of their \$3M commitment. 2012 is going to be a difficult year for them in terms of their involvement in the GSP. Parks is looking for a larger number of partners. Other groups involved in the GSP leverage the funding the City provides. There are a lot a shared resources. The GSP has 110 forest stewards, committed citizens that volunteer in Seattle parks. The GSP doesn't work in an area without having community support. As an example of the commitment many of the forest stewards have, one of them raised \$250K to restore the Jose Rizal green area. It was a crime prevention issue for that community.

The GSP has created a vertical learning model to train high school students in learning about caring for the urban forest. The high school students then go to middle schools and grade schools and train younger students building stewardship and sustainability. Students work on sites in their neighborhood in areas under restoration.

They are in the process of releasing a forest stewards on line mapping tool that will be able to provide reports of work being done in different areas of the city.

The GSP currently has 600 acres in restoration. The forest is in the process of being restored. This process can last from five to ten years.

There are two components for funding this work: one is the capital side, which includes restoration, planting and pulling out invasive species; the other is the gradual ability to sustain the work done.

Over the five years of life of the GSP they have been able to diversify funding (levy dollars, CIP dollars, donation, O&M dollars and CLC's campaign dollars). Over the life of the GSP we have received 500,000 hours in volunteerism and have planted 100,000 trees. The GSP is working on a three legged stool model: the Tree Resource, the Management Framework and the Community Framework.

They received the Community Catalyst Award last year for the work they've done with the vertical learning model.

A substantial number of funding dollars relies on a levy that is expiring in two years. REET funding has had lower revenues than projected.

MMead – Are there any questions?

MM – last year Parks put together a forum that talked about expanding into private yards and the right-of-way (ROW)

MMead – Parks is working with SDOT regarding work to be done in the unopened ROW. This is also being discussed by the Urban Forest Interdepartmental Team. Citizens are deeply vested in what's happening in their backyards. There is also the 'trails visioning plan'; they are working on putting more resources on trails and will be talking to communities and connecting to the pedestrian plan. Many trails go through forested areas. Parks won't have the resources to acquire lands they were planning to acquire. They will be working in the next couple of years to change the parameters for land acquisition so they consider more the habitat connectivity component. Can we acquire land and maintain it as the budget shrinks?

MM – what about the Tree Ambassadors program?

MMead – the CLC received funding from the US Forest Service. The GSP effort can't be built in isolation. The Tree Ambassadors (TA) program is open to Tree Stewards. Both the GSP and TA have the same tools for working on urban forestry to achieve sustainability. The way those tools are used will vary.

In order to hold volunteer events they have to advertise them so that unions know. This is related to right-to-work issues.

SPdB – the Tree Ambassador and GSP are complementary efforts

GB – he heard that 70% of trees in City parks are going to die in 25 years.

MMead – There have been different evaluations done over the years. The majority of our forests are big leaf Maple and they are not in the process of failing. A good example of this is Camp Long where 30% of the canopy in that area is gone. In the past the City allowed people to clear forest for their views. Significant issues in our forests: the majority of developed parks were planted 100 years ago when we built them. Most trees are reaching the end of their lives. For example, Magnolia Boulevard, the magnolias there are dying, Parks has re-planted four times and nothing has stuck. The main concern is that invasive species are taking over the understory and we don't have coniferous seed stock to re-seed it.

JS – Doesn't appear SDOT is investing in unopened ROW. What's preventing the GSP from taking in those areas?

MMead – Don't have resources to do the work they'd like to do. SDOT controls what's going on in unopened ROW but doesn't own it. They need to work with the abutting property owners. SDOT needs to allow egress and ingress to properties.

**Briefing on Community Tree Planting and Education Programs Statement of Legislative Intent
– Sandra Pinto de Bader (OSE)**

SPdB - During the 2010 budget process, City Council developed a Statement of Legislative Intent (SLI) directing the Office of Sustainability and Environment (OSE) to provide a range of options for Council to consider regarding the administration of the City's tree planting and education programs that directly involve the public.

Convened and worked with an interdepartmental team (SLI IDT) of City staff from the City's Budget Office (CBO), the Department of Neighborhoods (DON), the Department of Parks and Recreation (Parks), Seattle City Light (SCL), the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT), and Seattle Public Utilities (SPU);

As part of the process in responding to this SLI, the SLI IDT analyzed departmental assets in order to gain a better understanding of their strengths and weaknesses. City departments with tree management responsibilities have differing competencies they have developed to deliver their work plans. The SLI IDT identified criteria that would contribute to a successful reLeaf program.

Departmental competencies and assets were analyzed using the following five criteria:

1. Is increasing canopy cover and urban forest health a primary focus aligned with the department's core mission? Can the department's mission be expanded to include working on private property?
2. Are there existing community-based programs and engagement/outreach mechanisms that can be leveraged?
3. Does the department have staff with the technical expertise to bring scientific rigor to the program (such as a certified arborist)?
4. Does the department have access to sustainable funding sources and related programs?
5. Does the department have the capacity to grow the program and to leverage existing assets?

The draft response to the SLI with OSE's recommendation is currently being reviewed by the City's Budget Office and the Mayor's Office. Once there is a draft that Sandra can share with the UFC she will bring it to the Commission.

Shoreline Master Plan recommendation - vote

There was no quorum to vote on this item. It was moved to the May 4 meeting.

Public Comment

Michael Oxman – shared a document with performance metrics to be considered for the Urban Forest Management Plan:

Performance metrics for Urban Forest Management Plan.

- 1) UFMP needs qualitative assessment added to location data.
- 2) Use the same unit of measurement to both express goals and track progress. Correlate trunk diameter of individual stem count vs. the canopy cover area by factoring drip line width of typical individuals of each species.
- 3) Use increase in tree size or improved condition as a result of pruning to calculate increase in value of benefits.
- 4) Separate work reports into 3 goals of Establishment, Clearance, and Comprehensive pruning.
- 5) Establishment pruning tracked as part of planting budget for 10 years.

- 6) Create a work order record of number of years of life expectancy added by pruning.
- 7) Post public notice on website in advance of proposed tree removals with trunk diameter & canopy spread.
- 8) Rate condition of trees to be pruned, well as trees to be removed.
- 9) Involve Urban Forestry Commission in setting canopy cover goals for each Management Unit in UFMP.
- 10) Make a map available with tree Removal & Planting sites.
- 11) Use work order to update tree inventory & tie into statewide standard.
- 12) Assess risk as part of tree inventory.

Steve Zemke:

UFC is making a mistake by stepping back from developing an ordinance. Until we get to no net loss it's hard to talk about canopy increase. What numbers are we really looking at? Need to have complete numbers. The parks natural areas mentions no numbers. Write a letter to DPD on lost and gain of trees by development activity. Incomplete table in the progress report without this data. Incomplete figures don't help with good planning. Put in place a permit system. More details included in document below.

John Dixon:

He cornered the Mayor at a community center and talked about DPD's ordinance and found out that he had the same speaking points that Brennon does. He has not been briefed by the UFC and they need to do it.

John Small:

Talked about a press release that talked about a power outage caused by a tree branch. Full press release is below.

MM – it would be nice to know more details. What company was doing tree work when branch fell? Was there a permit issued?

GB- this ties in with the conversation the UFC had about the tree ordinance and health and welfare. Shouldn't an ordinance cover the City's fracture responsibility over trees? This creates trouble. It's important to emphasize OSE's coordinating function on urban forest issues. Include in the UFMP update.

MM – This is a budget challenge. The SDOT Street Tree Ordinance has been in the works for ten years.

GB – SDOT has an online permit.

JS – the message is very garbled. Citizens don't understand the complexities of the urban forest world in the City.

MM – is it a mistake to have a separate Street Tree Ordinance?

JS – it's the difference between public and private land. Should follow the same framework. Can't manage the urban forest without being able to measure what we are looking.

Next Month Agenda Items

MM – will work with Sandra to put together an agenda for May 4.

Adjourn

Community input:

Steve Zemke Comments to Seattle Urban Forestry Commission

April 13, 2011

These comments are to follow up on oral comments given at the last Urban Forestry Commission meeting.

Save the Trees –Seattle expressed concern that the Seattle Urban Forest Management Plan 2010 Progress Report was incomplete. In particular where reports were given regarding tree removals and planting and net gain or loss several Departments were conspicuously missing that are on the IDT for urban forestry. These include Seattle Public Utilities, Fleets and Facilities and the most glaring omission being the Department of Planning and Development.

In its planning and permit process for building and development applications, the DPD should be keeping a record of trees being removed and trees being planted. This is a glaring omission and should be rectified. DPD should be recording trees removed as to species, size (small, medium and large) and canopy cover as well as recording trees being planted as to species and size.

The current situation gives no record of trees lost or gained or canopy lost, either two dimensional or 3 dimensional. This needs to be corrected if we hope to keep track of whether we are gaining or losing canopy citywide. This is why we need to expand the current permit system administered by SDOT. Also there is a permit system in place at DPD for removing exceptional trees in critical areas. Why was there. Regarding our urging the UFC to adopt a position supporting no net loss of canopy, I noted that this is actually the City's current position in Seattle Comprehensive Plan. How can you work to increase canopy coverage if you don't even accept that you have to have no net loss before you can increase canopy? And lastly I noted concern over varying figures used in the 2007 UFM Plan and the 2010 UFMP five year implementation strategy. Admittedly different canopy evaluations were used but

The 2007 UFMP says 18% canopy cover equals 1,377,500 trees and that 649,000 trees were needed to reach a 30% canopy coverage. Planting about 20,000 trees a year for 30 years would give about 2,000,000 trees for 30% coverage.

Using different canopy calculations the 2010 strategy plan says that a 30% canopy goal now equals 1,298,594 trees. The city says the current city canopy is 22.9% and we would need 306,813 trees planted to get to 30% canopy coverage. This would require planting about 10,000 trees a year.

The Seattle Comprehensive Plan calls for increasing canopy 1% a year. The question is whether this is 1% of what they say the current figure is at 1,000,000 trees or going from 22.9 to 23.9% in one year. If you accept the increase as 1% of the current trees or 10,000 trees per year, this fits with the 10,000 tree goal in the 2010 UFMP five year implementation strategy.

But the real question here is the discrepancy in figures for the number of trees we have presently and what a 30% goal equals. Is a 30% canopy cover equal to $1,277,500 + 649,000 = 2,022,500$ trees or is it 1,298,594 trees. This is not a trivial question. That is why cities frequently complete an inventory before they make decisions on tree numbers and canopy cover.

Measuring canopy 2 dimensionally gives you a canopy value but the more significant number would be canopy volume. And without on the ground tabulation it does not give you an accurate number of actual trees.

Steve Zemke

Chair – Save the Trees-Seattle

4-13-11
Michael
Osman

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John Small:

Seattle City Light

News Release

Subject: Power Restored in Ravenna, Wedgwood

For Immediate Release: **For More Information Contact:**
4/12/2011 2:04:00 PM Scott Thomsen (206) 386-4233

Falling Wood from Private Tree Company's Work Triggered Outage

SEATTLE – Seattle City Light restored service to about 3,600 homes and businesses in Ravenna and Wedgwood in about an hour after a falling tree branch cut power to the area.

The outage started about 1 p.m. when a private tree company cut down part of a Douglas fir near NE 40th Avenue and NE 92nd Street. The falling wood hit power lines, causing a short, before coming off the lines and falling to the ground.

City Light crews inspected the area for damage then re-set breakers to restore power before 2 p.m.

The general boundaries of the outage were NE 106th Street on the north, NE 75th Street on the south, 8th Avenue NE on the west and Lake Washington on the east.

Seattle City Light is the 10th largest public electric utility in the United States. It has some of the lowest cost customer rates of any urban utility, providing reliable, renewable and environmentally responsible power to nearly 1 million Seattle area residents. City Light has been greenhouse gas neutral since 2005, the first electric utility in the nation to achieve that distinction.