

## SEATTLE URBAN FORESTRY COMMISSION

John Floberg, Chair • John Small, Vice-Chair  
Gordon Bradley • Tom Early • Leif Fixen • Matt Mega • Jeff Reibman • Erik Rundell • Peg Staeheli

*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*

**June 5, 2013**

### Meeting Notes

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

#### Attending

##### Commissioners

John Floberg (JF) - chair  
John Small (JS) – vice-chair  
Leif Fixen (LF)  
Jeff Reibman (JR)  
Peg Staeheli (PS)

##### Staff

Sandra Pinto de Bader (SPdB) - OSE  
Brent Schmidt (BS) - SCL

##### Public

Lance Young  
Steve Zemke

#### Absent- Excused

Gordon Bradley (GB)  
Tom Early (TE)  
Matt Mega (MM)  
Erik Rundell (ER)

**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

JF – let's get started and do public comment first.

#### Public comment

Lance Young – He is from Shoreline. He has been working on forest canopy issues along the Interurban trail which is next to their community. Trees provide buffer from Hwy 99. Issue they are working on size of trees to be re-planted. SCL ROW they have a policy to trim for clearance and that once the trees die out the maximum replacement tree size is 12 feet. Not sure why that size. Other utilities allow trees up to 25 feet. Wondering what the policy issue is and that hopefully the policy can be changed for the urban environment. Trimming policy is 3-4 years in this urban area. Wanted to know if the UFC has dealt with this issue.

JR – Do you have deciduous trees?

Lance – they are mostly conifers which have to be topped and it's hard on them. There are only one line of trees between the neighborhood and the industrial area.

JF – there are some issues that you shared in your letter and maybe Brent can give us some insight. Especially about the size of trees allowed for replanting.

BS – do allow larger trees in the distribution system. Primarily a voltage issue with the transmission lines (16.5 feet clearance for transmission lines). 12 feet doesn't apply to the whole width of the trail.

JF – where is your neighborhood?

Lance - 145<sup>th</sup> N to 155 along SCL's right of way. The trail continues north. Between Aurora and Linden street. Once you get to Aurora it is business district.

JF – how wide is SCL's ROW?

BS – it's 100 feet. But the shorter trees are only required directly under the lines. Trees can get taller as they get further away from the lines. They need the space to be able to access the lines for repairs. Need to bring large equipment in.

JR – If you have the capability and resources to look at special cases that would be great. It's a public burden to do this maintenance.

BS – part of the history is that there are a couple of Doug Firs and we are working with City of Shoreline with a replacement plan. They came back and said that they wanted to keep the Firs and keep them topped.

PS – is it a tree spacing issue?

BS – the trees are not continuous.

Lance – we are not looking for a forest. It's cheaper for SCL and better for the community if as these trees go away, we can re-plant with like trees.

BS – we are asking for the replanting to take place but not under the wires. WE are happy to replace the trees but not under the wires.

Lance – it makes sense for rural forests. Could there be changes done for the urban environment.

BS – It's a challenge and we would have to take a look at it case by case.

Peg – this ties to the discussion on budgets for City Light.

JF – we'll have that discussion next week.

### **Approval of May 8 and May 22 meeting notes**

**ACTION: A motion was made to approve the May 8 meeting notes as written. The motion was seconded and carried.**

**ACTION: A motion was made to approve the May 22 meeting notes as written. The motion was seconded and carried.**

**DPD letter to CM Conlin on Small Lot Development in SF zones – discussion and possible vote**

JR – no one had an issue with this strategy for small lots. We probably should look at the tree standards still in the works to address it. If we are going to formulate a response it would only be a matter that issuing a statement in support. To say that this should be reflected in the upcoming private tree ordinance.

PS – the question was, is there an out for small lots not to have to plant trees.

JR – a 2000 sqft lot would be exempt. We wanted to address the point system saying that now that a smaller lot can be created then it should have a tree planting requirement. Follow up would be an official statement from the UFC.

JS – I have given this more thought. One solution would be having the initial threshold be 1,000 sqft for a dwelling unit. A standard that would change the low end of the bar and it would give more flexibility if there is more density going in. SF is not necessarily single.

PS – Would that allow someone to build a house and a cottage and not plant a tree? Why would you allow?

JS – it would apply to larger lots, not to the low end. IF the first 1,000 sqft are exempt that could allow more flexibility for density.

PS – that would make it harder to meet our SF canopy cover goal.

JR – previously it was lot size minus 2,000. The smallest lot has moved down by 500, moving the threshold down by 1,000 we would say that the previous size was not adequate and we were supportive of it.

PS – we can have changed our view now that we know more and see how hard it is to get to our canopy cover goals.

JS – I think this is a Red Herring. I withdraw it.

JR - I would like to do a practical test with a Landscape Architect. We should not require anybody to have only trees. What is the SF canopy cover goal?

SPdB – 33%

JR – I'll draw a couple of plans and will share it with Peg.

**Position Paper on pruning for private views – discussion and possible vote**

LF – the City is going to allow for pruning for views, so we should make sure that all the time that is being spent in this permits is covered, plus money to fund restoration.

PS – the wording here does not ask for funding beyond what is spent on doing the work.

LF – the Urban Forestry Symposium was very good and I actually learned a lot in it.

JF – has Mark Mead looked at this latest iteration?

LF – the version he saw is not too different.

JF – any other changes?

LF – I think it's pretty much there.

JF – my questions are what will be the City's reaction to this and whether or not this is feasible. It would be interesting to see how much this would usually cost.

PS – the intent here is not to get pruning for view, but that if people want to have a view that they pay for the work needed to be done. When you are talking public benefit you need to weight in, the public benefit of a private view is non-existent, so private view seekers need to pay for it. That's the intent.

JR – there might be a greater societal cost.

PS – point 2 is meant to cover that. You could probably get around to some of these costs by doing some of the things yourself. Staff time and neighborhood notification would then be the costs that can't be avoided. You can't prune the trees but could plant.

JR – this is probably at \$1,000 - \$1,500

JF – our objective is not to make this affordable but to recoup the cost.

JR – I would do minor wordsmithing. The one sentence to our list of 6 add

**ACTION: A motion was made to approve the recommendation letter as amended. The motion was seconded and carried.**

#### **Letter of support for City Fruit – initial conversation**

PS- this letter is helpful because it gives us metrics. The question is, is this sustainable or will the work move to a different phase. They need to put in here a work plan.

JF – I would like to know what the people of Seattle would get if the organization spends \$146K next year. I'd like to see how they can achieve sustainability at that level. Maybe it's a conversation point of view.

PS – John can you talk to her as a NGO?

JS – there is no work plan and it's not clear that this would be sustainable.

LF – write a short letter of support. This is a great opportunity the City should consider, several departments may find value in several portions of the program. Appreciate the efforts City Fruit has made to benefit the community in the past.

## **Analysis of Departmental budgets – continues (MOVE TO NEXT WEEK)**

### **New business and announcements**

JF – putting together questions to ask the Portland Commission. Will send

PS – SDOT's ordinance goes into effect on Friday.

Leif and John F out next week. Peg might be out.

### **Adjourn**

#### **Community input**

**From:** Lance Young [<mailto:l.clayton.young@gmail.com>]

**Sent:** Wednesday, June 05, 2013 3:04 AM

**To:** Pinto\_de\_Bader, Sandra

**Subject:** Urban Forestry Commission

To: Urban Forestry Commission  
[sandra.pinto\\_de\\_bader@seattle.gov](mailto:sandra.pinto_de_bader@seattle.gov)

Subject: Forest Canopy preservation in power line right-of-ways

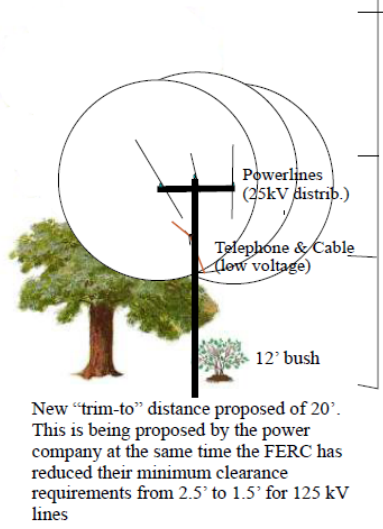
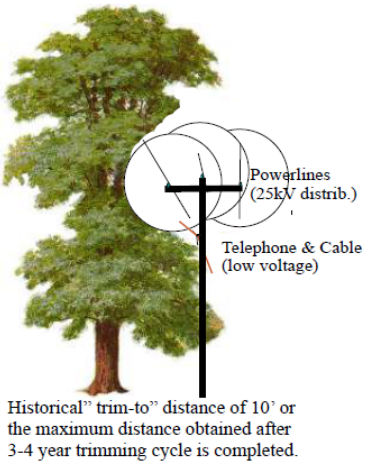
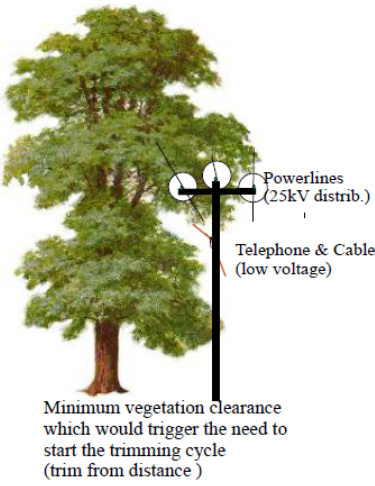
Our community abuts the Interurban Bike Trail and Power right-of-way. We have many (mostly evergreen) trees along our section of the trail. These trees provide an essential buffer for our neighborhood, they provide shade for walkers and picnickers, wildlife habitat, and carbon sequestration. As the older trees die off from repeated topping and pruning they will have to be replaced.

The Seattle City Light right-of-way standards limit the size of replacement trees to no more than 12'. This effectively means that as we lose our beautiful conifer and deciduous trees along the trail, they will be replaced with 12' bushes. This would irreparably alter the character of our neighborhood, and our trail. Our community can not understand why a standing tree can be trimmed back to 35' or 40' and be fine with the power company, and yet a new tree must be removed if it gets taller than 12'. Other utilities in our state allow 25 or 30' replacement trees why doesn't Seattle City Light allow this. Also the new Seattle approved street tree list has several 25' and 30' trees listed as appropriate for under power lines. This would be a good city owned place to enhance forest canopy instead of lose it.

The second issue is regarding street trees and the trimming clearances. The Seattle City Light web sight lists the minimum clearance between vegetation and the power lines as 10 feet plus three years of growth. This would result in a "trim-to" distance of nearly 20'. Please see (<http://www.seattle.gov/light/vegetation/treetrim.asp>) This web sight doesn't agree with their federal TVMP, and it is almost double the clearances of other utilities. If this is correct, and it appears some of the most recent trimming in Shoreline is to this excessive standard, we will lose significant forest canopy from street trees. In Shoreline perhaps 50% of our public trees are right of way trees.

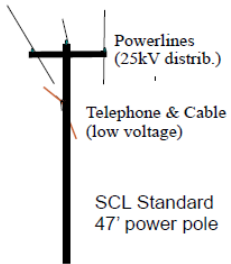
We are hoping that you might be willing to look into these issues on behalf of our community, the bike path users, and all those who care about the value of healthy trees to our urban lives. I will try to make it to the next meeting of the Commission to speak during public comments.

Thank you for your consideration  
Lance Young  
206-363-0859



**Power Line Vegetation Management Information**

- \* Trim from clearances (minimum vegetation to wire distance that should trigger a new pruning cycle < 0.8')
- Taken from the new Federal Guidelines for minimum vegetation clearance FAC-003-2 (was < 1.25')
- \* Trim to distance (is the maximum vegetation clearances after a pruning cycle is completed 10')
- \* Safety clearances for skilled and unskilled workers (10' for unskilled, 2.5' for skilled-IEEE Standard)
- \* Power line voltages Distribution vs Transmission vs Telephone/Cable
- Transmission Lines = 125,000 volts and up, Distribution (street) = 25,000 volts,
- TV/Cable = low voltage no arc danger, primary concern is insulation wear from vegetation abrasion.



**The two big issues we have left to deal with for our Interurban Trees are:**

1. Specify that proper tree clearances should remain at 10' trim-to.
2. When trees die they should be replaced with trees that mature at 25'-35' (not the current limit of 12')