

SEATTLE URBAN FORESTRY COMMISSION

Tom Early, Chair • Steve Zemke, Vice-Chair
Weston Brinkley • Megan Herzog • Craig Johnson
Joanna Nelson de Flores • Sarah Rehder • 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

December 13, 2017

Meeting Notes

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

Attending

Commissioners

Tom Early – chair
Steve Zemke – vice-chair
Weston Brinkley
Megan Herzog
Joanna Nelson de Flores
Sarah Rehder
Sandra Whiting (non-voting)
Andrew Zellers

Staff

Sandra Pinto de Bader - OSE
Patti Bakker - Parks
Faith Lumsden - SDCI
Diane Davis - SDCI
Darren Morgan - SDOT
Nolan Rundquist - SDOT

Absent- Excused

Craig Johnson

Public

None

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 called the meeting to order

Public comment

None

Adoption of November 1 and November 8 meeting notes

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

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

Green Seattle Partnership Plan Update briefing

Patti Bakker, Planning, and Development supervisor for the GSP. The GSP is a partnership of implementation partners like Forterra, Earth Corps, and many others and volunteers.

The Parks Department has been working on updating the 20-year Strategic Plan.

Goals for the 10-year update

- Reflect on where we are today
- Celebrate our accomplishments
- Identify how to reach the original goal by 2025
- Plan for the future beyond 2025

The vision of the original GSP plan was to promote a livable city by re-establishing and maintaining healthy forested parklands throughout Seattle. The goal of the updated plan is to contribute to a livable city by ensuring healthy urban forests in Seattle.

UFC question/comment: who has to approve the plan update?

Answer: this update document was approved by Parks Superintendent.

The Problem:

- Invasive plants and declining tree canopy
- Increasing urban density
- Maintaining our success
- Increasing public awareness.

The Solution:

The GSP is the solution to these issues, with the following goals:

- Restoration: to restore 2,500 forested parkland acres by 2025
- Community: to galvanize an informed, involved, and active community
- Resources: to ensure long term maintenance and sustainability

GSP is a citywide effort, in addition to partner organizations, multiple departments and programs are involved, including: SDOT, OSE, City Light, SPU, and Parks.

To date, 1,300 acres are in the process of being restored; the community has invested 935,000 volunteer hours in 80+ parks.

Other elements of the plan update include:

Implementation:

- Organization: Seattle Parks, Parks District, Partner Organizations, Advisory committees, youth engagement, forest steward representation, reporting, transparency and assessments.
- Neighborhood focus

Restoration:

- Redefining urban forest assessments
- Updating threshold values to determine Phase IV enrollment
- Efforts still to be undertaken:
 - o Cost variability and efficiencies
 - o Challenging sites
 - o New best management practices and updated regularly (especially for slopes and wetlands)
 - o Refined prioritization

UFC question/comment: have the Phase IV requirements changed?

Answer: originally, they were not clearly established. Now they have additional parameters to classify acres as being in Phase IV.

- Projecting into the future

- Recognize long-term needs for field work
- Evaluate and define equity in restoration
 - Resources
 - Volunteers
 - Geography
- Restoration beyond park boundaries
- Addressing the effects of climate change on restoration

Community Engagement:

- Outreach
 - Improve awareness
 - Increase feedback opportunities beyond the annual Shareholder’s meeting
 - Allocate funding between Field Work and Community
 - Improve outreach to and activity in underserved neighborhoods
- Engage Youth
 - Existing youth programs
 - Environmental learning center programming
 - Student Conservation Association (employment program)
 - Forest Steward and Partner Organization youth events
 - Urban Forestry Project
 - Proposed youth engagement
 - Add youth to GSP Committees and Executive Council
 - Support and expand the Urban Forestry Project
 - Increase access to programming for underserved youth
- The Forest Steward of 2025
 - New volunteer opportunities (not all field work)
 - Demographics of volunteers to match the city-at-large
 - Involvement in and tracking of Phase IV work
 - Recruiting new Forest Stewards and youth in leadership roles

Resources

- Funding
 - Staff (funded by General and Capital funds (REET))
 - Active restoration (REET & Park District funds)
 - Maintenance – not funded

The 2018 GSP Shareholders meeting will be January 27 at the Daybreak Cultural Center.

UFC question/comment: when will the plan be posted for the UFC to review.

Answer: It’s currently going through the process.

Tree Penalties Director’s Rule update

Faith Lumsden from SDCI presented the draft Director’s Rule 21-2017.

Historically, SDCI has not been very involved in tree code compliance. They are working on strengthening this piece.

Tree Protection Ordinance – 2009

SMC 25.11 contains lofty goals:

- Protect the urban forest
- Prevent indiscriminate removal and destruction of trees

- Trade off development flexibility for tree protection
- Especially protect exceptional trees

Enforcement challenges

- No permit required
- The rules are a little complicated
- Must rely on complaints
- Must respond quickly
- Can't always access the property

UFC question/comment: If there is a violation of the tree ordinance, would SDCI enter the property and ask them to cease and desist.

Answer: can post a stop work order, can walk to the front door, but can't enter the property unless invited in by the owner. They have been advised by the Law Department that even if they gathered evidence, if they were not invited in, the evidence would not be admissible in court.

They got over 300 complaints this year. Actively managing this work would be a full-time staff person.

UFC question/comment: do you penalize the tree services company?

Answer: yes, if they can identify the company they do issue a notice of violation

UFC question/comment: SDOT has been training tree service providers. Can you do that?

Answer: SDOT has a good system.

SDOT input: the tree service registration has specific requirements such as having a certified arborist in place. They have threatened with canceling registration due to bad behavior.

Enforcement tools

- Stop work orders
- Notices of violation
- Civil penalties

Penalties for illegal tree cutting

- Penalty = appraised value of the tree(s) affected in accordance with the Guide for Plant Appraisal, 9th edition
- Value (penalty amount) = (Basic Tree Cost) x (Species rating %) x (Condition rating %) x (location rating %)

Hard to calculate value when the tree is gone

- SDCI is developing a Director's Rule to help with enforcement
- Rule was published in draft form on Thursday, December 7, 2017
- Comments requested by January 15, 2018.

Draft Director's Rule Overview

- Trunk formula
Diameter at Breast Height (DBH)
- Conifer or deciduous
- Species
- Condition
- Location
- Grove

Conifers have a low value compared to deciduous.

Faith would like to know if the UFC has a different recommendation to assess penalties instead of using the current formula?

When there are several trees being cut, they are choosing the smallest tree to calculate penalties. Five times in the last six years they have assessed penalties. They don't have a good history in assessing penalties.

UFC question/comment: if there are no permits required, we are talking about citations. We probably want to push people to the right behavior instead of penalizing them.

Answer; there are some people that say they didn't know. Two out of eight were told by their real estate agent to cut the tree.

UFC question/comment: developers are telling people to cut the trees down before they purchase the property.

Answer: we are looking into it. Would they go after the developer or the home owner?

UFC question/comment: what other specific things would you like us to look at in the DR?

Answer: look at ways to defend the % ratings for species, condition, and location.

UFC question/comment: the fault that he sees with the current system is that it's complaint-based. Are you looking at what other cities are doing? It might help what other cities are doing?

Answer: another section of SDCI is working on that piece. A permit would make enforcement much easier.

SDOT's Street Tree Story Map

Darren Morgan presented the Street Tree Story Map as a new way to communicate.

Is the Trees for Seattle Story Map that is initially taking a look at Street Trees. SDOT is entering the third year of the Street Tree Management Plan. The vision is to increase the scope of the map to include all of the City's urban forestry efforts.

This is an ArcGIS platform that is relatively new to the City. This is in draft form and is meant to be shared with internal stakeholders before having it be fully shared with the public, so that he can receive initial input before having it go live in January.

Darren walked the Commission through the Story Map.

Council Districts and Census Tracts helped create the SDOT Street Tree Management Units. If you zoom in you can get information on individual trees.

UFC question/comment: will it determine who I need to contact?

Answer; yes, you just click on the specific tree.

The majority of Street Tree Management units have close to 50% of a single genus, which is not good for resiliency of our urban forest.

UFC question/comment: this map would be a great tool to educate people.

Chair and Vice-chair elections

Weston will be serving as the 2018 chair and Joanna as the vice-chair.

Public comment

None

New Business

None

Adjourn

Public input: N/A