

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

May 9, 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
Sandra Whiting
Andrew Zellers

Staff

Sandra Pinto de Bader - OSE
Vera Giampietro - OPCD
Brennon Staley - OPCD

Guests

Jon Hoekstra - MTSG

Absent- Excused

Tom Early
Sarah Rehder

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

Weston called the meeting to order and read the agenda.

Public comment

None

Mountains to Sound Greenway – Jon Hoekstra

Jon Hoekstra delivered a presentation about the Mountains to Sound Greenway (MTSG). MTSG began in 1991 as a grass roots organization. It started with a march of outdoor enthusiasts concerned with protection of our natural resources. In 1991 Jim Ellis, a Seattle civic icon, came out of retirement to start the Mountains to Sound Greenway Trust to protect the Mountains to Sound Greenway (1.5 million acres from Bothell to Ellensburg).

MTSG includes a coalition of community activists and community leaders interested in protecting the landscape, building connections to that landscape (that natural areas are connected to our communities), and engaging people in stewardship of the landscape. They are a small non-profit with 20 staff but has coalition of several hundred with representatives from government, conservation and recreation as well as businesses. The coalition shows the breath of support and the need of different constituencies to support this effort. They have a board with 60 members.

The focus on landscape in the early years was crucial. There is a big gap in land ownership between the public lands in Kittitas County and the Seattle urban core. 450,000 acres of private land have been acquired since 1990.

They work with volunteers to engage in ecological restoration and trail work. They educate around 3,000 students per year and focus on schools in South Seattle that qualify for reduced lunch because those students are more likely to have less contact with natural areas.

Priority initiatives include:

- Snoqualmie River Valley (Woodinville up to North Bend and Snoqualmie Falls)
- Middle Fork Snoqualmie
- Urban & Edge communities
- Upper Yakima basin, and
- National Heritage area designation

The trail starts at Jose Rizal Park and end in Ellensburg (people can continue on all the way to Spokane).

The Middle Fork Snoqualmie River encompasses 110,000 acres and is 40 minutes from Seattle. They had to buy up part of the forest, which was a dangerous place with a poor access road. The Trust acquired the private land, cleaned it up, and was transformed into a national park quality place. The valley is not clean, safe and accessible. Working to provide infrastructure to direct activities and not have the place be overrun.

Mstgreenway.org/bettermiddlefork is the website to get more information about their efforts to make the Middle Fork valley be designated as a heritage area.

Other interesting news:

- They will be doing a carbon credit pilot to test the viability for urban forests to be a viable source of funding through carbon credits.
- They are working on establishing proper forest management to reduce forest overstock and reduce the threat of forest fires.
- They are actively contributing to King County's Million Trees Campaign.
- They are just starting to think about what the Greenway means inside the city. What should the city look like and how can they help increase canopy cover.

NOTE: The UFC asked a number of questions from Jon Hoekstra. To hear the details of the conversation please go to the digital recording at: <http://www.seattle.gov/urbanforestrycommission/meetingdocs.htm>

Updates to Seattle's Green Factor Director's Rule – Brennon Staley & Vera Giampietro

Vera Giampietro and Brennon Staley are both working on MHA. They briefed the UFC last September. Today they want to talk about the Director's Rule for Green Factor which provides guidance on how to apply the code. Council is reviewing proposed Green Factor changes as part of MHA legislation.

Green Factor is the City's landscaping requirement for new development in multi-family and commercial zones (including industrial commercial zones). It was first adopted in 2006 and was updated in 2010. The Director's Rule was last updated in 2015.

Green Factor stated benefits:

- Improves the look and feel of a neighborhood
- Reduces stormwater runoff

- Cools cities during heat waves
- Provides habitat for birds and beneficial insects
- Supports adjacent businesses
- Decrease crime

Qualifying landscape elements:

- Trees
- Shrubs and other low plantings
- Groundcovers
- Vegetated walls
- Green roofs
- Structural soils

When landscape architects and other professionals work on designing landscapes within developments there are several materials provided for guidance:

- Code (23.86.019)
- Director's rule 30-2015, and
- Score Sheet

OPCD works on policy and code changes. SDCI still owns this as the regulating agency. They are working closely together. OPCD is updating the Green Factor as part of the Mandatory Housing Affordability process and after receiving community feedback as well as issues identified with the Director's Rule.

What Green Factor is trying to achieve:

- Improve aesthetic quality of landscape elements
- Improve survivability of landscape plantings
- Mitigate experience of building height and bulk
- Transition to the pedestrian scale
- Improve landscape performance
- Increase overall health, wellbeing, and livability benefits associated with nature contact.

Timeline:

- Expected MHA vote at Council is August/September 2018
- Introduce Director's Rule prior to vote in June/July 2018.

What changes are being considered:

- Clarify irrigation requirements
- Apply maintenance requirement for longer duration
- Increase and clarify soil requirements for trees
- Update and clarify vegetated wall requirements
- Indicate responsibility for landscaping in the ROW
- Align with tree and plant lists used elsewhere in the City (SPU, SDOT)
- Ensure consistency with Stormwater Code and ROW Improvements Manual
- Improve user experience for designers.

Next steps:

- Circulating draft DR update with SDCI, OSE, SDOT, and SPU staff
- Testing updates with landscape designers and UFC
- Anticipate final draft in July
- Requires 21-day comment period

- Goal is to become effective concurrent with MHA ordinance

NOTE: For a complete account of the interaction between the UFC and OPCD staff, please refer to the digital recording at: <http://www.seattle.gov/urbanforestrycommission/meetingdocs.htm>

Detailed Tree Regulations letter, response to CM Johnson’s framework – continues

Weston and Steve put together a letter to respond to CM Johnson’s initial Trees for All proposal. The UFC discussed and amended the document.

ACTION: A motion to approve the Trees for All letter of recommendation as amended was made, seconded, and approved.

Public comment

None

New Business

None

Adjourn

Public input

None