

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

June 6, 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
Shari Selch – non-voting
Sarah Rehder
Michael Walton – non-voting
Sandra Whiting
Steve Zemke

Staff

Sandra Pinto de Bader - OSE

Guests

Jon Sloan – Port of Seattle
George Blomberg – Port of Seattle

Public

Carolyn Rodenberg
Lynn Fitz-Hugh
Richard Ellison (via email)

Absent- Excused

Andrew Zellers

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 welcomed new UFC members Michael Walton and Shari Selch. Both of them were introduced to Council on 6/5 and will be confirmed on 6/11.

Public comment

Carolyn – She is part of the Coalition for a Stronger Tree Ordinance. Appreciates the work the UFC is doing providing input to the proposed tree ordinance. 6” diameter needs to be the threshold for a tree removal permit. Exceptional trees should continue to be protected. Developers should have the requirements as home owners under a tree removal permit system. Green Factor is not about trees. We have to protect trees.

Lynn – She is glad the UFC is providing input on how to strengthen the tree ordinance. She was surprised that developers were left out from the current draft. That’s where more of the tree losses happen. There are opportunities with including developers, otherwise the code will continue to polarize people. Include a tree fund to help address equity issues. The question has been raised on how low-income residents can afford to pay for tree maintenance and removal. Make things clear for everyone, including developers.

Port of Seattle – Jon Sloan and George Blomberg

The Port of Seattle has done a lot of work to restore estuaries. The Duwamish estuary has been completely transformed. Everything there now is man-made. They are working on balancing the Port's economic engine and impacts to the natural environment. Harbor Island is the largest man-made island in the world. The area has lost 99% of the estuary habitat and 100% of the forested wetland. The watershed has changed as well. They work to compensate for the negative effects the Port's activities have on the environment. Riparian vegetation is starting to get established in their pilot restoration site. They are doing this work as required restoration activities.

There are abandoned sites and degraded habitat in the Duwamish. The Port is doing restoration on those areas as well. They are restoring soft shorelines with native vegetation that brings insects that drop in the water and feed the fish. They mentioned several restoration sites currently underway:

- Terminal 117: when completed will include public areas where residents can walk down to the shoreline. This type of project is important for carbon sequestration and a sea-level rise impacts.
- T-25 site was a cold-storage facility. They are restoring the site and adding riparian vegetation. The Port is now proposing projects like these to help others offset their impacts. They are reducing their GHG emissions with kelp and eelgrass projects that also provide benefits to wildlife habitat.

UFC question: how is all of this working for the water quality in the Duwamish?

Response: The area is a superfund site. Some areas will be dredged and others will be left for natural recovery. The Port's restoration efforts will help improve water quality.

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

Adoption of May 2 and May 9 meeting notes

ACTION: A motion to approve the May 2 meeting notes as amended was made, seconded, and approved.

ACTION: A motion to approve the May 9 meeting notes as amended was made, seconded, and approved.

Detailed Tree Regulations letter – continues

The Commission discussed a draft letter in response to the [Central Staff Memo](#).

ACTION: A motion to approve the amended letter of recommendation RE: Council Central Staff May 11 memo was made, seconded, and approved.

Public comment

None

New Business

None

Adjourn

Public input

From: rebecca.watson@gmail.com <rebecca.watson@gmail.com> **On Behalf Of** Seattle Nature Alliance
Sent: Sunday, May 13, 2018 5:23 PM
To: Durkan, Jenny <Jenny.Durkan@seattle.gov>; LEG_CouncilMembers <council@seattle.gov>
Cc: Pinto de Bader, Sandra <Sandra.Pinto_de_Bader@Seattle.gov>
Subject: Support for 'Trees for All' proposal with UFC Recommendations

May 11, 2018

Mayor Jenny Durkan / Seattle City Council Members
Seattle City Hall
600 4th Avenue
Seattle, WA 98124

We urge you to significantly strengthen Seattle's tree ordinance; to protect the trees that provide great benefit to Seattle citizens and provide habitat to birds and wildlife.

Seattle has both benefited from, and paid a steep price for, the recent economic development and growth happening throughout the city. With the rampant building boom downtown and increasing densification of our neighborhoods, we feel it's imperative for Seattle leaders to take pause and note, the tremendous impacts of this growth on its citizens and on the environment. The '[Trees for All](#)' framework, championed by Council member Rob Johnson, provides a brighter path forward, towards prioritizing the preservation of trees, increasing tree canopy, and working towards environmental equity across the city.

We appreciate Council member Johnson for his leadership on this issue and would urge the Mayor & City Council to take this opportunity to support not only 'Trees for All', but also the additional recommendations made by the Urban Forestry Commission that would further strengthen tree protections. The core recommendations we support include:

- Consolidating the oversight of Seattle's Urban forest/trees into one city department and making this department's mission solely to advocate for trees and preserving the tree canopy
- Establishing one citywide online portal to provide clear information and make the tree permitting process easy, and create one citywide source of data to track tree canopy status
- Encouraging planting native species and discouraging the planting of invasive species, to maximize sustainability, environmental services and promote biodiversity
- Requiring the replacement of all trees removed that are 6" DBH and larger with an equivalent size tree; or paying for the replacement/maintenance/mitigation costs to a City Tree Replacement & Maintenance Fund
- Increasing the notification time on public/private property the removal of any heritage trees, or stands of trees that are 6" DBH and larger
- Regulating tree service providers working on trees in Seattle, requiring them to know and follow City Tree Policy or face fines
- Providing education/incentives to homeowners and developers to keep existing trees, promoting the idea that 'Trees are the View'
- Providing a way to easily report down trees, and/or trees which are known to have been removed without proper permits

Trees are integral to Seattle's identity. In addition to their beauty, they are essential habitat for birds and wildlife. Trees provide shade, improve air quality, lessen soil erosion, provide wind/sound buffers, filter polluted waters, and offset our energy needs. Study after study has proven they enhance our health and well-being. **It is time for Seattle to take the lead and prioritize preserving the trees we have, and work to increasing tree canopy for everyone.**

Sincerely,

Denise Dahn, Mark Ahlness, & Rebecca Watson

Seattle Nature Alliance

<http://www.seattlenaturealliance.org> | seattlenaturealliance@gmail.com

It is our mission at the Seattle Nature Alliance to preserve urban natural areas for wildlife habitat, passive use, and scenic beauty.

From: Cynthia Slate <cynthiaslate@gmail.com>

Sent: Monday, May 21, 2018 1:43 PM

To: O'Brien, Mike <Mike.O'Brien@seattle.gov>; Johnson, Rob <Rob.Johnson@seattle.gov>

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

Subject: Find It, Fix It #18-00096594

An exceptional western red cedar tree on a single family zoned lot with full alley access to develop lot to it's fullest potential, is nonetheless endangered.

As you know there is loophole in the Seattle Tree code that allows exceptional trees to be removed even when the lot can be developed to it's fullest potential. The loophole is the seller has been asked to cut down the tree before the lot is sold.

This tree is luckily placed -it is in the front yard set-back where no development is allowed. It is so lucky that it has survived and been considered old since before the oldest people (who were in their 90's in the late 90's) grew up here thinking it was "an old tree".

Why not stop this tree from being cut down? The realtor is misled into thinking this lot would sell better without this grand tree. That's just not true. This old tree would be wonderful to climb on or sit under.

Also, if a neighbor offers the seller money -before it is sold to the developer-because THEY want more sun, this is still not a reason the community should loose such an old exceptional tree. Please can anything be done?

Full-size 5 Soccer ball:





Check out this Other Inquiry at 1208 NW 77TH ST
<http://servicerequest.seattle.gov/reports/18-00096594>

Cynthia

From: Carrie Ferrence <carrie@cityfruit.org>

Sent: Tuesday, June 5, 2018 10:57 AM

To: council@seattle.gov; jenny.durkan@seattle.gov

Cc: Steve@friends.urbanforests.org

Subject: Protecting Seattle's trees and urban forest

Dear Mayor Durkan and Seattle City Council Members,
For the past ten years, City Fruit has worked to support Seattle's urban fruit tree canopy - it is one of the largest in the country and it represents a beautiful intersectionality of environmental protection, food access, and community engagement, particularly in underserved communities. We work very closely with the City of Seattle, through our contract to manage 16 of this city's public orchards, while building connections with neighbors and community partners to increase access to both the trees and the fruit.

We urge you to provide strong leadership now to significantly strengthen Seattle’s tree ordinance to protect our trees and urban forest.

Seattle’s urban forest is an integral and vital part of our city. It provides many benefits and amenities to those living in our city. Trees help clean our air and enhance public health, reduce stormwater runoff, mitigate climate change, decrease the impacts of heat and wind, provide habitat for birds and wildlife and give us a connection with nature in our neighborhoods.

Seattle’s rapid growth is reducing these beneficial impacts as trees are removed, particularly during development across our city. It is urgent that you act now to stop the loss of trees, particularly exceptional trees and tree groves, and to promote environmental equity as we increase our tree canopy.

We urge you to act now by updating our current tree ordinances and regulations as follows:

1. **Adopt a policy of a net increase of Seattle’s tree canopy each year to reach the city’s current goal of 30% tree canopy.** This requires maintaining and strengthening current protections for both significant and exceptional trees, tree groves, Heritage trees, environmentally critical areas and natural areas.
2. **Require the replacement of all trees removed that are 6” DBH and larger with equivalent sized trees (e.g. small, medium or large) – either on site: or pay the replacement and maintenance mitigation costs into a City Tree Replacement and Maintenance Fund.** Allow the Fund to accept fines, donations, grants and for acquiring land and setting easements and Tree Protection Trusts.
3. **Expand the existing tree removal and replacement permit, 2-week notice and posting system used by SDOT – to cover all public and private trees 6” DBH and larger on both public and private property in all land use zones.** Allow removal of no more than 1 significant non-exceptional tree per lot per year.
4. **Establish one citywide database when applying for tree removal and replacement permits and to track changes in the tree canopy.** Post online all permit requests and permit approvals for public viewing. Expand SDOT’s existing tree map to include all the trees in the city that are removed and replaced.
5. **Require a detailed Urban Forest Canopy Assessment for all development projects** prior to any development beginning. This detailed tree inventory should be entered into a public database. Replacement trees should be based on equivalent tree size at maturity.
6. **Expand SDOT’s existing tree service provider’s registration and certification to include all tree service providers working on trees in Seattle.**
7. **Consolidate tree oversight into one city entity: The Office of Sustainability and Environment, as was recommended by the Seattle City Auditor in 2009.** Give OSE the additional authority needed to ensure that trees have an independent advocate for their protection to avoid conflicting goals in other city departments.
8. **Emphasize native trees and vegetation, particularly conifers, to maximize sustainability and environmental services.** Require the removal of invasive plants during development. Increase incentives for protecting trees and provide public assistance for property owners who need help complying with the city ordinance. To increase compliance increase penalties, fines and enforcement. Ensure environmental equity in maintaining and increasing our tree canopy across the city.

Thank you for your support in protecting Seattle's incredible trees.

Carrie

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Carrie Ferrence, Executive Director
City Fruit 206-850-8481

From: Cynthia Slate <cynthiaslate@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, June 06, 2018 12:07 PM
To: Pinto de Bader, Sandra <Sandra.Pinto_de_Bader@Seattle.gov>
Subject: Re: New documents posted on the Urban Forestry Commission website

Heritage Trees and exceptional trees. Should be established by neighborhood. The requirement should be more stringent in neighborhoods with historically low canopy cover and less exceptional trees. Many people sadly do not leave their neighborhood, especially the disabled and non-working poor. They have special trees in their neighborhood that they know the history of and to the community they are "exceptional" but might miss that status if we are looking at the big 83 square miles of Seattle.

I hope the commission will consider this for neighborhood under-represented in Heritage and exceptional trees.

Cynthia

From: RICHARD ELLISON <climbwall@msn.com>
Sent: Wednesday, June 06, 2018 2:09 PM
To: Pinto de Bader, Sandra <Sandra.Pinto_de_Bader@Seattle.gov>
Subject: UFC public comment

To: Seattle Urban Forestry Commission
From: Richard Ellison, 8003 28th Ave NE, Seattle WA 98115 climbwall@msn.com
RE: Proposed Tree Protection Ordinance
Date: June 6, 2018

While I am very supportive of any improvements in legal tree protection, as noted by the UFC, developers are still not required to have permits for tree removal, business as usual. All players need to be held to the same standards. In addition, there are some other issues which are not addressed in Councilmember Johnson's proposed changes, two of them I will address here, Cumulative Impacts and ADU's.

The proposed MHA upzones in areas combined with the newly proposed ADU changes could be pretty devastating to mature trees, tree groves and tree canopy. The UFC needs to more strongly address cumulative impacts in its recommendations to Council. The City is ramming each proposal down as though separate from the other, avoiding a real discussion of cumulative impacts.

The City will say ADU's will be addressed separately, but this loses opportunities for adequate mitigation. Homeowners wanting a tree removed; Homeowners thinking of building an ADU; or a developer, all should have to play by the same rules. Basically if a homeowner wants to cut a tree down without a permit, can they apply for an ADU? If a developer or realtor wants to remove trees, do they need a permit? Too much hanky panky of realtors speculating on home sales have had

homeowners remove trees. Developers have homeowners remove trees. And now developers may also continue to remove trees without permits under the new proposal. Keep the loopholes to a minimum.

Single Family Zones have the highest density of trees currently. If ADU's are build wherever they can, Exceptional Trees will be lost. Groves will lose their Grove status as trees are whittled away in SF as well. Are there any calculations in any documents estimating the losses of canopy if ADU's are approved? It is necessary to anticipate potential changes in ADU codes with the proposed new tree protection ordinance.

Can exceptional trees be removed for ADU's? Under what circumstances? If building out to legal limits allows tree removal, then building ADU's will also allow for trees to be removed. What about tree groves? By removing one or two trees for ADU's, will tree grove status be lost? Is that possible? What's the difference between an ADU and a new home in regards to setbacks, open space requirements, etc.

As Cass Turnbull once said, "Where are the kids gonna play?"

Thank you,
Richard Ellison