Urban Forestry Commission (UFC)
January 5, 2011
Meeting Notes

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

Attending

Commissioners
Matt Mega (MM) – chair
John Small (JS)– vice chair
Nancy Bird (NB)
Gordon Bradley (GB)
John Floberg (JF)
John Hushagen (JH)
Jeff Reibman (JR)
Peg Staeheli (PS)

Staff
Sandra Pinto de Bader (SPdB) - OSE

Public
Michael Oxman
Steve Zemke
Margaret Thouless

Absent- Excused
Elizabeta Stacishin-Moura (ESM)

Call to Order
MM called the meeting to order once quorum was present

Public Comment

Michael Oxman provided a proposed agenda for the UFC to work on in 2011. The audit mentioned that performance metrics needed to be kept track of and he proposed format consistency across departments. SDOT and Parks have different reporting systems in incompatible formats. This would be a good place to start.

He shared the DPD result of the UW complaint about unlawful tree removal. There is no violation because they are in voluntary compliance when, after the complaint, they applied for a permit. The way this is shown people don't have a way to know that there ever was a complaint.

Clarified that according to UFC by-laws public comment allows for each person to comment for 3 minutes.

1. Forest Resource
    - A. Attributes
        - i. describe Location; Species; Size; Condition
    - B. Values
        - i. Social; Environmental; Financial (Architectural)

2. Human Resource
    - A. Maintenance
        - i. Plant; Prune; Remove
    - B. Inventory Analysis
        - i. Photo; Database; Blend (GIS)
    - C. Equipment

3. Political Will (Who pays)
    - A. Stewardship
        - i. Public Funding on public land
        - ii. Agency; Institution; Department
    - B. Property Rights
        - i. Owner maintains resource

4. Risk Management
    - A. Assessment
    - B. Prevention
    - C. Failure
        - i. Property Damage
        - ii. Injury

Steve Zemke provided comments on the draft tree removal permit position paper including:

- Urges UFC to look at this in the context of adopting a position of no net loss. In Lake Forest Park people know that when you remove a tree you either have to replace it on site or pay a fee for a tree to be planted elsewhere. The idea is to avoid canopy loss.
- Under reasons for a permit, add a goal to maintain the ecosystem benefits of existing urban forestry infrastructure including reducing storm water runoff, habitat preservation, air pollution mitigation, and other benefits.
- Under tracking it helps you understand and come up with solutions to reduce unnecessary tree removal, give you an idea of why people remove trees.
- Enforcement – permit system will allow efficient ability to see who is violating city laws for easier enforcement process
- Assumptions – make comment that tree removal outside of development should be regulated by a different agency such as SPU.
- Permits at three levels: no fee required, some fee required, higher level of fee weighing out whether people will not understand the need to file for a permit
- Add solar access as a reason why people remove trees

Invited UFC to participate in informal memorial for Ingraham trees this Sunday 1-2:30 PM at Broadview library.

Approve December 1 and December 15 meeting notes

ACTION: **A motion was made to approve the December 1 and 15 meeting notes as written. The motion was unanimously carried.**

Approve amended UFC By-Laws

General spelling and grammar changes were made throughout the by-laws. The main change was to reflect the Commission's decision to begin meeting twice a month (the first and second Wednesday of the month).

MM proposed to strike the words "at the beginning" from Sec. 7 under Article II to allow for flexibility on when public comment would take place, especially at the second UFC meeting of the month.

Steve Zemke wanted to make sure the public had the opportunity to talk prior to the UFC voting on issues.

NB the second meeting of the month isn't really intended for votes. It's supposed to be more of a working session and the first meeting is a more formal meeting.

ACTION: **A motion was made to approve the amended bylaws with all the changes included the one proposed by the Chair. The new Section 7 would read: "The commission will offer opportunity for public comment for 15 minutes at regular Commission meetings. Members of the public who desire to speak may sign up on sheets provided by Commission staff at the beginning of the meeting." It was also clarified that regular Commission meetings will take place the first and second Wednesday of the month. The motion was unanimously carried.**

Approve 2011 Annual Work Plan

MM proposed ownership for different work plan items including dates:
JR will continue working on revising the permit position paper
JF will lead the position paper on tree standards. PS and JS will support him
JH will lead the position paper on professional standards
JR will lead the position paper on development standards (timeline will depend on completion of permit paper)
MM will draft a calendar of monthly guest speakers and topics and ensure the Urban Forest Management Plan and UFC work plan align
MM will create a cover letter for standardizing presentations to UFC

JF asked for clarification of expectations
MM the idea is for the lead to assume responsibility for introducing the topic and have ownership of the process to make sure the work is done supported by other commissioners.

NB asked how agenda items are set up and how are issues requested of the UFC.
SPdB responded that issues needing UFC input are brought through the Urban Forestry Interdepartmental Team. Sometimes issues are brought forward directly from Council

PS said it would be helpful to get another briefing from all Urban Forestry departments
SPdB said it might be helpful to have a goal statement for each work plan item section in order to be able to prioritize the work load

NB proposed to glance at the work plan at the end of each meeting to see if we are on track. Because this is a working document it wouldn't be adopted but this latest iteration would be the working draft.

People asked general, clarifying questions around the work plan.
GB asked about items OSE would bring to the UFC
SPdB clarified that there is a work plan based on the Urban Forest Management Plan goals that the Urban Forest IDT works on.

JH: have there been significant changes in the 2011 work plan due to budget cuts?
SPdB: The departments are now aware of the budget cuts impacts to their programs. I'm working with the departments in getting the 2010 accomplishments documented as well as creating the 2011 work plan that reflects budget impacts. As soon as I have the information I will report to the UFC.

JH: Will less UF work be done due to the budget cuts?
SPdB: It's likely that budget cuts will impact urban forestry work plan items. I will present a report as soon as I have the information.

Tree removal permit position paper – continues
JR started walking everyone through the document. Incorporated some of the feedback given to the UFC by Deb Powers, including creating a goal statement.

JF - mentioned that the goal needs to be measurable. Effective management can be interpreted in different ways. We might want to tie it to the 30% canopy cover goal.

JR - since working on this he has been thinking of 'stewardship'. Management is an active verb.

PS thinks the term 'management' might elicit negative reactions and proposed to use the term 'stewardship' instead and add Seattle's urban forest canopy.

JF - stewarding the canopy has a positive effect of increasing it.

JR - we are talking about private property. Is it a given that there should be an increase in private property?

JH - we should add a few sentences to emphasize that we can't lose canopy.

JR is it fair to think that every single person in the city should have trees? Or should we allow for offset replacement and look for other mechanisms? If we are going to go to a replacement system at all

JS - we need to be careful on a no net loss on a parcel level because it becomes a punishment for having trees. We need to think about it terms of meeting targets.

JF - The overall effect is to gain canopy, let's state it and not be afraid.

JR – to keep it overarching we could talk about effective stewardship and growth of Seattle's urban forest on private property

PS – this is a guide that will start a permit process and it will evolve over time. This is a good framework to start. We are not writing the code.

JR – the next section has more specific statements about other goals. Steve suggested adding a bullet point on ecosystem benefits: to retain and expand the ecosystem benefits provided by the urban forest infrastructure to the city: reducing storm water runoff, habitat preservation, air pollution mitigation, and other benefits.

PS – let's keep it simple to air, water, and habitat

NB – make sure we are being consistent as we move through in talking about trees as infrastructure

JF – if there is going to be a punitive action like a fine it might be a good idea to provide the public with information on what they are losing by cutting down the tree and talk about the ecosystem benefits, to show the value of what you've lost by taking this tree out. People would understand how they are affecting the public. Maybe have a calculator that would show species and DBH specific ballpark. I have a couple of websites I can forward.

MM – Lake Forest Park has good things.

People commented on the Lake Forest Park Ordinance adopted in December 2010.

MM – Called Andy, associate planner in Lake Forest Park, to invite him to come talk to the UFC. He is waiting to hear back.

JF – should we include public property on this?

JS – include the ROW. Consider rolling the SDOT permit system into this new system

GB – when talking about safety: the work and what's being accomplished with the work. Stress the safety piece along with health and welfare and reference it up front. This might resonate with people more concerned with this aspect of regulations.

JR – talk about the fact that there will be tree standards

NB – people resonate when they think of health

JH – the intent of the permit should encompass private and public entities: Seattle University, etc. They should have to comply with canopy cover goals.

PS – leave some of these nuances to those writing the code. This is not the best use of our time.

NB – do say that this is intended for all users, public or private property not undergoing development

JR – Does the school district function under a Major Institution Overlay?

PS – including private and public parcels (excluding ROW and major institutions)

JR – excluding trees actively managed by the city

NB – Take SDOT's permit system and build from it. IT platform considerations for future of system

JR – add capabilities that should be done up front to be compatible with future systems and needs?

NB – make it very simple. Okay to have free permits (don't' call it registration only)

JR – make sure to define a tree if every tree requires a permit
PS – trees are defined in city code and regulations. SDOT has a list. You can get to them.

JR – there are some trees that are so small that we shouldn't be bothering with

NB – we need to be very clear with the public. A free permit would help as a selling point

MM – in Lake Forest Park if it is under 6" you can cut it. We have to have a threshold.

JR – the way he structure the questions, by the time you get to the end you can realize that there is no fee, that it was just a registration

MM – we need to have a conversation about when we use registration and when would a permit kick in.

NB – a permit increases the stature of tree protection

JF – are we going to provide protection to all trees?

MM – would suggest 6" DBH

NB – she would like to see less

PS – she would also like to see a smaller tree protected. But we shouldn't be worrying about that level of detail

MM – size is not the only issue, we should consider location and species as well

JR – the permit could say, if you have an under 6" tree and you don't know what species it is and you don't have an arborist that's okay; but is you have a 24" tree and you don't know the species and don't have an arborist, that's not okay

NB – the solar access point is also important

MM – it's written in the Comprehensive Plan, so we need to include it

JF – the title – heavy pruning and topping should be considered tree removal. It's confusing to have a title that is so narrow. People might think they are not removing although they are toping… maybe leave it as tree permit

JF – we talked about making the permit be revenue neutral. There is an idea still within the document that refers to making money, so we need to be consistent and make it all 'revenue neutral.'

MM - We will still have time next month to talk about this and adopt the final document.

JR – hopes to have a version ready to vote next week

New Business and Announcements

PS – wants to compliment SCL for good management of the situation around SCL's pruning of a large cedar

NB – the list of actions Matt put out was very helpful

MM - will try to continue doing that

Matt created two suggested standardized agendas for our meetings:

Meeting 1		Meeting 2	
Call to order		Call to order	
Public comment	15 min.	Chair report	15 min.
Approve minutes (for both meetings)	15 min.	Commission discussion	15 min.
Guest speaker or department business	45 min.	Work plan item	60 min.
UFC business or work plan status	15 min.	Public comment	15 min.
Work plan item	20 min.	Next month's agenda items	15 min.
Flex/announcements	10 min.		

Also, Matt will be holding office hours before UFC meetings. The second Wednesday he will receive people from 2:00 – 2:45 p.m. in STM 2790.

Adjourn

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Community Input:
From: Teresa Chegin [mailto:tereche52@hotmail.com]
Sent: Thursday, January 06, 2011 1:29 AM
To: PintodeBader, Sandra
Subject: Seattle Tree Canopy

Ms. Pinto de Bader,

I would like to send a message to the Seattle city government. As a resident of Seattle, I would like to see us preserve out tree canopy in Seattle. I am very disappointed that some of the trees on the Ingraham High School campus will be torn down. We should be saving as many trees as possible.

Thank you for giving this your attention.

Teresa Chegin

Teresa Chegin tereche52@hotmail.com