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

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

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

Attending

Commissioners
Matt Mega (MM) – chair
John Small (JS)– vice chair
Nancy Bird (NB)
Gordon Bradley (GB)
Tom Early (TE)
John Hushagen (JH)

Staff
Sandra Pinto de Bader (SPdB) - OSE
Roy Francis (RF) - SDOT

Public
Michael Oxman (MO)
Steve Zemke (SZ)

Absent- Excused
John Floberg (JF)
Peg Staeheli (PS)
Jeff Reibman (JR)

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
MM – called the meeting to order

Public Comment
MO – UFC should meet with all the arborists in all the City departments. Ask what's the method by which different departments' arborists learn about City policy in other City departments. In the 2009 audit it says that there should be better public outreach. You are having a meeting with a few department arborists and you are relying on people at the meeting to tell others in their department what took place at the meeting. What's the mechanism for trickle down of knowledge?

There was a report in the Leschi Natural Area that the Parks Department is issuing permits for tree removal. On June 6, 2010 the Parks Department staff brought to the UFC their policy and mentioned a moratorium on issuing these permits. It sounds like the moratorium is over and the neighbors are now removing trees in the Leschi Natural Area. When did that take place?

The main thing you need to find out from the IDT is how to implement the permit system since staff in DPD doesn't think a permit system could be implemented.
SZ – Two issues, one is the handout you are looking at. Under the section that says more information, add how people can request to be added to the email for meetings so people know they can get information on an ongoing basis.

At the top of the document you mention trees and vegetation, in other areas of the document you leave out vegetation. It would be good to be consistent. Add something like "and plants where appropriate." So people don't think it's just the trees we are talking about. The definition for infrastructure is still kind of vague. On where did the 30% come from. It's hard to read, too much information. If people can't read through it and get stock they'll stop reading. You can always put more information on the website.

The Street Tree Ordinance proposal. I will provide more detailed comment later. The reference to replacing any tree removed from City property with two trees, I think it's important to get into the concept of tree equivalency. If you remove a Douglas fir and replace it with two small cherries you'll never recover the canopy. I don't see any reference about street trees being part of the overall canopy cover goal for the city. Would be important to mention the Urban Forest Management Plan.

Canopy definition – talks more about buildings not tree canopy. SZ talked about new text not being underlined (page 10). On page 11 talks about using climbing spurs… it think this should say 'by an authorized person.' There is no reference about how the whole thing fits in on the overall canopy cover goal.

I mail the Mayor and City Council Portland's tree ordinance. I heard back from Conlin saying that he would review with interest. The Mayor promised to give one hour to tree advocates before this new proposal moves forward. The UFC should be able to meet with the Mayor to discuss the proposal.

Approve September 7 and September 14 meeting notes

> **ACTION**: **A motion was made to approve the September 7 meeting notes as written. The motion was seconded and carried.**
>
> **ACTION**: **A motion was made to approve the September 14 meeting notes as amended. The motion was seconded and carried.**

Ecosystems Metrics position paper – discussion continues
MM – John S has been leading this effort. JS, TE, and I met the other day. I summarized a little bit. We don't have a lot written on this right now. We can quickly to looking at the i-tree model (used to be UFORE). I-tree is very strong in air pollution metrics and carbon/climate is also alright.

We don't use so much air conditioning so it's not a big deal in term of energy savings? We also had good discussions about doing the habitat component too.

TE – i-tree identifies some elements of the habitat value but it's rudimentary
MM – For me, the metrics are set, the i-tree is the study. But, as the UFC why are we doing the ecosystem metrics paper? Is it to promote the ordinance, is it for public information? To get to a definitive monetary impact? Should be come up with messaging but don't want to re-invent the wheel. JS want to use some of this metrics as cost benefit analysis. How are departments spending money and is it going to the right place based on this study. Also talk about the lack of funding… we can get into some budget decisions.

TE – re-allocation of funding and identifying overlapping and contradicting uses of funds.

GB – having to do with the implementation of the UFMP. What keeps on coming up is the 30% canopy cover goal. Some of these things you may have a hard time attributing to the vegetation but we have a bunch of metrics coming out of the i-tree which will add a lot to the 30% in terms of benefits.

MM – we can have two scenarios if you increase or decrease canopy cover. See what happens in different scenarios.

GB – are the i-tree folks planning to monitor in the future

SPdB – Lisa Ciecko is the PM (from Cascade Land Conservancy). We can ask her about that.

MM – does the i-tree ECO do stormwater?

JS – no, that's done by the HYDRO module which is in Beta. What ECO does is carbon storage and sequestration, pollution removal, density by land use, species diversity, susceptibility to pests, energy effects. City is ramping up its spending on stormwater management. Put a dollar value to the services being provided and services that could be provided by getting to 30% canopy cover. Wanting to manage stormwater separately from sewage so they don't have to treat it the same way.

---- Conversation around stormwater and sewer discharges----

MM – position papers have been to inform the ordinance. This one is broader.

TE – what metrics can we get from i-tree?

JS – where is this paper doing is to quantify in dollars some of these services provided by the UF and where it makes sense, ask City staff to look at what we are investing in trees and what we are getting back. What if we invested in trees instead of the infrastructure we are investing in now (are more pipes in the ground more cost effective? Or is putting more trees in the ground more cost effective?). What is the study pumping out that is more useful

MM – can we have an intermediate step list the kind of metrics that we would expect to get out of the i-tree study and have a conversation with the folks that are doing it? We might want to do a big of research after. It would be beneficial to have a group brain storm. We could have that as a preparatory paper that we can send off? We need to talk to the PM and a tech person to talk about this.

JS – The City tends to work in silos. SPU focuses on stormwater, some other departments are interested in carbon sequestration. Bring awareness to the public about this. Building the business case for trees. To do that we need to outline specifically what metrics we want the City to quantify.

JH – there are some people in SPU whose sole job is to communicate what they are doing to the public.

TE – it could be interesting to highlight efficiencies that could be gained between departments. That doest back to the IDT.

MM – it's a bit confusing where we want to go with this paper. We need to come up with the outline. The critical piece is to figure out where dollars should be going and build efficiencies among departments. Then getting an educational piece to the public.

JS – This paper was something Godden asked DPD for some accounting on what the value of the permit system would be. DPD presented the cost of the permit system. This is a counterargument to DPD and would talk about the financial benefits of trees.

MM – in Seattle we need to use i-tree HYDRO. But air pollution is also pertinent for Seattle. Should the work group meet again or should we wait until we meet with the i-tree people?

JS – yes, let's wait until we meet with them.

Finalize UFC messaging document - vote
MM – the FAQ is the new piece added

SPdB – based on prior conversations I just added as much as I could fit in one page for Commissioners to react to it and add or remove as they see appropriate.

MM – Do you guys want to take the FAQ piece? I think vegetation is okay. Do we add understory and plants but might confuse the public sometimes.

TE – I would say 'and plants'

SPdB – Are we considering bushes that are not related to trees?

TE – if we are talking about stormwater yes. It depends on the use. Ultimately I see this as a push towards an urban infrastructure element and for that reason I would include all plants.

MM – why don't we do a hierarchy with a few definitions a, b, and c. So that we are not choosing a single definition of urban forest. FAQ doesn't mean you have all the answers.

TE – As people read this people will realize that there are some areas that are not part of the urban forest in all its glory but it does help.

GB – in some conversations in the past we talk about the urban forest and sometimes we mainly talk about the trees. Talking about urban ecosystem – it's a combination of all things that provide the benefits. Make sure to capture all the plant life in the region including ground cover, shrubs, trees, etc. just like the Green Factor includes different things.

MM – Gordon you are making the argument to include vegetation inside of the UF definition. I like that we are starting to move toward more of an urban ecosystem. We can advance education and information at the same time. I'll take a stab at making these corrections.

GB – what's the forest what does it provide and how is it managed. Starting with infrastructure, I wonder where that came from.

MM – we can state the goal what the UFMP is first. We might want to put an example and some numbers of the tree benefit calculator.

SPdB – the idea of dividing the document in three sections was to mimic the structure of the UFMP but it doesn't have to be that way.

MM – threats is pretty long. Maybe break the threats into headers to clarify things a little bit.

TE – the biggest threat is lack of appreciation. Give information on the full spectrum of what a tree provides. This if for a media question or private citizen?

MM – yes it's an initial basic piece we can hand out. I'll try to break it out into bullets. Would development threats be under management or resource.

TE – I would see it more as a management…

MM – we'll do the management piece first so people can see the bigger picture. Put the UFMP out there and mention the 30% goal. Maybe mention the IDT as the group that is working on this?

SPdB – the UFMP is the document that manages the urban forest and it's implemented by the IDT.

GB – do you think that people will want to know where the 30% came from?

MM – I would like to get it out. There are a lot of entities involved and it can be confusing.

TE – Instead of explaining where the goal came from people might be more interested in where we are now. Talk about the 23% current canopy cover.

MM – good opportunity to put something in there about the Green Seattle Partnership.

GB – instead of threats we can talk about challenges.

TE – finding more information as well as getting involved.

SDOT Street Tree Ordinance
RF – UF manager in SDOT

JH – before you get into this, can we have an update on the Seafair parade?

RF – SDOT pruned and tied trees back for the last time in 2011. There is a meeting being planned in the next few weeks to talk about next steps. I'm not sure exactly what the outcome of that will be. Perhaps

they will look for another route, I don't know. We'll know more as we get into discussions with the Seafair officials.

NB – how did the trees fared that were tied back?

RF – yes, they are okay but this is not sustainable.

JH – so the City will speak with one voice and say that's it. No more.

RF – ultimately the Mayor will decide.

GB – other streets accommodate traffic and prune trees. This also compromises the integrity of the urban forest.

RF – that's not really a result of pruning but 'bus pruning'

NB – 50th street is a good example of that.

RF – Code requires 14" over roadway and 8" over the sidewalk. If we did that then buses and trucks would be accommodated. But we are not getting to all trees with enough frequency to avoid that issue.

RF – Thank you for allowing me to come and brief the UFC on the proposed Street Tree ordinance. Drafting in the works for close to 12 years. Mayor was briefed last week on the draft and he said he is looking forward to receiving feedback from the UFC and the public. We'll have public meetings for the next several months. I'd like to talk briefly about the problems we encounter on the field and the shortcomings currently in the code.

Almost 100,000 of the approximately 140,000 street trees are privately owned. Individuals and companies prune or remove trees without a permit and lack skilled personnel. Those landscape maintenance companies mainly mow lawns but they are asked to prune trees by property owners and they might not know how to do it properly. Penalties in the current ordinance are very weak and minor compared to the resource being damaged. Many home owners are not aware of their maintenance responsibilities and are decades removed from the time when the tree was planted. The current ordinance is inadequate in regulating activities. The Street Use ordinance (which regulated activities in the ROW from street improvements to work on sidewalks) is an 80-90 page document and the section on trees is tiny. This new ordinance fills in the existing gaps. This is a summary page that shows the elements of the new ordinance in comparison with the existing ordinance:

Title	Current Ordinance	Proposed Ordinance
Tree Protection	Scope of Authorization requires persons, utilities, & construction companies working in the ROW to preserve trees but provides too little detail on how to accomplish this.	1. Makes it illegal to damage or destroy a street tree. 2. Provides an expanded set of definitions 3. Prohibits topping, spurring, and attaching signs or other objects. 4. Prohibits placement or storage of construction materials adjacent to trees
Permitting	Requires permits to plant, prune or remove street trees. No requirement to replace trees	1. Describes process & procedures for applying for a permit 2. Defines the criteria by which a planting, pruning or removal permit may be granted or denied. 3. Creates the authority for SDOT to require a replacement tree when a removal permit is granted
Tree Maintenance Responsibilities	Does not spell out who is responsible for maintenance of street trees	1. Defines criteria for determining SDOT & property owners responsibilities for tree maintenance 2. Gives city authority to perform emergency work on all ROW trees 3. Defines criteria by which a tree may be declared a public nuisance 4. Reaffirms SDOT authority to order property owners to perform maintenance for public safety
Arborist Certification	Does not require any specific qualifications for companies performing work on ROW trees or standards for work performed by them	1. Requires companies performing work on ROW trees to be supervised by an ISA certified arborist 2. Establishes insurance requirements for tree care firms 3. Permits a property owner to perform work on abutting trees as long as the work meets industry standards
Penalties and Fines	No penalties are specified for illegal tree work that damages or destroys non-SDOT owned ROW trees	1. Establishes penalties for damaging or destroying non-SDOT owned trees, which may include the appraised value of the tree

JH – of the 140,000 street trees how many are under power lines?

RF – I can get that information for you

NB – asking for a permit for removal/pruning of trees in the ROW is close to doing the same for private trees. The UFC could get behind that. Is there a component for a budget for enforcement?

RF – All legislation has a fiscal note attached. Unlikely to be something attached in terms of funding unless determined by the Mayor or Council.

NB – this could be a good conversation for next week's meeting.

RF – currently double fee for permit and up to $300 penalty. Now SDOT would be allowed to charge for the face value of the tree and also bring forward civil action. Could extrapolate cost of installation to each caliper inch of the tree. In terms of penalties, the city arborist makes a recommendation and the department director makes a final decision.

JH – ought to get a caveat that addresses 'pruning for line clearance'

RF – the state give utility companies the right to prune for safety and reliability

MM – does the IDT review SCL pruning and topping?

RF – SDOT meets monthly with the vegetation manager of SCL . SCL hires arborists to do the work.

JS – recommends clearly defining the term 'supervise.' It should be that the person is there during the work. On-site supervision. You can be supervising 2-3 crews and it's the guy on the tree making the decisions. What happens in areas without sidewalks? A lot of people have no idea they don't own undeveloped ROW. Some areas without sidewalks would be under this legislation but might not be able to be properly applied when don't know where the ROW is.

RF – GIS shows property lines.

JS – Streets without curbs and gutter or sidewalks

JH – Trees on undeveloped ROW – whose responsibility is that?

NB – Have ordinance go forward and educate residents at the same time. Needs a big campaign.

RF – talked about developing a Client Assistance Memo (CAM) and Director's rules.

MM - that would be a reason for a permit system

RF – ROW activities are regulated for transportation system to operate safely. This is an opportunity to inform applicants of their responsibility

MM – does the permit system save SDOT money in the long term?

RF – On the tree removal piece, yes, if the resident pays for it, it does save SDOT money

MM – Has DPD commented on this proposed Street Tree Ordinance?

RF – SDOT did share the proposed ordinance with DPD

TE – the ordinance defines hazardous tree but doesn't have a rating

RF – our arborists use existing standards to determine the level of risk associated with a tree

TE – But there is no specific threshold? Might want to include a threshold to clarify for the public.

Adjourn