

Urban Forestry Commission (UFC)

ADOPTED November 2, 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

John Small (JS)– vice chair
Nancy Bird (NB)
Tom Early (TE)
John Floberg (JF)
Peg Staeheli (PS)

Staff

Sandra Pinto de Bader (SPdB) - OSE
Nolan Rundquist (NR) - SDOT

Public

Steve Zemke (SZ)

Absent- Excused

Matt Mega (MM) – chair
Gordon Bradley (GB)
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

JS– called the meeting to order

Public Comment

SZ – Wanted to give general comments on the proposed street tree ordinance. How does it integrate with larger picture? Not sure why this is under Title 15 which deals with street and sidewalk use. There should be a separate ordinance for Seattle’s urban forest. The problem here is having to go to every department to find out about trees. Need a long-term look. The two for one replacement is in the Whereas section but not in the actual legislation. Maybe introduce the idea of replant or replace on site or elsewhere. This is a mayoral directive that could change if not codified.

In the Definitions section, canopy is defined as that of a building. Need to include forest canopy. There needs to be consistency when talking about 20 feet vs. drip line vs. root zone. When defining public place, the ordinance doesn’t include parks. The Seattle Center might not be a public place. This may not be the right wording. It’s important to protect significant trees not just heritage trees. The section of posting and public comment is a good idea. When talking about the value of the tree, it burdens the City to figure out the value of a tree. It should be value of the tree plus the cost of replacing the tree.

Approve October 5 meeting notes

ACTION: A motion was made to approve the October 5 meeting notes as written. The motion was seconded and carried.

DPD response to UFC recommendation for Shoreline Master Plan

JS – most of the UFC comments to DPD on the Shoreline Master Plan were adopted. JS went through the email he sent out:

DPD's responses to our comment include two requests for more information and one that I believe requires further input from our commission. I have provided suggested responses in order to facilitate a rapid response required by our meeting schedule and the due date for comments on the second draft ordinance which is December 6, 2011.

Item 1: *We received a request by DPD for language we suggested prohibiting land disturbance within the critical root zone of trees during activities related to vegetation and impervious surface management activities:*

We suggest that in sections 23.60.190.D.1.b and 23.60.190.E.1.b the existing language, "land disturbance is minimized and kept within the planting area; and," be changed to, "land disturbance is minimized, limited to the planting area and does not include the critical root zone of any tree over 6" DBH."

Item 2: *We do not feel that our comment (#22 under your responses to comments on environmental quality) has been addressed. We suggest that the term, "native vegetation," as it is applied to the restoration of site vegetation in the Shoreline Setback Zone and the Shoereline District throughout section 23.60. 190 be changed to, native vegetation consisting of a mix of groundcover, shrub and tree species adapted to the site conditions." to 23.60.152*

Item 3: *We received a request by DPD for language we suggested We received a request by DPD for language we suggested to make more clear the professional standard for the qualifications of persons preparing revegetation/ restoration plans. We state that the standard of training and expertise related to the type of ecological environment where the work will occur," is vague and lacks objective standards such as professional accreditation or state licensing requirements." This is in reference to the following section*

23.60.190 Vegetation and impervious surface management

A. Application and plans

1. An application and a plan are required for all actions allowed under this Section 23.60.190, unless specifically provided otherwise in this Section 23.60.190.

2. Applications shall be made on the form approved by the Director.

3. Plans prepared under this Section 23.60.190. shall be consistent with the standards promulgated by the Director and with best management practices.

4. Plans prepared under this Section 23.60.190 shall be prepared by a qualified professional with training and experience related to the type of ecological environment where the work will occur

We made the comment that the code should include a more clear professional standard for the qualifications of persons preparing plans. The standard of training and expertise related to the type of ecological environment where the work will occur," is vague and lacks objective standards such as professional accreditation or state licensing requirements.

I suggest we use a standard of five years of experience preparing similar plans in the particular ecological environment where the work will occur.

John W. Small ASLA

JF – is root zone a commonly understood term>

JS – yes

TE – I don't know if it is in the Municipal Code. Is land disturbance defined

JS – yes

Discussion on native vegetation followed

ACTION: A motion was made to approve the response letter to DPD as amended. The motion was seconded and carried.

JS will prepare a letter for Sandra to send out.

SDOT Street Tree Map briefing – Nolan Rundquist (SDOT)

NR – this is not a true wiki map but is setting it up so that the public can see and interact with the information. Proceeded to demo the website and show the feedback form to modify the information on a tree or to add a new tree. The information then goes to SDOT staff for them to incorporate the information.

JF – where are you marketing this?

NR – with News Releases, SDOT blog, reLeaf website, Street tree map in main SDOT website. Has an intern working on populating and updating the inventory.

TE – using as a regulatory tool?

NR – No, hopefully people will see that trees in front of their house are theirs to maintain. They are providing links to regulations but it's more of an outreach tool inviting comments and suggestions.

PS – It would be fun to do something like the Beta testing done with the Pedestrian Master Plan, and go to a computer lab for the UFC to play with the map.

JS – it would also be nice to have a mobile application

NR – San Francisco's map is a true wiki with people giving input, people get points for accuracy and get more editing privileges.

JF – can this information be exported to a true wiki?

NR - yes

TE – when developing the wiki, we could add space for potential street trees to help with the planting permit system. What about pests and diseases? Are we keeping track of trees removed due to pest or disease?

NR – only if a permit is issued to remove the tree? The system uses Google maps.

JS – should have disclaimer about special accuracy. Might be worth while to ask people to call to clarify.

NB – Interesting to see where the gaps are to increase canopy

JF – why did you do it?

NR – asked for it three years ago. This past April they said they had capacity to do it. Based it on the pothole map and used the tree information

NB – for the UFMP update it would be good to see where the trees aren't and focus on those areas

PS – can you search by age?

NR – no, but can search by diameter. Have sidewalk inventory that gives planting strip width.

PS – what about vegetation? Would you also map shrubs?

NR – we are using this for public outreach. Get people interested in trees. Maybe the Tree Ambassadors can do basic tree inventories in their neighborhoods.

JS – other messaging to accompany the map on the value of street trees, why they City is spending money on tracking.

PS – it's the way in which trees will begin to be considered infrastructure

NR – it can help with permit enforcement

TE – cross reference with street tree list

Finalize UFC messaging document – vote

NB – Definition for urban forest is too broad. Take out last sentence?

PS – Agree. Remove all after trees. Please send it out as a Word document

ACTION: A motion was made to approve the messaging document as amended. The motion was seconded and carried.

SDOT Street Tree Ordinance discussion

JS – I had a conversation with the City's attorney's office regarding undeveloped ROW. My neighborhood doesn't have sidewalks

PS – SCL had a different bent on mitigation, driven by health and safety and reliability issues.

JS – City agencies are subject to ordinance as well. Someone can't file a suit based on this ordinance. Concern to him that work can be done on ROW that's not covered by ROW law – it's a gray area that is not well protected.

JS – would like to see the two ordinances working together. Wouldn't mind slowing down the process on the Street Tree ordinance to have it be consistent with DPDs.

PS – this wouldn't address mitigation

TE – Gives a lot of power to permit holder. Requires SDOT staff to come back and confirm what else is needed

JF – not realistic

TE – don't know how effective that is

PS – leaves it open. Needs something to address mitigation, maintenance, communication protocols, etc. With enough flexibility for an MOU but not be silent on it. Telecommunications companies come so close to large trees and they are taken out.

TE – that's more prevalent now

JS – always wished for more similarity on the way trees in private and public property are regulated

JF – has UFC taken a stand on a unified ordinance?

NB – permitting on ROW trees could help shape the permit in private property from an IT perspective?

JS – there is no inventory of private trees

NB – Once there is a permit they will be inventoried

JF – is SDOT building something that could be added on?

NB – Now is the time to suggest that if DPD were to go the permit route, to do it like SDOT

PS – allowing Green Factor in the ROW. Would need to be addressed by both departments.

PS – maybe compare this with letter the UFC wrote to DPD. Would hate to see this one slow down. Put something in there to allow a connection between both ordinances.

Questions for DPD/SDOT staff:

1. Is there capacity to use same permit system for private trees? What conflicts might there be?
2. How does this impact the Green Factor especially for GF in the ROW

TE – the ordinance has a definition of hazard tree but does not have a rating. Might want to use a tree hazard evaluation. Use a tree risk assessment. Using AINSI A300 standard and complying with them but

that can be anything. Not a lot of guidance on compliance. Needs further definition to be clearer for applicants.

JS – term supervise needs to be refined as it applies to ISA certified arborist. Should be ‘on site’

PS – how does SCL utility maintenance pruning that is equivalent to topping gets mitigated or addressed in this ordinance?

NB – at all places they are recording for the street tree map – look up and see how many conflict with utilities. That would be interesting information.

PS – definition of public place is not complete enough. Public would get confused with the Seattle Center, the Zoo, Schools, etc. there is a gap there.

JS – might make sense to include what public places are excluded in the definition.

New business and announcements

Adjourn