

## Urban Forestry Commission (UFC)

December 14, 2011

### Meeting Notes

Seattle Municipal Tower Room 2750  
700 5<sup>th</sup> 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  
Tom Early (TE)  
John Small (JS)  
Peg Staeheli (PS)

##### Staff

Sandra Pinto de Bader (SPdB) - OSE  
Brett Stav (BS) - SPU

##### Public

Steve Zemke (SZ)

#### Absent- Excused

Nancy Bird  
Gordon Bradley  
John Floberg  
Jeff Reibman

**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 – we'll start the meeting but will not have quorum for votes

#### Chair report

None

#### UFC 2012 Work Plan – initial discussion

MM – we need to do a review of the 5-year plan. Our work plans are very heavy on the tree ordinance. We have to add in the Urban Forest Management Plan.

JS – we also deferred some items

MM – the ecosystems metrics position paper is on hold

SPdB – the Development standard and mitigation standards papers are also on hold.

MM – we never talked about budget, so there is a lot that we didn't get to. But we also added a lot like the Seafair parade issue, the Shoreline Master Plan, the Street Tree Ordinance, and the IDT meeting were not in the original plan.

PS – the parade route is being moved from Fifth to Second?

SPdB – the current route is on Fourth

JS – Fifth is the Monorail

SPdB – they haven't talked about a route change. The last thing SDOT said was that the Mayor's Office had a meeting with Seafair organization officials and SDOT, and that Seafair was to come back with a proposal. I can follow up with SDOT and find out where things stand.

MM – It sounds to me that we hit all our targets as they relate to department interaction. We had the IDT meeting. We were not explicit on what we were going to do in that arena, but we accomplished a lot.

SPdB – I'm going to begin working on a draft annual report for your review. This will also help us see what's missing and bring it forward to the 2012 work plan. The UFMP update is going to be a big piece, although it will be frontloaded.

PS – the UFMP might be a place where we could, this could be a workshop. It seems to me that the downtown core, understanding where trees should be is important. Once you do transit and bikeway you are taking up room. Reconsider certain streets for trees.

MM – there is green street labels on some.

PS – can't get bike, transit, and green the same.

JS – Bell street is a great example of a project that was planned way ahead of time and still ran into issues. Having to remove trees in order to plant trees.

PS – that was identified as a green street and had major utilities running underneath it. It might have been an ideal street on the surface but not from a sub-surface condition.

SPdB – we had a conversation about canopy cover goals by land use and by geography at the UFMP update meeting last Monday. SDOT is working on a study to determine feasible planting sites for the right-of-way. We have new information on canopy cover after the satellite study done in 2009. We are probably going to adjust the canopy cover goal to keep in mind the original assumptions. Urban Forestry – SDOT has been bumping into conflicts with sidewalks and Street Maintenance – SDOT. Even if we don't have the information by the time we update the plan we can mention that this information is necessary and that a study should be done. This can be captured in the research agenda and hopefully we'll get the information for the next upgrade.

PS – It may be that downtown might not be significant compared to the whole goal (because it has such small acreage).

SPdB – what's going to affect our bottom line is when you make changes to single family.

TE – the principles agreed upon is that industrial is a focus. WE also discussed whether to shift the goals or leave them the same, and we agreed that we needed to shift the goals based on the new information we have.

SPdB – we need to bring the industrial community along and maybe have the UFC host meetings with industrial groups to explore the idea of an increased goal. What can be done to increase canopy cover in industrial areas. Asked SDOT whether they can use their inventory data to confirm current canopy cover and figure out if a 6% goal would be appropriate.

PS – we should be careful that we set a bar. Achievable when?

JS - existing conditions is one of the least relevant things. You start by looking at other cities and other management plans.

MM – we need to tie it back to ecosystems services.

MM – I'm working on my canopy cover project. When we do things by land use we lose the geography.

PS – this can be similar to what was done with the Pedestrian Master Plan. Pick up GIS layers that are important and put them together.

TE – the IDT are individuals only looking at their management unit. How do we bring it all together.

PS – because the City has a very good GIS system. That could result in addressing the ecosystems services. Is there an IT budget for the UFMP update?

SPdB – no

PS – that's okay. That would be part of the new plan that within the next three years the City would set up a budget and develop a process to get a system that would give information about valuable tree canopy not just random tree canopy.

TE – There is a lot of knowledge that will become available. SDOT is doing their study, we are going to get the iTree results. But we are going to have to do this update, we are going to have to use the knowledge/data we currently have.

MM – so for now it's okay to stay with land use zones.

PS – but lowering the goals might send the wrong signal. We don't know the kind of changes that might affect these issues in the future. If we don't know much I wouldn't change too much.

JS – the industrial area includes the Duwamish greenbelt. If you subtract that you have much lower canopy.

MM – I have 14 neighborhoods done with the canopy cover study I’m doing. Parks doesn’t have its own designation, so I took it out. I haven’t gone to the industrial area. I’ll bring the information I get. The interesting thing is that the numbers so far in those districts are very good. I have SF residential at around 26%. Retail/commercial is way down. We need to look at where is the vacant land or not being utilized. We have to find out where the trees are. Seward Park is 42% canopy cover. We also need to see the risk factor, lands that are going to be the first to go when the economy picks up.

TE – that was a point that Brennon made. A lot of the multi-family is not fully developed, but when they do develop they won’t accommodate as many trees.

PS – Green Factor does a good thing for visual green factor is completely different for tree canopy.

MM – We need to look at saving trees in the best places and plant trees in the best places. When we have a large open area we have to plant conifers.

PS – that’s an interesting thing the UFMP could do, to start informing area importance. If there’s this much area the first tree to be considered for planting is conifer.

TE – reopen the question of does it make sense to be afraid of conifers in the ROW.

MM – this could also bring support for the Green Seattle Partnership. I like a tree mitigation bank. Maybe identify overlay of priority areas.

PS – maybe industrial areas are more appropriate for conifers.

JS – the other piece that needs to be pulled in through mapping is other areas protected by other regulations such as steep slopes and other critical area buffers, because that’s skewing the results.

PS – matching incentives to plant large trees in industrial. Talking about the Port, they could look at multiple values (not only aesthetics). Maybe look at banking.

MM – should we have a draft plan ready to review at our January 11 meeting?

SPdB – I will put together a draft plan and run it by MM.

### **Street Tree Ordinance recommendation – possible vote**

MM – we can’t vote on the Street Tree Ordinance recommendation because we don’t have quorum, but we can review it.

PS – presented the draft recommendation.

TE – I noticed that the ordinance posted on the website is not the same one we reviewed.

PS – I did look at the newer version, so I make some tweaks to our letter. This is what we had last time. Can we vote today?

MM – how did we do the vote last time.

SPdB – the last time was in relation to the Shoreline Master Plan and it was voted that the new iteration of the letter proposed by JS would be approved. So the UFC voted to approve that new version. Unfortunately we did not do that for the Street Tree Ordinance. What I'm thinking is that if those who haven't see it can review it now and then I can send an updated version out prior to the 1/11/12 meeting so people can be familiar with it and we are ready to adopt it at the meeting. In the meantime I can send an email to SDOT expressing the UFC discomfort because of the public process not being well publicized and ask for the public comment period to be extended two weeks beyond January 20.

PS – There are a couple of things that the current ordinance might have but I couldn't find. The street tree manual is now on the website. At the time we wrote this we didn't have it. Maybe the comment instead is that we would like to see the information in the Street Tree Standards Manual be included in the City's standard specifications and standard plans. This manual is really good but it's another document.

PS – they added ISA but didn't add threshold for hazard trees.

SPdB – maybe add 'without being on site' to the supervision piece?

PS – yes. How about "without being physically on site"

PS – they need to figure out what they are really going to enforce. People don't really understand that they would be liable for damage to a main line due to a street tree they own.

TE – This is confusing. People are liable for damages inflicted by privately planted street trees to public sewers, storm drains... it's convoluted and makes people think that the City will take care of it.

PS – Nolan said that this is old language that has been there since the '60s. If I read that, like that, I would not plant a tree in the ROW.

TE – I would see it as a reason not to plant trees in the ROW.

PS – You can see the damage done to sidewalks but you have no ability to know what is going on underground. So we should recommend deleting the reference to sewer, water and storm lines in the ROW.

MM – there is also the issue of removing trees that are too large to be under power lines.

SPdB – because the recommendation won't be ready to be sent out until the 1/11/12 meeting. I'll send an email to Roy and Nolan suggesting that they ask for feedback at their community meetings on the following:

1. Seasonal lighting
2. Shrub planting in the ROW
3. Trees under power lines, should they be pruned or removed?
4. Extend public comment by two weeks due to the holidays

JS – severe crown reduction as defined in the ordinance will happen due to conflicts with utilities. Do what you can on site and then do offsite mitigation.

### **Chair and vice-chair elections**

SPdB – Gordon, Nancy, and Jeff voted via email. Matt, John S, Peg, and Tom voted in person. Matt Mega was re-elected to the chair position and John Small was reelected to the vice-chair position.

### **SPU Public Outreach - Brett Stav (SPU)**

BS – SPU Outreach relies on market research, community and social marketing to find out what kind of issues customers are facing and what programs they be willing to participate in.

PS – How difficult would be the process of getting a paragraph about urban forestry in to the newsletter. What kind of partnering is necessary?

BS – You will need a financial sponsor to get into the newsletter or the billing insert.

SPdB – the link for the UFC is probably the reLeaf program which will be residing in SPU as of 2012.

MM – how many newsletters do you have?

BS – one

MM – Do you do evaluations as to how many people read it?

BS – we do market research and it shows that by far mail is the most effective and after that, TV. Readership depends on what you are saying. They have found that when they have some sort of giveaway they get close to 10,000 responses; when they are selling something compelling they get 1,500 responses, and when they promote lecture they get 10-20 people.

PS – so it could be something like plant a tree and get a free bag of compost? IF SDOT and DPD wanted to get something into the newsletter... do they have something equivalent to this newsletter? Maybe could have a question for Ask Evelyn related to urban forestry?

BS – the cost to send to 250,000 homes is \$75,000. So that comes to approximately \$14,000 per page.

JS – can SDOT and other departments get access to the newsletter?

BS – Yes, if they provide the necessary funding.

PS – we could recommend SCL to do something about right tree in the right place and also help SDOT get the word out there.

BS –Have an email version of the newsletter (free) that goes to 2,500 subscribers.

JS – did anybody receive SDOT's storm mailer? It did not address issues with trees at all.

MM – how many people are opting out of mail bills and doing electronic payment?

BS – approximately 15% are option out. We ad-hoc production of the newsletter and put it out in March and September (need to get information in January and June). If there is enough demand we put one out in spring and summer as well.

MM – do you share your address list with other departments?

BS – we purchase address lists from a mailing service.

### **Public Comment**

SZ – If 15% of bills are going by email, these might be the more environmentally minded people, gather their info in a database and send them email.

Regarding the letter to SDOT you did what we all typically do which is focus on what we find wrong. You might want to add some of the things you liked such as requiring arborist certification to work on ROS trees, you can say you approve of that. Also could comment about the current permit system working well and continuing with it. Posting requirements are also good. Reinforce the positives.

Your may want to emphasize the idea of tree replacement being required.

Sidewalks – looking at alternative ways to repair sidewalks by raising them instead of cutting the tree roots. Emphasize use of native trees and shrubs as a priority. Proposing to remove hazardous trees over time instead of all at the same time.

### **New business and announcements**

MM – we already have an agenda for our next meeting on January 11, 2012.

### **Adjourn**

### **Public comment:**

**From:** michaeloxman@comcast.net [mailto:michaeloxman@comcast.net]

**Sent:** Friday, December 09, 2011 6:01 PM

**To:** Pinto\_de\_Bader, Sandra

**Cc:** SeattlePOSA@yahoo.com

**Subject:** Transplanting Standards

Dear Urban Forestry Commission,

Tree transplanting standards were required to be presented by DPD over 3 years ago, according to Seattle City Council Resolution 31138.

I ask the Seattle Urban Forestry Commission to advise on the transplanting standard, since DPD does not have an arborist on it's staff. This task could be delegated to the commissioner representing the arboriculture disclipline.

As the commission enters it's 3rd year since being appointed, it is time for each of the members to make recommendations on the subject matter of their respective disciplines. We should have a report by the hydrologist on how the urban forest affects, and is affected by the water cycle. We should have the ecologist give an analysis of the interrelationships between the plants, animals, and the land, etc..

Since Resolution 31138 was passed, notable trees have been transplanted on permitted construction sites overseen by DPD, such as a large tree moved with a crane at Childrens Hospital. At the Greenwood Shopping Center, a zone change from single

family to midrise was granted contingent on transplanting a large Yew tree, but the tree has not yet been moved.

A designated Heritage Tree at the old MOHAI site at McCurdy Park will be soon be transplanted to the new museum location at South Lake Union Park. WASHDOT does not have an arborist either, and without the recognized transplanting standard in place, citizens have no assurance that this delicate operation on a tree over a hundred years old will be successful.

I believe the City Council wants the public to feel their wishes are being responded to. Resolution 31138 also directs the DPD to prepare specifications for how many trees are required in construction of new parking lots.

Other bite-size chunks of the tree issue are spelled out by the Resolution 31138, but have also been tabled, as if the Council and Executive branches of Seattle's city administration are powerless to break out of administrative silos. Legislative gridlock is not just happening with Congress in Washington, D.C., regulators in Seattle are not united, either.

The goals expressing our urban forestry values cannot be realized without clear policies set by our city's Mayor and Council. We are left with project documents that make the required statement, "this project maximizes retention of existing trees", but end up with the trees being bulldozed anyway. I hope the transplanting issue can be clarified, and the glacial pace of movement towards civic nurturing of our Emerald City can accelerate. Thanks.

Arboreally yours,  
Michael Oxman  
(206) 949-8733

[www.SaveSeattlesTrees.com](http://www.SaveSeattlesTrees.com)