

SEATTLE URBAN FORESTRY COMMISSION

John Floberg, Chair • John Small, Vice-Chair
Gordon Bradley • Tom Early • Leif Fixen • Matt Mega • Jeff Reibman • Erik Rundell • Peg Staeheli

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

May 8, 2013

Meeting Notes

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

Attending

Commissioners

John Floberg (JF) - chair
Gordon Bradley (GB)
Tom Early (TE)
Jeff Reibman (JR)
Erik Rundell (ER)
Peg Staeheli (PS)

Staff

Sandra Pinto de Bader (SPdB) - OSE

Public

Steve Zemke

Absent- Excused

John Small (JS) – vice-chair
Leif Fixen (LF)
Matt Mega (MM)

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

Public comment

SZ –Reviewed recommendation letter on DPD’s tree preservation protocols for small development projects. It’s a good letter. A lot of positive elements in it such as tree protection signs and equivalency in replacement of canopy lost. Like the idea of using easements. Fines for damage or removal emphasizing equivalency to keep canopy cover level. Shifting to the issue of dealing with building in undersized SF lots. The whole issue, can’t find anywhere mention the value of trees. It’s about helping developers build. If you take a very small property and want to build something that makes financial sense, you are going to have very little space to plant trees. Maybe they need to pay into a tree fund. It doesn’t mention the impact of removing trees from such small lots. There should be consideration for the impacts to the environment and a way to pay into a tree fund.

On the UF workplan, under tree-related city regulations/policies. Advise DPD City Council and Mayor. More impact when talking to CC. Update dates on items.

Plan Amnesty is having an urban forestry symposium dealing with trees and views. Look at inviting people from other areas (Portland’s UFC) to share their experiences.

John F – I've been trading calls with the head of the UFC in Portland. I'll see what comes out of that.

Approval of April 3 and April 10 meeting notes

ACTION: A motion was made to approve the April 3 meeting notes as written. The motion was seconded and carried.

ACTION: A motion was made to approve the April 10 meeting notes as written. The motion was seconded and carried.

Recommendation to DPD on tree preservation in small development projects – possible vote

PS – this comes out from of a lot of community comments, a few presentations we've had and was stimulated to action by the issue brought up by Irene.

TE – point 1, a) site visit – photos of trees or photos of the lot lines?

PS – photos of subject trees from all four directions and other photos should reflect the full property, including neighboring trees.

JR – item G, permanent easements. I struggle with that one.

PS – an easement on a property under re-development places that property under development code. Maybe it should only say 'easement' not 'permanent'.

JR – it seems like an undue burden for a small project. If the tree is required in needs to be maintained before certificate of occupancy is issued.

PS – the project is built, people are living there, the tree dies in a storm. How do we ensure there is

ER - space for another tree. People sometimes pave over that space and no tree comes back.

JR – should focus on maintaining compliance and not be related to the one specific tree.

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

Peg will send the final letter to Sandra.

DPD letter to CM Conlin on Small Lot Development in SF zones – initial conversation

JF – JS brought this item to our attention. Steve referred to it during public comment and said that there is no mention of trees at all. Is this your reaction as well?

TE – there is inconsistency in the square footage allowed going to 2,000 sq ft and this would certainly affect trees.

JF – the tree points system that would apply to these cases. There was a threshold under which requirements changed.

TE – there was a minimum density number.

JR – 2,000 for a SF lot is very, very small. Any recommendation about trees would have to be made based on the existing points system. Would be a matter of going back and looking at the tree point system and see how it would apply to lots this size.

JF – would the points system be sufficient in these cases?

JR – my gut feeling is that it wouldn't only be sufficient but more than enough for smaller lots. Same density of trees with a smaller lot and larger house footprint, so it would be a denser level of trees.

JF – Steve mentioned contributing to a fund.

JR – I struggle with that because we've talked about it a lot in the past. Apart from the legal implications around it, the question of how to spend the money and where, would be complicated. I would lean toward highest and best use of the money (likely away from the property) and that's going to cause problems with people in the neighborhood.

JF – when you build a skinny house that is tall then you have light issues. Are there lots of cases where a bigger footprint house would necessitate paying to a fund due to the fact that they can't plant trees?

JR – the tree point system had a fund built in.

TE – the way it's justified is that the tree fund is optional.

JF – if this is invoking the points system. Maybe we can bring the points system next to the letter to do a comparison.

JEFF WILL DO A BIT OF PREP ON TREE POINT SYSTEM. ADD TO NEXT WEEK'S AGENDA. TOM WILL LOOK INTO TYPE II EXCEPTION CRITERIA.

JR – shadow casting would be a big issue. You could also talk about views. But because it's an exception you might have more traction. It doesn't say what the criteria would be, but a Type 2 process is fairly good.

TE – I'll try to figure out what type of criteria would be included.

JR – the biggest things they'd be looking at is site topography, they would also look at context around it.

JF – let's bring this back for the next meeting on 5/22.

UFSP update process

TE – attended two meetings with IDT members, Phyllis and Meg Moorehead (Council Central Staff). Have deliberated on content and structure. A balance on the management portion and infilling and bolstering how the plan is going to read as a stewardship plan. It's an interesting process in that it will

incorporate a lot more of the citizen empowered initiatives. While staff does a ton of work for the urban forest, there is also a lot of work being done by volunteers. Talks a lot about how we are all contributing in different ways to the UF. It's also going to have a portion that speaks to volunteer efforts and City initiative that go into the stewardship piece.

SPdB – talked about where the process is. OSE will take back all the feedback received and produce a new, streamlined document. The name will be something to be discussed once the plan is ready to be moved forward.

JF – UFC participants on this team would bring any issues that might need UFC input.

Check-in on progress for UFC 2013 work plan

ADD to 5/22 agenda the draft on pruning for private views. TOM TO PROVIDE.

PS – would be good to get invited to the public meetings DPD holds on their code. To make UFC is aware of what the public is saying.

New business and announcements

PS – James Urban's discussion on planting trees and quality of trees grown. It was interesting. A serious issue. The problems I see here with tree planting have more to do with planting too deep.

TE – City tree planting already uses bare-root trees which take care of most of the problem.

PS – development doesn't use bare root. Once we have a code this will tie into some of the specs. I was in Tokyo the pruning of trees. Do first Thursday dinner for people to see photos. Pruning back to mayor branches (pollarding) – produces large leaves, it's a way to manage a tree for shade production in smaller spaces. They are pruning their urban trees (a positive). There are places where they have incredible canopy. They are planting a lot more trees in urban environments.

Adjourn