

SEATTLE URBAN FORESTRY COMMISSION

Peg Staeheli, Chair • Tom Early, Vice-Chair
Gordon Bradley • Leif Fixen • Donna Kostka • Matt Mega • Jeff Reibman • Erik Rundell

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

February 12, 2014

Meeting Notes

SMT 2750

700 5th Avenue, Seattle

3:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Attending

Commissioners

Peg Staeheli (PS)- chair

Tom Early (TE) - vice-chair

Donna Kostka (DK) non-voting

Steve Zemke (SZ) non-voting

Staff

Sandra Pinto de Bader

Mark Mead

Public

Mark Ahlness

Ruth Williams

Absent- Excused

Gordon Bradley (GB)

Leif Fixen (LF)

Matt Mega (MM)

Jeff Reibman (JR)

Erik Rundell (ER)

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

Peg called to order and for the benefit of those listening to the digital recording, stated the date and read the agenda items out loud.

Chair report

Peg shared a new Orientation document for new members. It provides the links to primary documents. Including links to DPD regulations, SDOT, and UFSP.

Peg also shared that the Commission made a decision in the past to focus staff time on advisory and forward-looking efforts instead of on providing detailed meeting minutes. The idea is to provide a digital recording of the meetings for those that would like the full detail instead.

Cheasty Greenspace and mountain biking proposal – Mary Dejong

Mary was not able to attend the meeting.

Parks Department briefing on mountain bike pilot – Mark Mead

Mark provided an overview of the Cheasty Greenspace Restoration and Mountain Bike Trail Pilot Project. Parks did two vegetation management plans for the boulevard and green space.

Parks staff made a recommendation to the Parks Board to put on hold the proposed bicycle policy update and instead implement and evaluate a pilot project.

Cheasty is a site that has community support and an active group of volunteers to implement the project. There will be a public process to determine the actual trail location and layout, Parks will oversee construction and monitor the project for three years. At the end of the monitoring period, Parks would make a decision on whether to move forward with a larger policy change or not.

The pilot program process will include:

1. Review of forest type
2. Management area forest issues and opportunities, including restoration goals
3. Review existing human impacts including encampments, encroachments, and trash.
4. Review existing geologic conditions
5. Design considerations
6. Design solutions including erosion, impacts to wildlife and plants, impacts to other users, changes in uses of the area, and maintenance of the trail.

The mountain bike trail would be 2-3 feet wide and would minimize use of crushed rock and include planting of strong native shrubs. The trail will be built on contour to avoid high speeds. The goal is to produce a positive impact in a forested terrain by promoting positive use of the space. Parks is not providing any funding for this pilot. Some support will take place through the GSP because they are doing restoration work, but not to build or maintain the trail. There is no intention to remove trees.

Mark answered various questions from Commissioners (the full meeting digital recording can be accessed in the UFC website).

2014 work plan – continues and possible vote

There was not quorum to vote on the plan but there were a couple of changes made to the document. The new version of the document will be posted on line and discussed at the next meeting.

Split planting large trees in ROW into two items:

- Explore advisory on ways to allow the ROW to accommodate larger plantable areas
- Explore advisory on constraints imposed by schools and urban villages (including commercial) on tree capacity during development (Jeff/Steve)

Peg disclosed that her firm SVR is working on the tree and sidewalks operations plan.

Place holder in work plan about Seattle School District TBD

Race and Social Justice/community outreach – stakeholder engagement – move to next meeting.

Public comment

Mark Ahlness – retired Seattle school teacher. Park user (Lincoln Park). Just found out about this. Several red flags came up for him:

- The process of how it happened – this project came from two people.
- Bought website for Cheasty Greenspace – no mention of the plan

- Facebook – no mention of this either
- Concerned about disenfranchised people that have been working hard to restore the area.
- Lack of baseline study for wildlife species
- Worried about setting precedent
- Loss of green space

Ruth Williams:

GSP forest steward. I'm glad Mark is running this. A lot of forest stewards are upset about this plan. We've been working hard to restore areas and now mountain bikes are invited. Proponents are looking at this as a recreational area instead of a natural area. Christopher Williams said he was going to recommend changing use of natural areas and then backed up and made it a pilot. Commission need to help Parks toe the line (they are going to try to reduce their costs – it's understandable). The local universities that might be able to bring students to do the monitoring work. You will need fences to keep people on the trail.

Next month's agenda items

Adjourn

Public input:

From: Cameron Justam [mailto:justcam@clear.net]

Sent: Thursday, February 13, 2014 11:25 AM

To: Pinto_de_Bader, Sandra

Subject: cheasty green space

my name is cameron justam and I live at 3510 cheasty blvd. s. and have for almost 40 years. I am in the original friends of cheasty group which predates the mountain view group by many years. our point of view on the green belt is quite different. we do not see it as "unused" land. to the contrary, its purpose is to be land that is conserved for the plants and animals that live there as well as the air we breathe and the forest space that an urban area needs for balance. much of it was purchased with the foresight to balance future development.

a mountain bike trail defeats that purpose. foremost, it is invasive to the plants and animal that live in it. these are live beings. we tend to be an egocentric species and this would be another example of that. it becomes a playground without regard for other consequences. I am sorry for this generation that has been nature deprived but this is an aggressive, insensitive way to get that connection. I am actually very surprised that the parks department is considering this. it is a departure from the philosophy of the staff who were active in securing this land back in the 1980's.

the group that wants this may be very well intentioned but their aggressiveness in pursuing it is very much in the spirit of the invasiveness of a mountain bike trail in a space that has been set aside for a nature reserve.

sincerely, cameron justam

From: Ellen Granfield [mailto:e_granfield@comcast.net]
Sent: Wednesday, February 12, 2014 11:54 AM
To: Pinto_de_Bader, Sandra
Subject: Seattle tree policies

Dear Sandra,

As a very concerned citizen I ask that the city form policies to increase tree cover and undergrowth, protect trees and natural areas, and plant more native species. With current tree cover in the city at only 23% and in park's less than 15%, it is deplorable for a city that is known as forward thinking and green not to have a stronger plan of protection and reforestation. So many construction projects now are clearing properties from neighborhoods where older trees have sustained habitat, mitigated storm run-off, and produced a healthier environment for all of us that we are now reaching a critical point. Air quality, water quality, habitat, and climate all depend on tree cover and undergrowth. Recreation for a few is not a good enough reason to tamper with natural areas. Cutting lower branches for better visibility is not good policy. Cutting down trees for convenience is not good policy. The natural world is finite and sensitive and we are stewards first and foremost. If we continue to use and abuse only for ourselves we will lose what is most valuable. We must, as a city, do the right thing, act now to protect trees and undergrowth, and push hard to reforest more of the land with native species. Our future depends on it.

Thank you for your time,
Ellen Granfield