

SEATTLE URBAN FORESTRY COMMISSION

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

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 7, 2014

Meeting Notes

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

Attending

Commissioners

Peg Staeheli - chair
Tom Early – vice-chair
Donna Kostka
Jeff Reibman
Erik Rundell
Steve Zemke

Staff

Sandra Pinto de Bader - OSE
Jana Dilley – reLeaf Program
Rich Gustav - SPU

Public

None

Absent- Excused

Gordon Bradley
Leif Fixen

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

Donna has been formally appointed to the Commission.

Public comment

None

Approval of April 2 and April 9 meeting notes

ACTION: A motion was made to approve the April 2 meeting notes as amended. The motion was seconded and carried.

ACTION: A motion was made to approve the April 9 meeting notes as amended. The motion was seconded and carried.

Seattle reLeaf program update – Jana Dilley

Jana Dilley, reLeaf Program Manager, provided an update on the Tree Ambassador program. Seattle reLeaf is an interdepartmental program focused on outreach and engagement around urban forestry. It is currently working on residential property. The program has two main projects: Tree

Ambassador (TA) and Trees for Neighborhoods (T4N). T4N distributes 1,000 trees per year to Seattle residents for planting on private property.

TA is a volunteer stewardship program. This year they changed the model and instead of engaging people by neighborhoods to support urban forestry work in the city, they have grouped people by project type:

- **Tree walks** – The program has completed 15 tree walks to date. Volunteers have been hosting one tree walk a month. They just had one on Sunday under pouring rain in Volunteer Park and they had great attendance (probably 17 people). They are good opportunities pieces to engage people. The program has been coordinating with Seattle Audubon’s tree map. Tree Ambassadors are aware of the tree map and are encouraged to input information. They have also worked with Feet First.
- **Landscape renovation** – This is the most popular track. Volunteers are working on project ideas following their April training. They are focusing on smaller plots of land owned by SDOT, removing invasive plants. reLeaf is working with SDOT to build the internal structure on how these areas are approached. Collectively, they make up a lot of land but they are very small parcels. Some are on steep slope and this makes them unsuitable for volunteer work. High traffic areas also make it hard to use volunteer work. The power of this track is that people are realizing they have invasive plants in their own yard. Volunteers identify a site they are interested in and then program staff meets with SDOT to look at the feasibility of it as a TA project.
- **Street tree stewardship** – Most of these efforts are about removing grass and other weeds from the trees drip line and adding mulch.

The program brought on 50 new people this year. They have trained about 90 people over the past 3-4 years. Some people from the first class have moved out of state but others continue to participate. The program has engaged 243 in 12 events with six tree walks and two mulching events.

TA work plan for 2014:

- Wrapping up new volunteer training sessions
- Support volunteer projects
- Provide ongoing workshops for volunteers (structural pruning, replanting restoration sites)
- Hold public tree walks at least every other month
- Annual volunteer picnic. UFC recommended inviting UFC and CC/Mayor to show appreciation.

T4N work plan for 2014:

- Bring new staff on board
- Plant 1,000 trees with 300 residents
- Provide watering reminders and pruning workshop to past participants.

Question:

Are watering reminders being sent to SDOT or other departments?

Answer:

Watering reminders are something T4N program does. Not familiar with SDOT practices.

NOTE: INCLUDE IN DPD REPORTING CONVERSATION

Urban Forest Equity:

Per Sandra’s request, Jana provided a review of a 2004 UW thesis study by Ara Erickson regarding urban forestry and equity. The study made an assessment of street tree condition, maintenance, and

neighborhood income levels in Seattle. It did not look at distribution or condition of existing street trees. It didn't find a difference in condition of trees between high and low income census tracts but did find that SDOT was putting more maintenance work into trees in low-income areas.

Jana presented a GIS map showing Income, SF canopy cover, and Planting potential. The planting potential data was obtained from a 2009 study (with 2007 data) and it's not reliable because it includes non-plantable areas such as baseball and soccer fields.

INVITE DAVE BAYARD – SCL – TO TALK ABOUT VEGETATION MANAGEMENT WORK HE IS DOING.

Question: is there a connection between reLeaf and SCL?

Answer: SCL provides significant funding to reLeaf/T4N. There is an MOA between both departments. When SCL removes a tree from residential property, they give that owner preferential enrollment in T4N. reLeaf then contacts those people before the program opens to the public. They are guaranteed 1:1 trees up to 4.

Question: What's the percentage of trees removed vs. people saying they do want replacement trees?

Answer: will have to review last year's records.

Actions reLeaf is taking around equity issues:

- Target outreach in underserved, low-canopy neighborhoods
- Provide additional staff support for volunteer events in target neighborhoods
- Training volunteers to plant trees for elderly and disabled residents
- Developing tree walks in target neighborhoods
- Working with SDOT and SCL to combine outreach around City's urban forestry efforts.

Question: does reLeaf have an email list?

Answer: Doesn't have a distribution list but has a section for people to submit questions through its website.

SCL surplus substation disposition letter of recommendation – continues and possible vote

Commissioners provided input and edits to the current draft.

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

Letter of recommendation to DPD on reporting UFC would like to see – initial conversation

Peg attended Design Review meeting for the Seattle Times property. They were very pleased the UFC was present.

There is no reporting on tree planting from DPD.

No reporting on tree removal that takes place in development projects. It would be useful to see a tree canopy assessment to go along the permitting process. What's there, what comes out, what's required to be planted. It's important to get those metrics as well as to know what's being planted elsewhere.

There is a recommendation for replacing tree canopy in the South Lake Union design guidelines. As a result of that some developers have begun an assessment of canopy removed and assessment of new canopy. This is for anything that goes through design review. However, it's not a requirement. There is a move in that direction and it's reasonable to say that it should be in the process. Should it be at the zoning review (codified) or design review to issue recommendations?

Question: What would be an intermediate step if there is no ordinance supporting detailed reporting? What would be the mechanism?

Answer: a Director's Rule (DR) clarifying what DPD expects to see based on that design guideline recommendation. It would have to be identified in the different design guidelines documents. A DR could change the requirements of a submittal application (couldn't create a requirement, but they can show and tabulate).

DPD couldn't deny a permit for not meeting the canopy cover goal unless it was codified. The resistance would be from DPD. If they don't have the ability to enforce, why take the time to request reviewers to require it?

If the starting point was a DPD GIS-based process to compare existing canopy cover to data shown on plans, then the process would provide a sense of where things are. The issue would be that GIS layers might have dated information.

The other angle, would be to re-send the submittal letter we sent 1.5 year ago and see if there is anything going on in that arena. Or look at meeting with the Mayor to find out what his plans are for the DPD tree ordinance.

Question:

Does DPD send out watering reminders to developers?

Answer:

Right now they don't do a five-year check to see if required trees have survived. It's complaint-based at this point in time. They are requiring landscape contractors to submit maintenance plans.

Race and Social Justice. Community outreach – stakeholder engagement – UFC membership - continues

The Commission continues to explore expanding membership to include Get Engaged members. They would be qualified at a certain level in a field that applies to the specific position. It would require more outreach effort.

The Commission could propose a Get Engaged member in addition to the current nine members. Get Engaged members would have one-year appointments. The goal is to broaden the membership and add diversity. The Commission will bring this idea to the table at the June 10 briefing to the SPUN Committee. The UFC chair would have a weighted vote to avoid tie.

During recruitment processes clarify Positions 2 and 3 but adding Horticulture qualifications to Position 2 and clarify Position for 3 to include public health, public policy. It's important to keep the Commission's technical expertise but increase diverse membership. Mention on the website the positions that are open in 2015 so people can start applying.

New business and announcements

Cass Turnbull is requesting a letter of support for a grant application

UFC would be supporting the grant application. Sandra will bring a draft letter to the next meeting.

Adjourn

Community input

From: John Pehrson [mailto:pehrsonj@gmail.com]

Sent: Tuesday, April 22, 2014 8:23 PM

To: Jenkins, Michael; Pinto_de_Bader, Sandra

Subject: Seattle Times Park and Exceptional Trees and Grove
Michaela and Sandra,

Thank you again for your leadership on the review of the Seattle Times Park and the letter of support to City leadership.

Unfortunately the developer has not responded to our clear interest or the clear interest of the Urban Forestry Commission and the Planning department of DPD.

The project is scheduled for an Early Design Guidance Meeting on 4/30 and their design package shows three alternates, none of which save the park or any part of it, You can see this on the Design Review web site and the project address is 1120 John Street. They propose to destroy the exceptional trees and other trees in the park and have shown no mitigation or even list it as a con on the alternative massing proposals. Their description of the cost of saving the park is simplistic and exaggerated. It seems to me to show a willful disregard for the City's policy on saving exceptional trees and groves in a dense urban environment and a disregard for the environment.

Is there any way you can reflect the interest of the Urban Forestry Commission at the Design Review on 4/30. It would make a power statement of City policy. As it turns out now, the senior and only City staff person at that meeting is usually the DPD planner on that project. Shelley is very competent but has a project, now neighborhood or City perspective. That seems inadequate to me for a project that involves 2,000,000 square feet of development, 2000 new housing units with an expected population of 3000 people on two super blocks.

thank you for your consideration.

John Pehrson

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