

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

June 11, 2014

Meeting Notes

SMT 2750

700 5th Avenue, Seattle

3:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Attending

Commissioners

Peg Staeheli - chair
Tom Early - vice-chair
Gordon Bradley
Leif Fixen
Donna Kostka
Erik Rundell
Steve Zemke

Staff

Sandra Pinto de Bader

Guests

Councilmember Sally Bagshaw
Ellen Weir - UW
Justin Hellier - Parks
Brian Gay - Parks

Absent- Excused

Jeff Reibman

Public

Cass Turnbull

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 read the Commission's mission and the agenda.

Chair report

Conversation with CM Sally Bagshaw

Introductions: Commissioners introduced themselves and mentioned their area of most interest within the Commission. Points mentioned include:

- Increase canopy in the ROW and industrial areas
- Provide a link between academia and policies being implemented
- Centralize tree management in a single department. Perhaps OSE.
- Improving reporting through DPD
- Ongoing tree canopy cover assessments to know where we are in relation to our goals
- Tree maintenance
- Support work DPD is doing on tree ordinance for private trees

CM Bagshaw – delighted to be in this position. She chose her involvement with the Commission. Wants to be more involved in all aspects of sustainability and the environment and her work with the Seattle

Public Utilities and Neighborhoods (SPUN) Committee allows her to support increasing canopy cover for Seattle.

UFC comment:

It's important to make sure the public is engaged in the City's planning process. An example of how sometimes there is not enough engagement was the Ingraham High School situation.

CM Bagshaw: I think it will be very important to have a robust public process when DPD resumes work on the tree ordinance for trees on private property. This is a good opportunity to re-energize the community.

CM Bagshaw question: How is the UFC involved with the Green Seattle Partnership?

Answer: GSP engages the community, cleans up invasive species, re-plants, and maintains. GSP takes big parks and open spaces at higher levels of maintenance.

CM Bagshaw: If passed as proposed, the Parks Levy will provide \$89M for the 2014 baseline to be maintained. \$2.6M is for the GSP above and beyond current funding. There was tremendous outpour from the public in support of the GSP.

UFC comment: We didn't get the funding for SDOT tree crews we recommended last year. Hopefully, as part of the Freight Master Plan this could be revisited.

CM Bagshaw: It's very important to have proper maintenance for the right tree in the right place and that's what industrialists would like. They like trees, but not in locations where they are going to be whacking them with their mirrors and double loads.

Bio-remediation presentation – Ellen Weir

Ellen Weir made a technical presentation on phytoremediation (see presentation posted on the Urban Forestry Commission website at: www.seattle.gov/urbanforestrycommission). Ellen talked about phytoremediation, the focus of her graduate research and applications. She provided the challenges Bio-remediation: use of microbes to break down contaminants. Microbes produce elements that help plants grow. PCBs get metabolized (with the exception of pumpkin – which stores it in the leaves and stems). There are a lot of plants that have multiple capabilities and adding the microbes is very easy. You can buy endophyte packages to enhance growth.

Phytoremediation can be slower and it's not guaranteed to have specific time frames (such as those required by the EPA). That's why phytoremediation is not yet approved by EPA. More research and knowledge is needed. Using the right plant for the climate is very important.

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

Commissioners discussed the letter of recommendation. Would like to keep the request for information very simple and concise so it can be implemented quickly.

Information about the number of trees, tree species, and diameter of tree in each property would be helpful. That would give more data to better understand the impact. People already applied for the permit and this information would be easy to collect. If we are asking DPD to change and collect data that they currently don't collect, then might as well ask for what we would like to see in terms of data.

CM Bagshaw: Would suggest making the cover letter short and attach the specifics with what you'd like separately.

Require in development permits to make a canopy cover assessment for each property.

Steve and Leif to provide draft language for the detailed information the UFC would like to see. The document would be added as an attachment to the cover letter.

ACTION: A motion was made to approve the letter as amended and to include an attachment describing the level of detail the Commission would like to see in the data. The motion was seconded and carried.

Race and Social Justice Presentation – Justin Hellier

Justin – provide context of what race looks like and what it means in the urban forestry arena. Racism can be operating even if nobody sitting at the table has racist intentions.

Race – is a socially constructed way of categorizing people. It’s made up. There is no genetic basis for it. But it is still socially meaningful.

- Race is still critically important and it matters. In the US statistically, race is the determining factor in these and a variety of other outcome measures (health, wealth, rates of incarceration, education attainment, employment, income and poverty, etc.)
- A bigger piece of the puzzle is that race has always mattered in terms of how people interact with the environment.
- If the environmental movement doesn’t find a way to enfranchise people of color and low income communities, we will not be relevant in the future.

Question: What is Parks doing in this arena?

Response: Parks’ environmental learning centers have been working on this. Goal is that 50% of program participants come from communities of color. Offer scholarships for minority kids that can’t afford to go to camp (through Seattle Parks Foundation).

Question: the Parks Legacy Plan – what do you recommend moving forward?

Response: The RSJI Change Team in Parks worked on that.

Question: What would a truly inclusive public engagement look like?

Response: The UFC goes to where communities are already meeting to bring awareness to the UFC work.

Is there a racial divide in the opportunity of residents to enjoy the benefits of the urban forest?

- How would we know/ do we measure this? How would we?
- If we discovered there was, what kind of conversations would we have?

Public comment

None

New business and announcements

None

Adjourn