

SEATTLE URBAN FORESTRY COMMISSION

Peg Staeheli, Chair • Tom Early, Vice-Chair

Gordon Bradley • Leif Fixen • Donna Kostka • Joanna Nelson de Flores • 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

August 13, 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

Leif Fixen

Joanna Nelson de Flores

Steve Zemke

Donna Kostka

Staff

Tracy Morgenstern (OSE)

Sherell Ehlers (SPU)

Susan McLaughlin (SDOT)

Public

None

Absent- Excused

Gordon Bradley

Jeff Reibman

Erik Rundell

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

Chair Peg Staeheli called the meeting to order and read today's agenda for those listening to the digital recording.

Stormwater Code – Sherell Ehlers (SPU)

Sherell provided an overview of the update to the Stormwater code and manual. The updates are needed to reflect the new NPDES permit requirements and to reflect other changes since the last update in 2009. The update, begun in 2013, will also create a more streamlined, user-friendly document with an increased focus on enforcement.

One of the proposed updates is a change to the trigger for Green Stormwater Infrastructure (GSI) to the MEF (maximum extent feasible) from all single family properties to those with an increase of 2,000 square feet of impervious surface. The prior manual exempted the first 1,500 square feet functionally creating a 500 square foot difference. The 2,000 square foot trigger aligns with the Department of Ecology rules. The rules encourage lower areas of impervious surface so as to avoid triggering the requirements thereby incenting more low impact development. Commissioners questioned if the

requirement could be changed to consider all impervious surface, rather than just new. Sherell noted that there are issues with creating requirements to mitigate existing conditions.

Trees are last in the manual's list of GSI strategies, however, Ecology does not include them at all. Commissioners asked if i-Tree hydro data would support increasing the assumptions of the volume of stormwater a tree mitigates. i-Tree hydro has not been developed for our local climate. Commissioners discussed whether the UFC should advise funding for i-Tree or an equivalent model for better assessing the stormwater management value of trees.

Forterra has looked at the potential for funding a local climate i-Tree hydro model. SPU indicated it would support the results if the model were created. At this point, Forterra has not further pursued. Joanna will follow-up to see if this is something Forterra is continuing to pursue.

SPU is currently soliciting informal comment as they develop the draft code and manual which will be available for formal public comment in January, 2015.

A commissioner recommended that the code and manual provide for protection of existing trees as strongly as possible, including a penalty or disincentive for removal.

Right-of-Way Improvement Manual – Susan McLaughlin (SDOT)

SDOT is undertaking the 10-year update of the Right-of-Way Improvement Manual. The manual provides the mission, vision, core principles, policy guidance, and design standards for people working in the ROW, including designers, arborists, owners, developers. This is a major update as the transit, bicycle, and pedestrian master plans have been updated and the relevant design criteria needs to be incorporated. Commissioners noted that the list of plan updates relevant to the Manual should include the UFSP update.

The Manual is adopted via a Director's Rule and therefore has less authority than code and is distinct from standard plans and specifications.

The update provides the opportunity to improve the manual structure including enhancing continuity, taking more of a multi-disciplinary approach, and using more illustrative guidance through pictures and graphics. Emerging opportunities include illustrated street typologies and improvements to the development review process.

A commissioner asked if trees can be incorporated into greenways which currently do not have a "green" component.

A commissioner noted that there are undeveloped ROW parcels that are split by SDOT ROW, including in parks which limits the adjacent property owner's ability to manage them. Is there an opportunity to turn jurisdiction over to Parks in these cases?

A commissioner asked if the UFC could provide input on enhancing how maintenance is addressed in the manual. Susan responded that there was an opportunity for improvements in this area and would welcome input.

SDOT is looking at other street design guidance documents for ideas including those from NACTO (National Association of City Transportation Officials), New York Boston, and San Francisco. The update process includes a core team, chapter leads, an Interdepartmental Team, and will be forming an Advisory

Group made up of members from City boards and commissions. SDOT will request a UFC member participate.

The manual includes street typologies based on design characteristics. A commissioner noted the need for the UFC to look at the different types, including P-zones where there is concern that room for trees is limited due to limited root zone and canopy space.

Commissioners noted the need for root space to be accounted for in designs. Another commissioner noted that the annual fee permit requirements are a burden for community groups who are trying to improve the ROW.

A commissioner questioned if the utility clearance requirements are based on outdated assumptions and that modern excavation techniques warrant a reconsideration of clearances. Another commissioner noted that the process of rounding to the nearest foot may be too limiting as well and 6" increments may be warranted.

Because the manual is guidance, code changes would be needed for to fully foster the street characteristics presented in the manual.

ACTION: Commissioners will identify a representative for the ROW Improvement Manual Advisory Group and an alternate in October or November.

Public comment

None

New business and announcements

Areas commissioners would like to follow up on include:

Open Space Policy

- Write a letter advising the City to fund staff to develop an open space policy.
- Add a UFC work plan item in the Policy category to track City development of an open space or natural areas policy.

2 for 1 Executive Order

Consider providing advice to the City to amend the policy to require more trees when small trees are replacing larger and allowing smaller trees to be planted.

i-Tree

Consider an application to the state DNR grant process to update i-Tree hydro for our region.

State Stormwater Code

Consider commenting to Ecology on the absence of trees in the state stormwater code.

Standard Plans & Specifications

Recommend the City require space for soil volume and roots in the standard plans and specifications.

Adjourn