

SEATTLE URBAN FORESTRY COMMISSION

Tom Early, Chair • Steve Zemke, Vice-Chair
Weston Brinkley • Leif Fixen • Reid Haefer • Donna Kostka • Richard Martin • Joanna Nelson de Flores
Erik Rundell • Andrew Zellers

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 8, 2017

Meeting Notes

Seattle Municipal Tower, Room 2750 (27th floor)
700 5th Avenue, Seattle

Attending

Commissioners

Tom Early – chair
Steve Zemke – vice-chair
Weston Brinkley
Leif Fixen
Reid Haefer
Joanna Nelson de Flores

Staff

Sandra Pinto de Bader - OSE

Guests

John Brosnan – Seattle Audubon

Public

None

Absent- Excused

Craig Johnson (non-voting)
Donna Kostka
Richard Martin
Erik Rundell
Andrew Zellers

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

Steve called the meeting to order.

Public comment

None.

Seattle Audubon Executive Director John Brosnan

John Brosnan, Executive Director of Seattle Audubon, introduced himself and talked about the work he's been doing since he joined Seattle Audubon nine months ago. He was tasked with finishing their Strategic Plan. As part of this effort John did public engagement and put together a work plan. One of the main elements in the workplan is the urban forest. He welcomes input on today's presentation.

The focus on urban forest issues makes sense from a bird habitat point of view. The new campaign is Neighborhood Flyways.

They updated their mission statement: Seattle Audubon leads a local community in appreciating, understanding, and protecting birds and their habitats.

Part of their new focus includes:

- Appreciate – education: enhanced early childhood, modernized curricula, and equity and inclusion
- Understand – science mobilizing our data, expanded partnerships, oil spill response, and citizen science improvements
- Protect – Conservation: legacy, bird friendly policy and advocacy, coalition building, and Neighborhood Flyways
- Organizational sustainability – volunteer program nature shop, membership, finance & operation, and facilities.
- A new model for partnership

Urban Conservation: Neighborhood Flyways

- Baseline data: Seattle tree map & neighborhood bird project
- Policy and advocacy: Urban Bird Treaty City (designation of the Fish and Wildlife Service), Bird friendly communities
- Resources for private and public landowners: backyard habitats
- Restoration: Neighborhood Flyways initiative
- All of this equals unbroken migratory pathways across a major urban area.

The idea is to have unbroken flyways for both migratory and local birds. He is working with Jana Dilley (Trees for Seattle) on how to collaborate to increase stewardship in Seattle. We've found that people really get engaged around birds in their back yards. There is a tool that National Audubon Society recently released on what native plants to plant in your backyard to attract a specific kind of bird. The next level is to identify the collective backyard. Where are the greenbelts and the question of how we can string them together through engagement of different communities?

The different perspectives of the Neighborhood Flyways:

- Urban forestry programs – public and private
- Community & partners – an engaged constituency
- Environmental justice and equity
- Stormwater, green infrastructure
- City policies – density vs. open space
- Climate change and carbon sequestration

Currently, Seattle Audubon doesn't have the GIS capability to continue working on the Tree Map effort. The tool is at Audubon.org/plantsforbirds.

John is putting together the Neighborhood Flyways symposium and would like to invite the Commission to attend: April 6 at Town Hall, 2-7 p.m. Will have ISA credits.

UFC question/comment:

Make sure to include the Native Plants Society. This is very good information and it sounds like you are really digging into it.

Answer: we've had fits and starts and this initiative (Neighborhood Flyways) is proving to be a good way to establish connections and collaboration.

UFC question/comment:

Would like to compliment you on the urban forestry programs both public and private. We have been advocating for the City to update the tree code for private property. Encourage you to carry the message and find out what is the perception of community members with regards to regulation.

Answer: absolutely!

UFC question/comment:

Now that you've gone through this strategic planning process, do you see the organization more on the advocacy and education side of things?

Answer: there is a recognition that there are many programs. We have a volunteer core of over 500 people. Over 5,000 members. All it takes is orienting volunteers to the same outcome (coming from different angles).

UFC question/comment:

When you talk about neighborhood flyways, what are you referring to? I envision contiguous canopy cover for bird habitat.

Answer: Exactly. The idea is to work with different partners to work on habitat preservation. Some people feel this could collaborate with the pollinator pathway effort.

UFC question/comment:

We should also consider the connection for insects, not just pollinators. Which a lot of people don't include.

UFC question/comment:

Glad to see that you included the equity piece.

Answer: the equity element will guide where we take this initiative and help us prioritize. The ability to find nature right outside your home is one of the important messages we will be using.

Washington Park Arboretum discussion continues.

Will move to next week. Leif will produce initial draft language.

Coordinated tree maintenance and SCL pruning cycle letter – discussion continues

Sandra re-arranged the content based on last week's comments. Commissioners discussed the new iteration of the letter.

ACTION: A motion to approve the letter of recommendation as amended was made, seconded, and approved.

Sandra will share with departments for input prior to sending.

Urban Forestry Departmental budgets table

Commissioners reviewed the table and the draft language Donna and Tom produced. The Commission discussed the table and letter. The question of how will departments provide useful metrics in terms of how they are providing UF services arose. The budget numbers are a good baseline for the UFC to have. There is no clear path forward at this point in time. There are three major lines of thought: promote tree code update, how to improve the SDCI tree code violation issues (a couple of years ago a lot of people would visit the UFC and provide testimony on how trees were being lost to development); and understand the tree canopy cover assessment and the results. Would not want the UFC to send a letter that is misinterpreted and not helpful.

Public comment

None.

New Business

Tom would like to bring back up are the results of a conversation he had with CM Bagshaw. And it's the UFC to find ways to promote or expand UF in the ROW in unique ways. The idea is to take a road and create a dead end, remove pavement, and put a park in the middle of it to plant trees. Leverage the ROW to expand the UF. Other ideas would be welcome. Maybe a transfer development rights program to let developers go higher to preserve mature trees. Add to next month discussion.

Adjourn**Public input:**

None