

SEATTLE URBAN FORESTRY COMMISSION

Tom Early, Chair • Steve Zemke, Vice-Chair
Weston Brinkley • Leif Fixen • Reid Haefer • Craig Johnson • Donna Kostka • Richard Martin
Joanna Nelson de Flores • 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

April 12, 2017

Meeting Notes

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

Attending

Commissioners

Steve Zemke – vice-chair
Weston Brinkley
Leif Fixen
Reid Haefer
Donna Kostka
Joanna Nelson de Flores
Sarah Rehder (non-voting)

Staff

Sandra Pinto de Bader - OSE

Public

Megan Herzog

Absent- Excused

Craig Johnson
Tom Early – chair
Richard Martin
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. Read the Commission's mission and today's agenda.

Public comment

Megan is thinking of joining the Get Engaged program and is interested in the Urban Forestry Commission.

2016 canopy cover assessment process update

Sandra provided an update on the 2016 canopy cover assessment. The study is almost done and shows Seattle at 28% canopy cover. This study is not directly comparable to past studies. So, we can't say that we have grown our canopy by 5% (from the last satellite assessment which showed us at 23%). The technology has improved significantly. The 2016 LiDAR assessment is the most accurate measure of Seattle's canopy cover. We will use this as a baseline to determine the trend with future studies.

The City is putting together a webinar to share the study results with the public. The Webinar will be on Monday, May 8 from 9:00 a.m. – 10 a.m. Sandra will share the information with the Commission.

Sandra mentioned the different research questions that are being answered as part of the study:

- Progress achieving Seattle's 30% canopy cover goal citywide.
- Progress achieving targets for canopy cover in each of the eight Urban Forest Stewardship Plan management units.
- Progress achieving canopy cover targets for SDOT's 27 street tree management units and the right-of-way.
- Canopy cover in Seattle neighborhoods and Equity and Environment initiative focus areas.
- What is the evergreen to deciduous tree ratio citywide and by UFSP management unit?
- Where are the city's largest trees, and tree groves?
- Heat island effect and canopy's impact.
- Impacts from development.
- What's the volume of vegetative material that falls within the minimum 10ft clearance distances of SCL distribution and transmission systems?

Arboretum follow-up letter

Leif walked the Commission through the draft letter. Commissioners discussed the issue and letter language. One request to be made with this letter would be for the City to update the tree ordinance and get the Arboretum to comply with the two for one tree replacement policy.

Leif will incorporate input to the letter for further discussion.

Tree Protection Ordinance

Leif brought forward a draft letter recommending a holistic review of Seattle's tree ordinance.

The Commission discussed.

Steve mentioned the 2009 City's Auditor report on Management of City Trees.

It's important to consider the US' view of private property. The idea would be to require mitigation for tree removal.

The Commission discussed how much detail to include in the recommendation. Sandra will share previous letters it has sent to Mayor and Council about updating the tree ordinance. The Commission agreed to direct the letter to CM Johnson as well as the Mayor and CM Bagshaw and discussed attaching past letters to show the history of the Commission's position.

Wait until we get the data from the Canopy cover assessment and use that information.

Creative ideas to expand Seattle's urban forest

Steve proposed a brainstorm session:

- De-pave roundabouts
- Super-block notion – adding trees in the middle of the ROW on low-density residential streets
- Look at alleys – are they being used or not and can we plant trees in them

- Water quantity – stormwater mitigation
- Making a big push to plant 50K or 100K trees each year.
- Increasing support to expand Tree Ambassador and T4N projects. To promote opportunities for residents to plant more trees.
- Green space or a tree easement program. Purchase of development rights to preserve trees.
- Creation of a tree replacement fund (payment-in-lieu). Would include donations.
- Update the tree protection ordinance
- GSP has a date by which it should be done. It should be ongoing. Identify ongoing funding for long-term maintenance of restored areas.
- Concrete engagement with the State around highways and State-owned ROWs. Sound Transit is looking at taking out 1,000 around I-5. Mitigation could include tree planting in Seattle. Other mega projects could mitigate through tree planting (if we had a tree fund)
- Expand invasive species removal to private property.
- Have a campaign to build the culture around trees. We have Arbor Day but we could do more to engage people that don't think daily about trees. Could use the idea of the banners on MLK with different languages. They could be used to promote trees.
- Ivy out and noxious weed removal to be enforced
- A website for development guidance for ongoing maintenance.
- Work with nurseries for them to stop carrying invasive plants. Have Home Depot carry a pamphlet increasing public awareness.
- Public awareness of tree removal in general. Having a good tree inventory would help. When a tree is removed it becomes really public. Whether it's the Arboretum or a private property owner, when they remove a tree it pops-up on the map. Tree removal shaming would be effective.
- Google has a database with a shapefile for each tree in the city. Find a way to mine that data.
- Expand involvement of the UW in terms of their resources on metrics.
- Take the 20 worse performing schools and plant trees around them to see how student performance changes.

Public comment

None.

New Business

None.

Adjourn