

SEATTLE URBAN FORESTRY COMMISSION

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

May 10, 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
Craig Johnson
Donna Kostka
Joanna Nelson de Flores
Sarah Rehder (non-voting)
Andrew Zellers

Staff

Sandra Pinto de Bader - OSE
Allyn Ruth – Department of Neighborhoods
Pam Kliment – Parks and Recreation

Guests

Seth Shteir – Seattle Audubon
Margy Bresslour – Colman Park Community
Evan Wright – Colman Park Community
Gerry Bresslour – Colman Park Community

Absent- Excused

None

Public

Linda Finney
Joyce Motty
Nannette Martin
Michael Daley

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

Tom called the meeting to order.

Public comment

Linda – in support of the Colman Park project. Great support from Mount Baker
Joyce Motty – Colman park vista project. Looking for a forward thinking solution. Statement attached.
Allyn – She wanted the Commission to know that she works for Department of Neighborhoods and is involved on the grant side of this project.

Seattle Audubon's Urban Bird Treaty

Seth Shteir from Seattle Audubon presented information about Seattle's Urban Bird Treaty, which recently was signed.

Seattle Audubon stated in their 2016 State of the Birds report that one-third of all North American bird species need urgent conservation action.

Throughout the US there are four mayor flyways. The Pacific Flyway goes from Alaska to Tierra del Fuego. Birds are indicators of the health of our environment. They are an important part of the food chain. They control pest insects. They pollinate certain plants.

Migrant birds are like long distance athletes and they must deal with many hazards, including:

- Exhaustion
- Starvation
- Collision
- Predators
- Disease
- Pollution and
- Development and habitat destruction

In 1999, the US Fish and Wildlife started the Bird Treaty effort. Seattle is #28 and fills a critical link along the West Coast.

The Seattle Urban Bird Treaty partnership will work on reducing hazards and increase awareness about birds. The partners are:

- US Fish and Wildlife Service
- WA Department of Fish and Wildlife
- City of Seattle
- Seattle Parks and Recreation
- Audubon Washington
- Heron Habitat Helpers and
- Seattle Audubon

Program goals:

- Restore habitat
- Bird friendly architecture
- Lights out program
- Cats indoors
- Connecting residents with birds and nature
- Bird certified gardens

Cats are predators of birds and there is an effort to keep cats indoors.

UFC comment: Talk to SDOT to reduce brightness of SDOT's LEDs new lights.

UFC question/comment: Is there any research in terms of impact of non-native trees.

Answer: native plants are best with birds because they adapted to them.

A letter of support to the Mayor and Council would be great.

Would like to come back and provide updates.

Colman Park Vista project – Community presentation

Margy, Evan, and Eliza presented their view of the project.

They were taken aback by the fact that Parks didn't invite them to participate in their presentation and commented on the minutes.

The friends of Colman Park Vista was founded in 2014 and has over 218 members. They obtained a City Neighborhood Matching Fund grant with the following objectives:

- Undertake a public process
- Do an assessment of the plant community and the slope
- Produce design concepts and Vegetation Management Plan.

The vision of the group for the Colman Vista Restoration project is:

- Improve ecological functionality
 - o Remove and discourage invasive species
 - o Plant a multi-layered, diverse canopy
 - o Prevent erosion, sloughing and slumping
 - o Protect and expand native restoration efforts.
- Invite and encourage park use
 - o Create easily identifiable, welcoming entry areas
 - o Repair pathways and encourage light with low growing plants
 - o Improve safety and make it apparent that this is a park
 - o Beautify the slope
- Functionality for all
 - o Engage interest for pedestrians, cyclists, and motorists
 - o Draw people in, bring neighbors together
 - o Slow down activity along 31st Ave S
 - o Address equity and neglect concerns
- Restore Olmsted vision
 - o Create beautiful entry befitting of this historically significant park
 - o "Borrow" Lake Washington, Cascades, Mercer Island, and Mt. Rainier landscapes

Community support includes Friends of Colman Park groups, Colman Park P-Patch, and The Green Seattle Partnership Forest Steward for Colman Park.

Eliza Davidson all presented the community's vision. Colman is an Olmsted Park. This used to be a gorgeous vista. In the last 40 years, big leaf maples colonized the area and Parks allowed them to be copiced. For the past 30 years, the slope has been neglected, it was dark and dangerous.

Applied to a Department of Neighborhoods (DoN) grant and got it. Hired a Geotech to evaluate the slope, an arborist to evaluate the trees, and a Landscape architect to produce a plan. 80+ people came to the first meeting. Representing the diversity of the meeting. The group has accomplished a great deal. They received the geotech report and arborist report (confirming unsustainable state of vegetation). Have done extensive research, engaged with past leadership for restoration efforts, received many endorsements from community.

They have researched the history of the park and gathered community support. Evan shared the restoration work done to date and the level of community support provided during public process.

The plan is not complete. They envision a model site for incorporating the Olmsted vision and native plantings used in a more thoughtful manner for a view point and park. What people value about this site is that it was always a natural view point looking at a forest and the water beyond.

Tom thanked the group for their presentation. When they push the plan further, he would like to recommend they give clear responses to concerns from Parks. He thinks there's a way to have everyone's concerns be allayed. Don't be afraid to talk about past management practices (coppicing) because GSP is aware of that.

Would like to letter of support for the project. Encouraging the Parks department to support the community.

Tom would consider it if there's a plan that addresses Parks policies and concerns.

The group would like clarity from Parks.

The UFC would like to see a balanced approach and would like to see more large trees planted during restoration. A concern is setting a precedent for other groups to claim the right to have a view.

2016 Canopy Cover Assessment webinar debrief

The Commission discussed the CC assessment webinar. The main thing to make sure the City gets from future assessment the ability to establish a canopy cover trend over time.

Donna is wondering where are new places where we can plant trees. When she travelled to California, she went to a school that had a parking lot with many trees.

Sandra stressed that the urban forestry team will be reviewing the canopy cover assessment results as part of the Urban Forest Stewardship Plan update in 2018.

OSE led a webinar to share the canopy cover assessment results on May 8. The webinar, final report, GIS tree canopy layer and other documents related to the 2016 canopy cover are posted on the Trees for Seattle website: <http://www.seattle.gov/trees/canopycover.htm>

UFC 2016 Annual Report/2017 Work Plan Council briefing debrief

Move to next meeting

Public comment

Before there was GSP the community planted, with Parks' assistance, 400 hemlocks and cedars. Parks was going to do thinning to give these trees an opportunity to get established but that didn't happen.

Parks: all of us want the same thing: a healthy forest. An interesting aspect is cultural landscapes. Parks wants to work together within the limits they have.

DoN is willing to look at a Phase II to work with the community and Parks to come to a resolution that works for all. Parks did neglect the site when it was mostly a black community.

It might be good for Friends of Olmsted parks to talk to UFC about the GSP one-size fits all approach. It's important to respect historic landscapes. There is tension there.

SANDRA TO INVITE FRIENDS OF OLMSTED PARKS TO COME VISIT.

Parks has a consultant that is doing an analysis. Sandra is requesting the analysis from Parks for the UFC to review.

New Business

None

Adjourn

Public input:

Colman Vista Project

Looking for a forward thinking solution.....

Seattle is a city of views and steep slopes, some in natural areas and others in developed parks. Many of these slopes have trees that have been topped or are aging out. Add to this scenario the fact that as a city, we are struggling with a conflict of the public's desire for views and the need to increase the urban canopy.

The Colman Park Vista project presents an opportunity to address these issues. Here is a community group that is eager to work with parks to restore a steep slope and open up a framed view. It could be a pilot project that could be a model for future slope restorations across the city. What do we want? steep invasive-infested slopes with damaged and aging trees that serve as dumping grounds for car bumpers, beverage containers and dog excrement? or do we want healthy forests that sustain the city?

The Seattle Park Department (SPD) could take a proactive stance to improve steep slopes in our parks and potentially open some FRAMED VIEWS by:

Developing an in-house restoration team of plant ecologists, landscape architects and geo technical experts who can create vegetation management plans for steep slopes in various exposures: north, east, south and west.

In lieu of an in-house restoration team, developing a list of consultants who have experience with slope geology and native plants.

Because the SPD has restrictions for volunteers working on steep slopes, consider developing a jobs program for restoration crews who can work around the city. (Green Seattle Partnership expressed their dilemma that the remainder of their restorations are on slopes.)

Consider a canopy of varying height trees (large, medium and small trees) and large shrubs. Plant large conifers near the base of a slope. Plant smaller deciduous and coniferous trees and large shrubs on the upper slope to establish a framed view. An unencumbered view is boring and unnecessary.

A moratorium on vegetation plans does not solve the problem of vigilante cutting for views or the public's desire to enjoy views.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to share my thoughts on the Colman Park Vista Project.

Joyce Moty 
Former Green Seattle Partnership steward
Native Plant Steward
Open Space Advocate