Urban Forestry Commission (UFC)
June 13, 2012
Meeting Notes

Seattle Municipal Tower Room 2750
700 5ᵗʰ Avenue, Seattle
3:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

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

Attending

<u>Commissioners</u>
Matt Mega (MM) – chair
John Small (JS) – vice chair
Nancy Bird (NB)
Tom Early (TE)
John Floberg (JF)
Jeff Reibman (JR)
Peg Staeheli (PS)

<u>Staff</u>
Sandra Pinto de Bader (SPdB) - OSE
Lisa Rutzick (LR) - DPD

<u>Public</u>
Michael Oxman

Absent- Excused
Leif Fixen (LF)
Gordon Bradley (GB)

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 report
MM – was doing spring cleaning and found interesting document. City did a phone survey
Asked questions about the urban forest in 2000 (talked to 614 people. Made over 5,000 calls).
Regarding permit system (Cascadia consulting group did for City) 34% of people were in favor
And 56% of people were against it.

Neighborhood design guidelines and the design review process – Lisa Rutzick (DPD)
Lisa Rutzick – DPD manages design review program. How tree preservation interest might be folded more into the design review guidelines. Just working on updating guidelines and the UFC is welcome to provide input. Time is of the essence.
Shared the document and brought attention to areas where trees are either mentioned or it would make sense to mention.

Peg – why are they referring to deciduous trees specifically? Could have left it open to be determined by the specific location if that's an issue.

LR – green team weighed in on language. Timeline for comments is very short. She would need UFC input in the next two weeks. Law has already reviewed.

TE – with the author (Cheryl) leaving, who is going to take over?

LR – Mike Podowski is shepherding this through the Council process.

MM – There is no rationale of why you would connect habitats.

LR – you might want to add wording at the beginning in the introduction.

NB – the term public space is broader than open space.

LR – public place could refer to ROW or City property.

PS – maybe need to put 'networks of publicly accessible spaces'? Open space tends to have a definition of natural habitat.

LR – open space is not defined. Public space is defined.

PS – what are you referring to in general terms?

JR – talk about landscape. The city-wide document is being worked on. What about the neighborhood pieces?

LR – they are not changing in content but mostly will follow the city-wide new format. Maybe this is another discussion point (re-writing neighborhood design guidelines). The city-wide document is all new.

JR – if you are working on a neighborhood you would use the city-wide guidelines

LR – the neighborhood guidelines are more directive and more specific.

TE – Just for my understanding… these are given to designers to work through their plans. Once plans are complete and submitted the design review board reviews the plans based on the guidelines, is that correct?

LR – guidelines are the authority that the design review board has to change a given design. They have to tie back project design to the guidelines.

JR – in short the goal in putting stronger language here would be that, if the design review board wanted to support trees, we would need to give them stronger language in the guidelines so they can refer to it.

MM – groves are of particular value.

JS – Need to refer to urban forest habitats.

LR – threshold for projects that are subject to design review are LR3 zones and commercially zoned areas. Administrative design review occurs if project is under SEPA threshold.

NB – is grove defined?

LR – Yes, it is now.

MM – there is a resolution that mentions groves as critical in the interim code too.

PS – in page 22 is used under the open space concept. Will need to match to land use code. Otherwise people might not want to plant groups of trees thinking that they might be considered actual groves.

JF – Does the language used is intended to provide an implied prioritization?

LR – Don't think so.

JR – it might be done because you have to create something and the second is how you might create it.

NB – it needs to be clearer

JR – there are many ways to create open space on a project. This is encouraging people to consider one way to create open space.

PS – this is what happens when the public reads these guidelines. They start trying to interpret them.

MM – I think we are getting into the weeds. Let's have Lisa tell us what she has flagged.

Lisa – Page 4, A1, B 2 and 3, Page A1 and 2 Maybe provide a sentence or two in the intro. We don't reference sources. Page 12 A2, Page 18 C, Page 20 C-3

TE – introduction on page I – what we value in the built environment, mention existing trees.

LR – I appreciate the feedback

MM – do we want to get a group going or do we think this is enough?

LR – will email

Include in our recommendation the idea of a process to review neighborhood guidelines.

Review standards for UFC input for Large Projects – (Peg) continues and possible vote
MM – will combine the next two agenda items.

NB – we have the projec list and the holistic review matrix. Peg and I have briefly reviewed. The matrix is a good review tool but without asking the right questions we won't be able to fill in the matrix.

PS –As we request projects to come in, we should have a framework on how we ask our questions. Then the matrix came out of Conlin's letter and how we move things along.

NB – if we had this before Lisa came, how would she have filled it out? A lot of things might be 'not applicable'. Use both forms to focus our discussion. We might not get to all things in the process.

MM – we have them fill out the questions form and we fill out the matrix ourselves.

NB – if it's too onerous we won't do it. Use it as people are speaking to fill out. As we make recommendations we'll use the info we've compiled.

PS – we might want to change the questions. Some would be for project review and then high level for planning-type projects. All projects answer all questions and planning level projects only fill out part of it.

JR – We also review statements of policy. For example the Seafair issue. It's not a project.

NB – likes that policy people would see all of the questions. It would inform those writing the guidelines. On the side of the matrix are 'mandated' and 'voluntary' categories we can establish different kinds of reviews.

JF – how would we become aware of these projects?

MM – Sandra and I just had a conversation about this. Those that want our finger prints come to us.

JF – something to trigger having to go to the UFC

MM – would like a trigger but also have to accept the ownership that if we find out about something in our professional life, then we need to bring it to the UFC.

PS – we should be looking at a couple of SDOT projects every year. The major projects in the city we should see at the appropriate time.

JR – one filter is does this project require action by Council? Our role is to advise Council.

JF – by then it would be too late.

PS – have in our agenda a standing item on finding out what projects we've heard about.

MM – maybe if we don't make a recommendation we just have them fill out the questionnaire for us to be aware. Have an intro to the document. We decide whether we want them to come and talk to us as well.

MM – be clear in the intro that some projects might be too early and say that we will bring them back to them when appropriate.

JR – ask them to identify major phases in their projects.

MM – establish a feedback loop.

JR – maybe use tiers.

PS – this is not too lengthy. They can fill it out.

NB – the intent is to gather information.

JS – sometimes consultants provide manuals for the City but it might not have funding or staff to implement.

MM – so we need to do a nitty-gritty review of questions once again? It's a living document.

PS – consider it a living document and modify as needed

NB – focus on the questions and then integrate them with the matrix

MM – Peg will have one more update to the document. She already received comments from Tom.

NB – Peg to flush out her piece and give it to Nancy to then update the matrix. We can also get to whether this is mandated or voluntary.

PS – we'll go with this as a test.

TE - Other projects to follow: seawall, 85th, Northgate light rail station, etc.

JS – anything with an EIS

NB – how about reviewing Amazon's campus in So. Lake Union. It's a high-impact area. Has not gone to design review yet. Leif sent it out.

PS – we probably should look at it.

JR – the EIS was not for Amazon but for the whole neighborhood. There might not be a single project. The upzoning would require Council action.

PS – we could ask SDOT to brief us on upcoming projects.

Urban Forest holistic approach matrix – (Nancy) continues and possible vote
SEE ABOVE

Ecosystem Metrics Position Paper – (Matt/John S) continues and possible vote
MM – will incorporate JS' comments. I would like to propose to table this item for now.

JF – I can help with this piece.

MM – I'll work with you on this.

NB – agenda item for public outreach

Public comment
MO – sent out an email earlier today. Heard several times the question on how does Portland do it? They publish a monthly newsletter where they describe what efforts are being undertaken to support the urban forest. MO read his letter. There has been a huge shakeup in the Parks department. The street tree crew is in one end of the city and takes a lot of time for workers to get to all the trees in the city.

Tomorrow night there is the launch of TreePAC, a political action group. Forest Stewards are meeting and Tree Ambassadors are meeting as well. He doesn't see commissioners at any of these events.

Last year there was a joint meeting between UFC and UF IDT, where were the arborists?

Next month's agenda items
Sandra talked about next month's items and the planning of the UFC/IDT meeting.

PS – I do wonder about how it is that Portland funds this kind of work.

NB – Would like

NB – won't be here July 18.
PS – not here July 11 or 18

MM – will probably need get groups together to produce comment letters. Hit the ground running after the 11.

MM – nice to have one or two commissioners

Adjourn

Community comment:

From: Michael Oxman [mailto:michaeloxman@comcast.net]
Sent: Wednesday, June 13, 2012 11:33 AM
To: Pinto_de_Bader, Sandra
Cc: SeattlePOSA@yahoogroups.com; mike.mcginn@seattle.gov; Conlin, Richard
Subject: Portland's Urban Forestry reports

Matt Mega, Chair
Seattle Urban Forestry Commission

Dear Commissioners,

Several times I have heard references to 'how Portland does it', so I decided to do a little research into the urban forestry management system in this Oregon city. It wasn't difficult. They publish the attached monthly newsletter to let the citizens know what efforts are being undertaken to manage this essential resource. Both Street trees and Park trees are reported on.
http://www.portlandonline.com/parks/index.cfm?c=53148

What would it take to ask the employees of the Seattle municipal government what they do to manage the urban forest? Can we please get reports of inspections, permits, tree crew activity, citizen outreach, legislative action, budgets, etc.? I feel it would be helpful to document these actions as a measure of accountability to the citizens.

For example, I understand the leadership of the Parks Department has changed 3 times in the last 3 months. I'm wondering if this is because of natural evolution in management or budget cutting?

The inefficiency in maintaining tree crews in both the Parks and Transportation Departments entails redundancy in staffing, equipment & trucks, and travel time from separate service yards, and creates a communication barrier that is described in the May 2009 Tree Program Audit. It would be helpful to know who to go to for information about possible consolidation as a cost saving issue.

Thanks for all your deliberations.

Arboreally yours,

Michael Oxman
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