

## SEATTLE URBAN FORESTRY COMMISSION

John Floberg, Chair • John Small, Vice-Chair  
Gordon Bradley • Tom Early • Leif Fixen • Matt Mega • Jeff Reibman • Erik Rundell • Peg Staeheli

*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 6, 2013**

### Meeting Notes

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

#### Attending

##### Commissioners

John Floberg (JF) - chair  
John Small (JS) – vice-chair  
Tom Early (TE)  
Leif Fixen (LF)  
Gordon Bradley (GB)  
Jeff Reibman (JR)  
Erik Rundell (ER)  
Peg Staeheli (PS)

##### Staff

Sandra Pinto de Bader (SPdB) - OSE  
Phyllis Shulman (PSh) – CM Conlin’s Office  
Jennifer Wieland (JW) - SDOT  
Nolan Rundquist - SDOT

##### Public

Steve Zemke  
Nicholas Dankers

#### Absent- Excused

Matt Mega (MM)

**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

JF – get meeting started

#### Public comment

SZ – Just need to pass the ordinances to make it tougher for other cities to compete with us. Portland’s new ordinance came into effect Feb 1. Took the draft annual report and will provide feedback and items.

Addressing tree/sidewalk – look at native trees and include as many in the ROW as possible to preserve habitat for wildlife. Greenwood Ave N – unnecessarily paved over parking strip. Have some goal in terms of minimizing paved over surfaces. Study from East coast correlating loss of trees and higher death rates. It might be an air quality issue. It would be an interesting thing to keep in mind the value of trees. More trees around some schools would ease air quality issues. Phinney Ridge, development project, developer removed a huge cedar tree that was supposed to be preserved. Neighbors are upset. Is DPD really enforcing when someone cuts down a tree that could have been preserved.

#### Approval of January 9 meeting notes

**ACTION: A motion was made to approve the January 9 meeting notes as written. The motion was seconded and carried.**

**Addressing tree/sidewalk conflicts scope of work briefing – Jennifer Wieland (SDOT – Urban Forestry)**

JW – Moved to SDOT SUUF – develop an operational plan to address conflicts between trees and sidewalks. 34<sup>th</sup> Ave in Madrona. Sidewalk repairs would require removal of large trees that don't have enough space. SDOT approached the plan by removing several trees. A group developed in Madrona to ask the City to hold on and think comprehensively on how to address the issues without necessarily removing trees. \$100K to develop a tool kit of options to address conflicts between trees and sidewalks citywide. We want to assess all the options and use case studies to get to a conceptual plan for the corridor and have concepts that would work for different locations.

JW – \$100K is not a huge budget, we'll need to balance interests.

The values and goals were pulled from existing City policies and plans:

- Create a safe, accessible, and inviting walking environment
- Grow and maintain a healthy urban forest
- Preserve existing assets
- Implement programs in accordance with RSJI goals

Draft objectives

- Repair sidewalks damaged by street trees with long-term solutions
- Retain as many mature, desirable trees as possible
- Explore and implement alternative sidewalk repair approaches
- Evaluate approaches across criteria, including lifecycle cost
- Implement tree removal, when necessary, in phases
- Add to the urban canopy by planting new trees

We will look at advantages and disadvantages and life cycle costs. Will we be adding to the maintenance backlog?

Consultant to provide evaluation of current practices. LA has a robust program. Consultant tasks are:

1. Project management
2. Existing and best practices research
3. Development of long-term solutions and approaches to implementation
4. Case studies
5. Public outreach and community involvement

Case studies in five locations at both corridor and spot locations. 23<sup>rd</sup> Ave might be another one. There will be a major capital project with complete streets component. Wide range of stake holders involved including UFC.

Milestones:

February 7 – receive feedback on draft scope from community members and City Boards

February 15 – finalize scope of work and begin roster solicitation process

March 30 – provide selected consultant with notice to proceed

April 15 – complete project management plan and public outreach plan

June 1 – complete existing and best practices research

PS – in a big picture looking at this I think public involvement is not well defined. You might want to say what the level of effort might be. For this to have value and address RSJI issues you would want to hit the four quadrants and downtown, whether it's a public meeting or some other way.

TE – do more a community council meeting.

LF – what are we hoping to get out of these community meetings?

JW – looking for feedback on whether we are asking the right questions, but also truth-test the approaches with each of the neighborhoods.

TE – how is this envisioned to be used internally in SDOT?

JW – using the tool box as the go to place for street maintenance.

JF – not just limited to that scenario of the loss of a tree. It could be a complaint.

Nolan – one of the drivers (in LA funds are located in UF dept, here budget is in street maintenance).

LF – that was a big debate in Boston. Public works has the equipment but not always have the best interest in the trees.

JW – maintenance depends on who planted the tree. IF it was the home owner, then they are responsible for sidewalk maintenance.

PS- Develop alternative – second bullet – be clear that you'll be looking for internal and external methods. Something clear on the home or business owner in terms of what repairs are acceptable. That's when the RSJI issues might come into play. The minimal method might not be financially feasible for some homeowners. Coming up with ideas for that would be something to request in the scoping.

JF – does the tool incorporate the idea of when sidewalks are rebuilt is there an acknowledgement of the potential need of a larger area for the tree?

JW - how do we balance the situation when a removal took place and we are going to re-plant.

JS – in terms of case studies is important to look at small streets with different special constraints and opportunities. Traffic calming that goes in is usually hostile against trees. This is a great opportunity of

taking a more holistic approach to manage the ROW. Will you look at chip sealed streets that don't have safe pedestrian environments?

Nolan – A lot of these trees were planted before ADA.

JF – what's the solution?

Nolan – I would like to see more space for trees.

ER – Is the tool going to differentiate between a corridor and individual problems and locations

JW – I see a mix of both. In terms of a larger investment on the City side, the corridor investment will be the focus.

GB – we probably can't do everything at once. Is part of what the consultant will take include an approach of an inventory of where in the City the issues are. What's a mature and desirable trees. This is where we start and these are the practices.

JW- it's not just responding to complaints. As part of the PMP, we do have a good sense of where the higher needs are in terms of maintenance. So it's not just the squeaky wheel situation. We would be looking for the consultant to be coming in with a wide range of experience on the solution side.

PS – a bullet under 3 to be clear: refine the prioritization process from the PMP to balance ... make it part of the deliverables. It might err on the pedestrian side and it might need another lens to look at, there might be an alternative to solve the pedestrian issue.

JF – There could be a decision based on pedestrian safety to remove a large number of trees. It concerns me.

JW\_ - the desire here is not something to look at alternative approaches to taking out the tree.

JS – even a systematic species replacement over time would be a solution that would take a long time.

PS – the Madrona area is different. It's an aging infrastructure. WE are not as innovative here. Conifers are missing. There is not enough room for conifers in the planting strip, but I don't get that statement when we are talking about large deciduous trees. It's more about how to retain existing large deciduous and conifers.

JS - you can't deal with tree retention without thinking about species selection.

PS – You want to know which areas are to be prioritized. Explain what level of effort you are looking for in each area.

TE – the product in general is a tool kit but what does that is envisioned to be?

JW – I don't know yet. Corridors – conceptual plan; for spot locations – we are expecting the consultant to say for this condition these are the tools. Start to tell us how, and when, and where to use the tools. It might be more of an implementation strategy.

PS – make a decision of whether you are going to do this for an in-house implementation or external and be very clear if it's just going to be SDOT work order guidance. Include that details include consideration of the clear zone of height requirements. It's a maintenance issue that is not being address very well right now. Not just the side-walk and root zone but the tree structure. Consider the full canopy.

JW – will share the final version.

GB – another issue, invest a lot to create a space around the trees. Many trees are compromised because of power lines. It has to be a full assessment of the health of the tree as well.

ER – life cycle costs to include tree maintenance as well as sidewalk maintenance.

PS – clarify that the scope – we realize that there are many issues with urban trees and we will not be addressing other issues such as power lines, underground utilities, etc.

JS – which roster will you be choosing from? Will there be an RFP for a more diverse response instead of going with the roster?

JW – because of the size of the contract we have flexibility. We need a firm that has engineering, landscape architecture... a mix of experience. I'm open to suggestions.

PS – if you go broad. I would stick to roster is the cost of procurement would start to make this not viable. Post it and have people call you.

#### **2012 Annual Report – initial conversation and possible vote**

JF – will be presented to Council on 2/27.

Sandra received feedback on the document and will produce a final version.

**ACTION: A motion was made to approve the 2012 Annual Report as amended. The motion was seconded and carried.**

#### **Discussion of Council's proposed review of Urban Forest Plan**

JF– opportunity to debrief from the conversation we had with Phyllis during the last meeting. I'm curious on what the outcomes are of the meeting.

Sandra gave a briefing of the work done to date. Meeting with IDT, meeting with working group, with faculty...

Phyllis – good feedback from IDT – not institutionalized approaches, not explicit. We need to bring out in the plan.

JF – one of the points of confusion was the numbers portion. Maybe we are not going to be using the canopy goal or the units of measure. It's more re-casting.

Phyllis – it's not just canopy goals.

JS – I continue to struggle on how does this affects SCL's priorities in terms of maintaining for reliability. If individual managers have other goals then implementation will not be consistent.

PS- this has been a really big issue.

Phyllis – how do we get more consistency and the policy direction so embedded that it brings clarity and consistency to our actions. Create the framework of policies, goals, and priorities. Then departments will connect to that. Then the implementation areas will align themselves to the plan. You want the plan to reflect what you want to happen. Your work plan will do it. Make sure things are happening consistently managed.

JS – how does the plan address the issue of rate money only goes to provide services that benefit ratepayers?

Phyllis – the plan will help build the rationale. We can't change the rate nexus issues.

JS – it's frustrating to me that the City falls into silos. SCL is doing the bulk of urban forestry management by dollar amount. We need to come up with a system where this work is balanced with other goals, whether it's using rate money to mitigate their impacts. The plan could do that with mitigation.

Phyllis – hope to get closer to that level. Then focus into those areas that need work.

PS – The SCL issue is big and we can say we can't solve it quickly but I don't really know how big it really is. Could the plan say that there will be an evaluation of X number of years of SCL pruning vs. doing a major removal – ACTION ITEM

Phyllis – conditions for health for trees. Then we look at what SCL is doing – evaluate tools, criteria to evaluate each case.

JR – how do we get into the plan the idea that this is rate money, but there is flexibility how SCL delivers power. What's the best thing long term? Same attitude brought to trimming.

PS – protocols that SCL puts into their system - use same thought that what they are doing has a 100 year value (apply this to trees). Repeated maintenance.

Phyllis – there is a section of strategies and action items. You are also thinking of what are the criteria one uses to make those decisions.

PS – Stewardship, look at the city as the community that lives here, beyond City government. What do you envision the action item for the community.

Phyllis – we have to flush that out. We are saying that it is essential this is a community-wide effort. When we are talking stewardship is that the underlying assumption is that it's a community wide effort. That partnership is what's essential. Then you look at what's it going to take.

JF – the first step it's to establish it at a high level. Then CC can endorse it and be a part of that vision.

Phyllis – it's going to be easier when you see the new tweaked product. Then UFC and IDT will weigh in with ideas.

PS – schedule – we will meet again next week. Then we'll meet with the IDT and UFC team. IF you like the direction, then we'll wordsmith.

JF – nice to have the American Forests piece supporting this effort.

Phyllis – the organization level was there. Not rated on canopy. Update on Street Tree ordinance. Met with SDOT people. Put forward questions with concerns. They will be getting back to her. Meeting again with DPD next week. Specific issues: pruning certification (what's out there, how much does it cost, in several languages? For RSJI purposes so not only people that can afford it get certified. What can the City do about this to make it more equitable. Another thing about needing permits to put up holiday lights – they want to be able to monitor so that the lights that are left on the trees are monitored and removed. She also asked them about their response to UFC comments.

PS – there is a clause saying that people that have street trees are responsible for damage to the mains.

JS – there is the issue of coordination between DPD and SDOT for trees that are under both jurisdictions. Trees grow in between ROW and property... if someone wants to cut a tree growing in both areas do they need a permit from both departments? If I don't have sidewalks who do I call?

JF – UFC wants SDOT to come back once they have made changes to the Street Tree ordinance

PS – if they are only tweaks, maybe a smaller group could review?

JS – it would be nice to get a response.

JF – Sandra just provided me with a copy of SDOT's response to our comments dated March 7, 2012. I'll pass it around.

#### **Revision of deadlines in 2013 Work Plan**

JF – Let's review the work plan to adjust deadlines

**ACTION: A motion was made to approve the revised 2013 Work Plan. The motion was seconded and carried.**

#### **New business and announcements**

#### **Adjourn**