



Lani Chang (Position 3 - Natural Resource Agency or University) • **Maeve Gillis** (Position 10 – Get Engaged) • **Melanie Ocasio** (Position 11 – Environmental Justice) • **Lia Hall** (Position 13 – Community/Neighborhood)

Commissioners Absent

Alicia Kellogg (Position 2 – Urban Ecologist) • **Drue Epping** (Position 5 – Arborist) • **Andrea Starbird** (Position 12 – Public Health)

Facilitators

Aaron Clark (Position 1 – Wildlife Biologist) and UFC staff

Briefings

Akshay Iyengar, City Budget Process 101

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

DRAFT Minutes

April 8, 2026, 3:00 – 5:00 p.m

1. **The meeting was called to order at 3:05, the Chair conducted roll call, and the agenda was reviewed.**
2. **The Chair facilitated Public Comment and provided a guideline to the public for engaging in this period.**

Steve Z made the following comments:

- Introducing himself and noted his experience of being on the UFC
- Noted to everyone that today is Arbor Day, and a proclamation was issued in its honor – also mentioned that this was featured in recent Department of Natural Resources newsletter. Encouraged folks to subscribe to said newsletter.
- Thanked the Office of Sustainability and Environment for updating the UFC’s meeting notes and agenda page for 2026 meetings. Following up on this, additional notes were mentioned:
 - Stated that he has not yet received a response to the email he sent to OSE staff/leadership February about this subject

- Referenced the adopted UFC Coordinator Protocols that were adopted on 01/13/21 and emphasized the responsibility to complete the tasks listed in this document.
- Noted that several meeting materials (agenda, meeting recordings, notes) for 2025 still need to be uploaded and urged OSE staff to do so soon to ensure that the public can stay informed and engaged.
- Urged the UFC to recruit for open vacancies on the Commission and encourage them to reach out to personal networks to apply.

Jamie S made the following comments:

- Thank the UFC for making these meetings public and noted that he is new to participating in this group.
- Introduced himself and provided some background information on his professional experience and education.
- Noted that he joined due to concern about the rapidly changing climate in Seattle and whether City planning will be adequate for that shift (e.g. erratic rainfall, hotter/longer summers, etc.)
 - Reflected on the Comprehensive Plan and its plans for redevelopment/rezoning, and expressed concern that it is prioritizing housing at the expense of environmental services that the tree canopy provides.
 - Noted specific concerns in the Comprehensive Plan/City planning that impacts tree canopy and tree requirements (e.g. no tree planting requirements in some situations, the consideration of specific trees that should be prioritized, etc.)

Sandy S made the following comments:

- Referenced Steve's comments about recruiting for Commission vacancies and emphasized that there are people in the community who would like to serve, adding that these positions shouldn't be vacant for as long as they have been.
- Mentioned that she is a part of Tree Action Seattle and referenced the timing of the Comprehensive Plan - encouraged the UFC to send a letter to City Council to make amendments to Phase II to require tree retention and planting.
 - Noted concerns that the current plan affects almost half of Seattle's land base, and how there are no tree requirements in certain zones.
 - Emphasized that this will affect tree canopy for decades and urges UFC to give advice to City leaders before a final decision is made.

3. Vote: Approve Meeting Notes from 03/11/2026 (this section took place near the end of the meeting as quorum was not reached until then)

- Aaron motions to approve, Lia seconded.
- UFC unanimously approved notes.

4. Updates & Announcements

- Hannah provided OSE updates/announcements:
 - Reminded Commissioners that an email was sent requesting they complete a Financial Interest Statement form (FIS form). Noted that this request is coming from the Seattle Ethics and Elections Commission (SEEC) and is requirement that needs to be completed by 04/15.
 - Applications to join the UFC are now open and announced on OSE social media platforms. Encouraged everyone to share and engage.
 - Lia: What channels does OSE utilize to announce these vacancies and application opening? Also noted that it would be good to utilize connections with community partners such as UW or similar programs relevant to these positions to garner more attention to encourage people to apply.
 - Hannah: Requested that OSE post on all available platforms such as X, Facebook, and LinkedIn – she will share the links with the Commissioners to share accordingly. Noted that Lia’s comment about utilizing connections with community partners is good thing to consider and that she will connect with OSE Comms to see if that is something that was/can be explored.
 - Noted that April is Earth Month with Earth Day occurring on April 22nd. Highlighted that there are many opportunities to participate in community events and volunteer to celebrate – dropped link in the chat to the Trees for Seattle so that everyone can take a look if they are interested in participating
 - Confirmed that the recently approved Welcome Letters for incoming/new elected officials were sent to the appropriate offices, and that she will follow-up on scheduling those meetings accordingly.
- Aaron made the following updates/announcements:
 - Reiterated that Commissioners should share the application to join the UFC announcement to their own connections and networks to encourage people to apply
 - Re: Follow-up to Welcome Letters and the meetings with corresponding elected officials – clarified that initial plan for UFC attendees will include the Co-Chairs and the subcommittee involved in drafting the welcome letters. However, participation from other UFC Commissioners is welcome and asked that those who want to join should reach out to be included in scheduling considerations.
 - Lia mentioned that she would like to join.
 - Brought up the Select Committee on the Comprehensive Plan and how they will be undergoing amendment review in June. Suggested creating a 2026 Comprehensive Plan Recommendations Subcommittee to generate high level recommendations for the Committee to consider in their process, with the expectation that the recommendations would be ready to be approved by the UFC at the May meeting.

- Aaron, Lani, and Lia mentioned that they would like to join.
- Lia: Asked for clarification on what next steps are for this subcommittee. **(Note: This question was brought up at the end of the Second Public Comment)**
 - Aaron: Confirmed that follow-up will happen offline after this meeting.

5. Introduction: Sean Watts, Consultant

- Sean introduced himself, outline of the presentation, his role, and provided information about his personal and professional background
 - Connected how his upbringing in the DC drives his work, and what values he has that inspires his process.
- Bottom-up Systemic Transformation
 - Systemic change requires change at an organizational level and master the ability to work together as a team.
 - An organization is only as equitable as the least equitable person in that group
- Equity Organizational Development -
 - Sean usually three key attributes that is typically seen in successful organizations: Growth Culture, Living Charter, Align on the WHY of their work
- Speaking of why... Why Sean?
 - Sean shared how he connects to the UFC's mandate and what his role will consist of
 - Emphasized the importance of creating a space to ensure different opinions are heard, to encourage listening to understand rather than to just respond.
 - Discussed how fostering nuanced conversations to achieve this space will have lasting impact on the work the UFC will do.
 - Connected this to urban planning in Seattle as an example by comparing maps detailing the 1908 (Olmsted Park System) -> 1936 redlining maps -> 2011 Park needs
 - Described the 2020 study by the University of Portland, and how redlining exacerbates urban heat islands
 - Discussed Seattle canopy cover map compared to displacement risk index map and how a nuanced conversation would help ground the conversation to find a balance between different needs/considerations involved in these discussions.
 - Sean's role in supporting the UFC
 - Partner with the UFC to assess and propose systems to find balance within decision making and progress
 - Scope of work that Sean will work on with a subcommittee: Structural, Procedural, and Cultural

- Next Steps & Draft Timeline
 - Create a subcommittee w/ 3 volunteers with 4-5 meetings over ~3 months
 - Discuss and hone ideas within small group
 - Will report back to the UFC on a regular basis
 - Wants to ensure that all participants can be vulnerable and honest about their blind spots to engage fully in work.
 - Discussed what he expects the draft timeline to look like and when certain key steps will occur.
- Questions/Comments:
 - Aaron: Checked to see who is interested in joining but indicated he is interested and would like to participate if possible.
 - Lia: Thanks, Sean for his presentation and expressed excitement at this partnership. Admits that this wasn't exactly what she expected but is pleasantly surprised by the content and information that was shared. Mentioned her experience on the UFC and recognized that due to turnover that the culture has shifted and is somewhat unstable. In consideration of this, she would like to consider when new Commissioners are expected to join and how implementation of these governance and protocols will play a role to ensure the previous and new Commissioners are aligned on expectations.
 - Sean: Defers to OSE staff on confirming timeline for new Commissioners but discussed how current plan is to have certain housekeeping items will be in place to be utilized during the onboarding process and lead to having everyone learn together during the implementation phase.
 - Lauren: Lauren added context for general timeline expectations with the subcommittee group work and how recruitment timeline lines up with it. Explained that the hope is the new Commissioners will be brought into the process/have the opportunity to experience the implementation before it's finalized to give them the opportunity to provide feedback as well.
 - Aaron: Thanked Lia for speaking from her perspective and raising those points for consideration in this process. Noted how this relates to the importance of the overall work that the UFC does.

6. Briefing: Budget Process 101

- Akshay introduced himself, explained what he and the CBO work on, and what to expect from his presentation.
- City Budget Basics

- Runs on a bi-annual basis – is passed on the second year but is formally legislated on a yearly basis.
- Currently in the 2nd year of biennium where 2-year budget will be approved/passed before beginning cycle again in 2028
- New administration = new people and determining priorities -> factors into how the annual budget process will look like
- Must have a balanced budget as required by legislation
 - Budget governs appropriation levels for all City spending and available resources are based on economic forecasts
 - Match these resources to all spending with revenue
- Budget process timeline
 - Begins in spring – determines what the baseline budget is and what expenditures for look like.
 - After baseline is determined – Discussions with CBO and Mayor’s office/departments, then CBO will send guidance to departments to work on their budget submittals.
 - June – October: After proposed budget is determined, Mayor proposes it to Council. Council will undergo its own process for reviewing and amending the budget.
 - November: Once proposed budget is finalized/approved, Council will vote on it in November. Mayor will then sign it to become the adopted budget – legally binding for the following year.
- Expenditures: Akshay provided a high-level overview of 2026 adopted budget (by broad program area in adopted budget book)
 - \$9B total funds in budget, \$2B is general fund (most flexible part of budget – pays for larger portion of staff/most discretionary)
 - Other funding streams are more restricted
 - Each department is grouped into a type of budget group
 - Provided overview of what departments are involved with urban forestry and estimated budget information related to it in 2026 and recent years.
 - Described two SLIs (Statement of Legislative Intent) involved
- Questions/Comments:
 - Lia: Where is the Trees for Neighborhoods budget located?
 - Akshay: It’s typically located in SPU.
 - Lauren: Added that SCL also contributes as well.
 - Lia: When it comes to certain grants, is it up to City departments to determine what gets allocated? Specifically made by the City and to be put out into the community.
 - Akshay: City Grant program will be included in the annual budget process and is appropriated for certain grant programs, and it’s usually up to the department to determine how that is provided. Provided some information on how federal funding and other funding may be considered in budget and the nuances involved in that determination.

- Lauren: Expanded to say that if it's a program within the Department that allocates a grant to community partners, then it would be a line item within whatever that body of work gives out the grant. (i.e.: Environmental justice fund in OSE).
- Lia: What happens to the money from funds that are not used? Does it go to those programs in the next year?
 - Akshay: The budget typically allows carry forward as it's spent down, but there will be circumstances to consider like the contract involved and approval processes.
- Aaron: When in the budget process will it be clear that urban forests/canopy/ tree related programs will be affected by budget cuts, and where in that timeline should we be keeping our eyes out for providing feedback?
 - Akshay: Revenue forecast is provided a few times each year to Council, and it is a public process that will provide a good overall view of what the overall revenue picture is looking like going into the budget cycle. The next one is happening next month, and he is happy to follow-up with that information. Additionally, there will also be the proposed budget in September. There will be opportunities for the public to engage with Council once the budget is in front of them, or letters can be provided to keep the Mayor's Office apprised of priority areas and concerns (advises early summer is helpful).

7. Second Public Comment (if time allows)

Steve Z. made the following comments:

- Noted that the UFC looks at various things (e.g. public schools, trees and education, etc.) and that the urban forest management plan needs updating.
- Provides an observation that the UFC is spending more time on decision making and processes, and advises that the UFC should ensure that this doesn't take too much time – emphasizes the need to address some current issues such as the Comprehensive Plan update that will have a major impact on the tree canopy.
- Suggested that there are opportunities to include individuals from the public who can help address these issues and provide advice to the UFC.

8. The meeting adjourned at 4:59pm

Meeting Chat:

Aaron Clark Position 1 wildlife biologist, 04/08/2026, 3:09 PM

To ensure a respectful and productive meeting for everyone, please keep the following guidelines in mind while using the chat box: Refrain from Disrupting Presentations & Business Items: Please refrain from using the chat box during presentations or business proceedings to respect our presenters' time and keep focus on the task at hand. Public comments should only be made during the designated public comment periods. Be Respectful: We ask that all comments remain kind, and respectful of all participants, including presenters, volunteer commissioners, staff, and fellow attendees. Disrespectful or off-topic messages may lead to changes for chat accessibility in meetings. Stay On Topic: Please keep your comments focused on the agenda items and topics being discussed during the meeting. We accept email submissions of other items and topics that can be distributed to UFC commissioners between meetings. By participating, you agree to follow these guidelines so we can maintain a respectful and effective meeting environment for everyone. Thank you for your cooperation!

Lia Hall #13, 04/08/2026, 3:19 PM

Thanks for your comments, Jamie.

Jamie Shambaugh, 04/08/2026, 3:32 PM

Glad to add my two cents and look forward to continuing the conversation!

Lia Hall #13, 04/08/2026, 3:28 PM

I would like to opt in

Pascual, Hannah, 04/08/2026, 3:29 PM

OSE_UFC_Liaison@seattle.gov

Pascual, Hannah, 04/08/2026, 3:31 PM

<https://www.seattle.gov/trees/get-involved/events>

Jamie Shambaugh, 04/08/2026, 4:13 PM

Thanks again for the opportunity to provide comments today. I need to peel off but look forward to engaging more with your group to advance forward-looking urban forestry that supports all City residents!

Aaron Clark Position 1 wildlife biologist, 04/08/2026, 4:15 PM

please rejoin us at 4:18 after a brief break :-)

Melanie Ocasio - UFC #11, 04/08/2026, 4:20 PM

Hello everyone. My apologies for joining late, I just finished up work :)

Aaron Clark Position 1 wildlife biologist, 04/08/2026, 4:22 PM

Hi Melanie, glad you could join.

Lia Hall #13, 04/08/2026, 4:53 PM

Thanks Akshay!

Iyengar, Akshay, 04/08/2026, 4:53 PM

Thank you, everyone - please don't hesitate to reach out if you have any questions

Sandy Shettler, 04/08/2026, 4:56 PM

No thanks, appreciate everyone!

Sandy Shettler, 04/08/2026, 5:00 PM

You were great!