Urban Forestry Commission (UFC)
March 7, 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

Commissioners
Matt Mega (MM) – chair
John Small (JS)
Nancy Bird (NB)
Tom Early (TE)
John Floberg (JF)
Gordon Bradley (GB)
Jeff Reibman (JR)
Peg Staeheli (PS)

Staff
Sandra Pinto de Bader (SPdB) - OSE
Steve Sheppard (SS) - DON

Public
Nicholas Dankers

Absent- Excused

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
MM – called to order

Public comment
None

Approval of February 8 minutes
> **ACTION: A motion was made to approve the February 8 meeting notes as amended. The motion was seconded and carried.**

Major Institution Master Plans – Steve Sheppard (DON)
SS – Manage major institutions program for City of Seattle. Seattle doesn't have a zone for schools, hospitals, or universities. We allow them in any zone through the Major Institutions (MI) code process to identify the rules they wish to live under. MI can amend City code in any way they wish with the exception of height limits. They can amend setbacks, landscape requirements, etc. The process is significant. In exchange or being able to propose what they want, they have to set maximum boundaries for future growth, participate in a 2-3 year process to review their needs and proposals with the City and the community. They submit a proposal

to the hearing examiner and this is a major legislative action. There are three participants: the City (through DPD, producing a report and recommendation); the institution providing a plan and EIS; and a citizens advisory committee (CAC) producing a report and recommendation.

TE – what criteria does the hearing examiner use to review the reports?

SS – not clear. He weighs the needs for growth and vitality of the MI and being the biggest employers in the area vs. needs to maintain livability of the neighborhood. Near the end of the process there is a 3-way negotiation. In the past the CAC has prevailed. There are political considerations. DON's role is to convene, staff, and give technical assistance to the CACs. The code requires from MIs to define a maximum floor area ratio (as a way of regulating bulk), height districts within the campus, setbacks, transportation management plan, open space and dedicated open spaces for the duration of the plan, landscaping on edges of campus. Have not yet gotten into percentage tree cover. As a tradeoff they can go higher and denser when the City controls their footprint as to not affect the neighborhood. Currently the following institutions have plans ongoing: Seattle U, Virginia Mason (early stages), Swedish (just started), Harborview (to begin on 3/20/12), Seattle Central Community College, NW Hospital. The best way to get involved is to join the mailing list. This way UFC could make comments. MI can request relief from almost any City code. City Council can put conditions in exchange for granting concessions.

NB – this process would be a good way to make recommendations about trees and canopy cover goals.

PS – do you have other organizations applying to become MIs?

TE – are stadiums MIs?

SS – MI only applies to educational and medical. Corporate campuses run the other way because they don't want to involve CACs.

TE – how do you form CACs?

SS – they have 12 representatives and three alternates. Sometimes City Council expands to 15 reps with 3 alternates. Mail to neighbors within three block radius, post signs, put ads on papers, Institutions do outreach… People are asked to volunteer and everyone is interviewed. City and MI participate in a three party interview. MIs put forward their preference (like a jury selection). It goes to City Council through the Mayor's Office in an MOA.

TE – how can UFC advise?

GB – Would be advising the City.

NB – there are six process underway. UFC would have to have consistent set of recommendations

SS – all institutions are different.

JR – would have to be backed case by case, highlighting opportunities for each institution.

GB – when one MI looses canopy and can't re-plant, are there ways to plan on the street? Are there discussion on the role of the urban forest?

SS – there is increasing focus from community groups. There is no Green Factor for MIs.

PS – it's the opposite; we need to focus on adjacent neighborhoods that need enhancement. Some of the MI's are fully built.

SS – Seattle University provides open space to the neighborhood. It's neighbors, Swedish, Harborview, etc, don't.

JR – are there any MIs trying to change their boundaries?

SS – Seattle U, Virginia Mason, SCCC

JR – under an MI does all the land have to be under the same owner?

SS – no, functions related to the MI can be provided and owned by a separate private party.

JR – can the plan be modified without an EIS?

SS – the code allows for amendments to the plan. If not significant. Anything that changes development standards needs an EIS.

SPdB – will get into the mailing list to keep UFC abreast of issues.

UFC comment to Yesler Terrace Tree Protection Plan - introduction
MM – presented his draft recommendation. There are some things that are new such as the bond requirement.

JR – a technical comment, because of where they are in the development process, they wouldn't' have clear percent canopy cover numbers because they don't have a plan yet.

PS – when they have a big-scale development they can still have future plans

MM – they did have a goal.

JF – as they develop one parcel it could affect how other are developed

PS – it would be good to have a standard to know what we can comment on. There is no strong development code for tree protection. We should have some guidance for big projects.

JS – should re-consider outside mitigation for these projects thinking about MI plans, need all the opportunities we can get to meet canopy cover goals. Will be limiting other opportunities in other regions.

JR – offset within the development

MM – don't mind off site so much

JR – we are dipping into our other buckets (which are already pretty taxed).

MM – if required mitigation on site – what happens if there is no more space on the site?

NB – transfer of planting requirements

JR – on site is preferable, if not on site available then go off site.

MM – add a different into paragraph?

JR – reiterate that we are pushing that metric for a reason.

MM – will call Dave LaClergue to give him a heads up.

NB - Add to UFMP update that, when new zones are created (such as Yesler Terrace) there will be a process to establish a canopy cover goal for that zone.

UFC recommendation on canopy cover goals for industrial MU - vote
NB – went through the changes to the original draft.

JS- he was amazed at how much retail and commercial development has happened in the industrial area. There is an opportunity to increase canopy cover as development occurs.

PS – these are places with an increasing percentage of workforce. Trees would provide a healthier working environment.

JR – agree. Also there are other uses in this zone. During plan review process City needs to make sure other uses can't exploit advantages that were meant to be for industrial lands.

PS – non-conforming uses should comply with their intended use

JS – recognizing that in addition to industrial there are other uses that could provide planting.

PS – encourage City to plant trees in industrial area

NB – something like a 'tree in lieu" – could go to industrial areas

JS – First Ave in front of Corps of Engineers have trees on both sides of the road (Marginal Way).

ACTION: **A motion was made to approve the recommendation letter as amended. The motion was seconded and carried.**

UFMP Action Agenda, Research Agenda, and i-Tree results – comments from Commissioners attending meetings with UF IDT

Sandra explained request for additional data analysis from i-tree report.

PS – it's great to have new data

MM – lots of ways to slice and dice the data. Hesitant to use data to talk about canopy percent.

SPdB – using the i-tree data to inform the current condition section of UFMP Management Units.

PS – if we are not getting the tree value, should we classify small trees as shrubs?

JS – call them saplings by DBH. Would be useful to see the condition data and know which areas are going to be hurting in 10 years.

PS – the information that was presented by the i-tree team was in draft form.

New business and announcements

Adjourn