

## SEATTLE URBAN FORESTRY COMMISSION

Peg Staeheli, Chair • Tom Early, Vice-Chair

Gordon Bradley • Leif Fixen • Donna Kostka • Joanna Nelson de Flores • Jeff Reibman • Erik Rundell • Steve Zemke

*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*

**December 10, 2014**

### Meeting Notes

SMT 2750

700 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Seattle

3:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

#### Attending

##### Commissioners

Peg Staeheli - chair  
Tom Early – vice-chair  
Donna Kostka  
Leif Fixen  
Jeff Reibman  
Erik Rundell  
Steve Zemke

##### Staff

Sandra Pinto de Bader (OSE)  
Joshua Erickson (SDOT)  
Darren Morgan (SDOT)  
Jennifer Wieland (SDOT)

Guests:  
Amalia Leighton - SvR  
Susan North – Seattle Audubon

#### Absent- Excused

Gordon Bradley  
Joanna Nelson de Flores

##### Public

None

**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

Peg called the meeting to order.

#### Chair report

None

#### Seattle Audubon Tree Map Update – Susan North

Susan North from Seattle Audubon gave an update on the Tree Map. The Commission has already seen the map but this will be an opportunity to introduce it to new UFC members.

Susan navigated the map's home page (<http://seattletreemap.org/>). The map has data on tree species and diameter at breast height you can get total benefits, GHG benefits, Water, Energy, Air quality benefits, etc. She has ideas on how to increase promotion by creating partnerships with community groups. Seattle U and UW are interested on working with Seattle Audubon on this. She would appreciate the Commission's ideas on how to promote the tree map.

UFC ideas:

- Organize events around Earth Day, the National Arbor Day, Seattle’s Arbor.
- Citywide outreach through Seattle reLeaf. Also reach out to Tree Ambassadors.
- Get School District involved. Do a tree week and have tree mapping be a project for class rooms.
- Apply for an AmeriCorps train the trainer project.
- Advertise positions for interns.
- Reach out to community organizations such as Community Councils, Girl and Boy scouts.
- Encourage Parks Department staff to input tree data when they maintain a tree. There are also many “Friends of” groups.
- UFC would provide a letter of support for grant applications.
- Focus on a neighborhood and apply for a Neighborhood matching grant to get the mobile app.

NOTE: Update UFC letter of recommendation on tree inventory and mapping. Revisit in 2015 and add something to this effect. Add to 2015 Work Plan – This is a good subject to continue working on.

SDOT doesn’t currently have a way to capture data via a mobile app but they are working on that. SDOT has already been in communication with Seattle Audubon and collaborating on the Tree Map.

**Street Tree Operations – Darren Morgan and Joshua Erickson (SDOT)**

Joshua has recently come on board as the Operations Manager inside SDOT’s Urban Forestry Section. This is an opportunity to introduce him to the Commission and for him to talk about urban forestry operations within SDOT.

He has been with UF for 8 years. Started as tree trimmer in a crew and is excited to support the work on urban forestry. The field operations group has landscape, tree, and irrigation crews - 17 gardeners and 6 tree trimmers. They are responsible for landscape maintenance and establishment, tree removals, tree pruning, tree planting. They have a lot of landscapes and trees but don’t have enough people.

He is excited about incident action plan for wind storms. SDOT has always been able to respond to storms well, with SDOT’s highly skilled team. Don’t have a solid plan in place to document all of that and show how SDOT responds. Create a structure to gather the data.

According to calculations done by Steve Zemke to get to 30% canopy cover, Seattle would have to plant 12,000 medium size trees each year.

Interesting to look at a streamlined plan on how SDOT might be able to help SCL on storm response.

NOTE: 2015 briefing – IDT storm response.

**SDOT’s Tree/Sidewalks Operations Plan update – Jennifer Wieland (SDOT)**

Jennifer Wieland and Amalia Leighton from SvR presented the draft Tree and Sidewalks Operations Plan. The document brings together more than a year work done internally, with other departments, and with community groups to identify creative approaches to address conflicts between trees and sidewalks. Test cases were done in Madrona, Lake City, and Rainier Beach.

The public comment period ends January 20. The plan is intended to be used by Street Maintenance and Street Use divisions. It also applies to other divisions in SDOT and other City departments. It identifies tools that private sector and individual home owners can use.

Main sections of the document:

- Introduction: the plan's goals, objectives, and policy foundation.
- Background and research: following a look at SDOT's current practices for managing trees and sidewalks, the team gathered national and international best practices and areas of emerging research that could be used in Seattle.
- Decision Process: the team formalized the process that SDOT uses to make decisions about retaining and removing trees during sidewalk repair and other infrastructure projects. The decision process spells out how SDOT undertakes an initial and follow-up evaluation and the points in the process at which public notification and input is needed.
- Solutions toolkit: the toolkit identifies solutions that may be used to plant and retain healthy trees and provide accessible, walkable surfaces. The toolkit includes both tree-based and infrastructure-based techniques and materials to guide design, construction, and maintenance activities. Each tool is categorized as proactive or responsive and includes costs, expected useful life, and other relevant considerations. Most projects will require a combination of solutions.
- Case studies: the plan includes three case studies that recommend successful long-term management strategies for different urban conditions and tree species: 34<sup>th</sup> Avenue in Madrona; 35<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE in Lake City; and Rainier Ave S in Rainier Beach. The case studies were used to test the draft decision process by assessing each tree along the corridor and resulted in a conceptual plan for resolving tree and sidewalk conflicts at this scale.
- Actions items: Beyond implementation of the operations plan, additional efforts are needed to support SDOT's management of trees and sidewalks. Internal actions include requesting more staff resources, updating the street tree list, and improving publicly accessible tree and sidewalk information. Considerations that require broader city coordination include integrating the tree assessment with the Complete Streets checklist, updating standard plans and specifications, and coordinating with other departments that maintain trees.

SDOT has begun to implement many of the recommendations from this plan. Following the incorporation of public comments, the plan will be referenced as part of the updated Right-of-Way Improvements Manual (ROWIM) in 2015. The concept plan prepared for Madrona will guide near-term sidewalk repairs in the neighborhood, and the Lake city and Rainier Beach concept plans will be implemented as other area projects are implemented. Further SDOT policy direction and budget requests will be developed in 2015.

UFC Comment: Clarify what useful life is and what element it's referring to (is it the tree, or the asphalt?).  
Answer: Primary audience is SDOT staff. They are interested in the expected useful life for asset management purposes. None of the tools were meant to remove a tree. The assumption was to keep the tree and what can be done. This is more of a reactive approach to solve issues. The audience is technical.

UFC comment:

- The two-column section of the document is hard to read on line. Appendix doesn't have cities in alphabetical order.
- Will SDOT work on an operations plan for sidewalks and power poles?  
Answer: The Pedestrian Master Plan and ROWIM are being updated and those would be good documents to address this issue.
- Is there a hotline where a resident can report a sidewalk needing repair? Yes. Residents can use (206) 684-tree or (206) 386-1218

NOTE: Sandra will ask Darren to provide all numbers and will post them on the UFC website.

#### **2014 Annual Report – discussion and possible vote**

Commissioners provided input on the document.

**ACTION: A motion to approve the 2014 Annual Report as amended was made, seconded and approved.**

#### **2015 Work Plan – discussion and possible vote**

Peg will provide more input. Donna and Leif will provide their input to Sandra.

#### **Follow up letter to 2014 letter recipients – discussion and possible vote**

Sandra will make one-on-one calls to staff for follow up.

#### **Public comment**

None

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

Peg mentioned a couple of administrative issues:

- Steps to put a recommendation out: 2-3 meetings before we can put a letter out. When there is need for expedited letter, consider protocol.
- When Commissioners came on board they used to receive a notebook. Now we use the website. Agenda item for January. Walk-through the bylaws. ADD AN AGENDA ITEM FOR 2015.

The Commission thanked Peg for the great job she did as chair and for her participation in the UFC. Peg's second term expires this December.

The interview panel has made a recommendation for Position #4 and is awaiting response from the Mayor's office.

#### **Adjourn**