SEATTLE URBAN FORESTRY COMMISSION

Leif Fixen, Chair • Tom Early, Vice-Chair
Gordon Bradley • Mariska Kecskes • Donna Kostka • Richard Martin • 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

October 7, 2015
Meeting Notes
Seattle Municipal Tower, Room 2750 (27th floor)
700 5th Avenue, Seattle

Attending

Commissioners   Staff
Leif Fixen - chair   Dave Bayard - SCL
Tom Early – vice chair   Sherell Ehlers - SPU
Mariska Kecskes   Michelle Marx - SDOT
Donna Kostka   Sandra Pinto de Bader - OSE
Richard Martin   Andy Sheffer - Parks
Joanna Nelson de Flores   Brent Schmidt - SCL
Jeff Reibman   Mike Schwindeller - Parks
Erik Rundell
Steve Zemke   Guests:
                                       Sarah Reichard – UW Botanic Gardens Director

Absent- Excused
Gordon Bradley   Public
                                       Lance Young

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
Richard (acting chair) called the meeting to order.

Public comment
Lance Young – He confirmed with SCL that the intent is to preserve all trees. There has been confusion
about what's going to be done on the trail. Surrounded communities use clearance of 1-3". SCL has
increased from those guidelines to a minimum of 10-15 ft. Trees are important. There are 800 signatures in
a petition saying that this issue is very important.

Adoption of September 2 and September 9 meeting notes
   **ACTION: A motion to approve the September 2 meeting notes as amended was made, seconded, and
approved.**

   ACTION: A motion to approve the September 9 meeting notes was made, seconded, and approved.

SCL briefing on Interurban Trail – Brent Schmidt (SCL)

Brent Schmidt – Mr. Young has 120 ft of property adjacent to property lines that is currently providing buffer to his property. Line clearance program is pruning distribution system on a four year cycle. Brent provided his background and talked about his very qualified team of certified arborists. SCL is recognized as a TreeLINE USA utility. The utility has a large impact on the urban forest. His group is tasked with managing vegetation over 1,800 miles of distribution lines.

Brent showed an 11ft big leaf maple branch – this was growth gained in a single season. Defining a tree is difficult. There are hedges that can become tree-sized. SCL has agreed with Shoreline to protect significant trees. SCL is concerned about liability issues with their property. Brent referenced the agreement with Shoreline. They maintain the clearance for their four year pruning cycle. Transmission corridors require bigger clearances. The trail is both a Distribution and a Transmission corridor. Line clearance tree trimming can only be done by certified professionals. SCL sent out 300 letters to neighbors in the area and had three responses.

UFC Question: it's confusing to have 10ft clearance at all times. 10ft seems to be drastic pruning. If other utilities in the region don't feel they need to do that type of clearance why does SCL?
Answer: Can't speak to other utilities' practices. SCL recognizes that they need to do periodic pruning. Sometimes it is drastic, because some of those trees haven't been pruned before. Moving forward there can be proactive pruning and won't need to prune as much.

UFC Question: what is the requirement to be certified to do line clearance?
Answer: If new OSHA definition comes into play nobody can touch any tree that is within 10 ft of a power line. This line of work has the highest mortality rate of all occupations. The person doing work needs to be individually certified. SCL has gone the extra mile requiring an ISA certified arborist present at all time in any given crew.

UFC question: is SCL working with all trees vs. trees of a certain size?
Answer: At this point they are working on this with City of Shoreline to come to an understanding. The issue is not one about tree pruning but about tree removal.

UFC question: is SCL removing all vegetation in certain areas?
Answer: No. They are not going to remove all vegetation. Depends of what was there. In some cases there were poplars that grow very fast so it make sense to remove them when they are small. Shoreline has requirement for replacement of significant trees.

UFC question: are people requesting keeping smaller trees and bushes?
Answer: Yes, and we are willing to look at that and accommodate it as long as tall trees are not planted under the power lines.

UFC comment – maybe SCL could provide guidelines for appropriate tree planting. That would help cut down on cost.

Pedestrian Master Plan technical update – Michelle Marx (SDOT)

Michelle Marx – is the project manager in SDOT for Pedestrian Master Plan (PMP).

The PMP update scope of work includes:
- Assess plan progress
- Update data/prioritization
- Update toolbox (including incorporating Neighborhood Greenways, Low Cost sidewalks)
- Establish performance targets
- Develop implementation plan.

The updated walkability toolbox:
- New sidewalks
- Alternative/low-cost sidewalks
- Crossing improvements
- Sidewalk maintenance
- Neighborhood greenways
- Traffic calming
- Speed limit reductions
- No turn on red
- Other, new, innovative treatments (TBD)

PMP policy framework:

Plan vision: Seattle is the most walkable city in the nation

Plan goals:
- Safety: reduce the number and severity of crashes involving pedestrians
- Equity: make Seattle a more walkable city for all through equity in public engagement, service delivery, accessibility, and capital investments.
- Vibrancy: develop a connected pedestrian environment that sustains healthy communities and supports a vibrant economy.
- Health: get more people walking to improve mobility, health, and prevent disease.

Goals for updated prioritization:
- Update outdated data
- Reground methodology with plan goals
- Revise criteria to align with recent SCOT/City initiatives
- Streamline methodology where possible
    o Separate 'signal' from 'noise'
    o Narrow priority project list
    o Emphasize connectivity
    o Ground projects to 'motivating need'

Looking at the safety analysis. The safety goal is to reduce the number and severity of crashes involving pedestrians. Factors involved include:
- Pedestrian collisions – serious injuries and fatalities highly weighted. Data from the last 8 years.

- Arterial classifications – proxy for volume. Majority of severe injuries occur on principal and minor arterials.
- Roadway width – using # of lanes where available, and curb to curb width where number of lanes is not available.
- Signalized pedestrian crossing spacing – capturing both signal-controlled intersection and signal controlled mid-block crossing opportunities.
- Speed – 85th percentile speeds where available and posted speed limit where actual speed is not available.

They will look at infrastructure to aid in crossing the roadway and along the roadway.

Where they are now is asking the question on how to weigh all the factors and the elements within those factors to determine where to invest in pedestrian improvements. They are proposing using a public survey to get feedback on the factors that should guide how the City prioritizes walkability improvements (to inform weighting) and low cost sidewalk concepts and other new toolbox items. Will be releasing the survey in a couple of weeks. They'll release a draft for comment early next year.

UFC question: new toolbox items – do they include tree/sidewalk conflicts?
Answer: they are already incorporating SDOT's tree-sidewalk operations plan

UFC question: adding weight to areas around schools. Kids are a vulnerable community. From a prioritization point of view there are a lot of developer driven projects that have pedestrian infrastructure. Sometimes the project just goes to the property line, would it make sense to invest on completing those projects. How much can we get into traffic calming as part of the safety piece.
Answer: yes. They are evaluating volume and speed they have problematic safety locations starting to emerge in their map.

UFC question: There are areas where there are no sidewalks where it's difficult for people to walk to transit. Recommends working with Seattle school district. Sometimes kids have to walk to school bus pick up locations in areas with no sidewalks. Greenways talk about green transportation but what's missing here is that trees calm traffic and trees encourage walking. Encourage including trees as part of Greenways.

UFC comment: coordinate with SPU to install rain gardens as buffers when SDOT is improving some areas. Vulnerable communities: senior communities sometimes bump against areas that don't comply with ADA guidelines for senior communities.
Answer: revised ROWIM that had requirements that sometimes would have power poles located in the middle of the sidewalk.

UFC – how does the toolbox translate to priority areas?
Answer: locational priorities are established and then look at what tools to apply.

Stormwater Manual update – Sherell Ehlers (SPU)
Sherell Ehlers has talked to the UFC in the past. She already talked about the Code changes. The Manual talks about how to implement the code.

Have a stormwater code and manual to protect life, property, surface waters from harm and meet requirements of state and federal law.

Wanted to revisit thresholds in the code and simplify the manual. The code has been adopted with minimum requirements for projects. Approved by council on September 21, 2015. Will be in effect starting January 2016.

Sherell walked the Commission through the different volumes of the manual:
Volume I – they put all minimum requirements in this volume for ease of use.
Volume 2 – construction stormwater control
Volume 3 – project stormwater control
Volume 4 – source control
Volume 5 – enforcement
Appendices – A – I
More studies on the stormwater value of trees would be helpful. They can't bring the importance of trees up with Ecology without data to back it up. Having the comparison of trees vs. other stormwater retention properties.

Sherell walked through the volumes and mentioned changes that will take place.

Timeline:
Spring 2013: outreach to frequent users
Summer 2013: initial outreach
Fall 2013/Winter 2014: public outreach
Spring 2014: initial drafts available for public comment
Spring/summer 2015: legislative process and formal public review for 2016 Stormwater Code Update
Fall 2015: Director's Rule process and formal public review for 2016 Stormwater Manual Update
Comments due October 18, 2015.
January 2016: stormwater manual and code are scheduled to take effect.

Comp plan recommendation - continues
Move to the next meeting

Arboretum Botanical Garden Committee visit
Andy Scheffer, Mike Schwindeller, and Sara Reichard (UW Bonatin Gardens Director) visited with the UFC.

Public relations issues – how they convey removals to the public will be critical. They have 4 x 8 banners to communicate tree removals. They will add signage in the area of restoration. Will also have a press release on the website. Having interpretation along the trail that talks about canopy in the arboretum would be helpful.

The arboretum has 20,000 collection plants going back to the 1930's. It's an opportunity to get the collective message across to people. Why the arboretum is important (it's a museum) and also say why

canopy cover is important. Clarify the role of the native matrix in this tract of land. Construction process is a two-year process. When they start construction they will place a protection box around trees to be preserved and include the value of each tree. This has helped with the construction contractor assuming responsibility for protecting the trees.

UFC comment: the public relations problem will be the public's perception of the arboretum removing large trees and the impact that it has to the city's canopy cover. Especially when very large, old conifers are being removed. Removing native trees and putting exotic trees doesn't help with native wildlife.

UFC – in order to replace canopy, the project could fund planting of street trees. Also, will there be follow up for tree maintenance (watering) for the replacement trees.
Answer: that's already contracted. They have a good record with tree establishment contracts.

UFC comment- make signs large enough so they can be read by people driving by.
Answer- they can do that and also place more information throughout the arboretum (at visitors center, etc.)

New business and announcements
Steve – the TreePAC interviewed candidates last week. TREEPAC.ORG for link.

Donna – What is next steps for the City of Shoreline and SCL issue? Sandra will send the link to the digital recording for those that arrived late.

Richard – would like to see the impacts of SCL work within city of Seattle boundaries.

The UFC will vote about whether or not to weigh in on issues related to other cities.

Adjourn

Public Input

From: ruthalice@comcast.net [mailto:ruthalice@comcast.net]
Sent: Monday, September 28, 2015 11:25 AM
To: Bagshaw, Sally; O'Brien, Mike; Sawant, Kshama; Harrell, Bruce; Rasmussen, Tom; Godden, Jean; Burgess, Tim; Okamoto, John; Licata, Nick
Cc: Aguirre, Jesús; Pinto de Bader, Sandra; Acosta, Rachel
Subject: Fwd: Thornton Creek Alliance: Beginning with Cheasty, Please do not Repurpose Seattle's Greenspaces

Thornton Creek Alliance
Post Office Box 25690
Seattle, Washington 98165-1190

Dear City Council Members:

Thornton Creek Alliance (TCA) respectfully requests that you continue to withhold the DON funding for the Cheasty bike park and stand by your original ordinance, passed just over a year ago. Based on comments by Parks officials over the past couple of years, we believe Cheasty is just the first of many natural areas that Parks hopes to repurpose in order to give priority to active sports and equipment rather than forest and habitat restoration. TCA, including its NE Seattle Forest Steward members, strongly prefers continuing and augmenting the City's existing policies that restore our forested lands, keeping habitat development and human enjoyment and education as priorities.

We know you have received a lot of information documenting the ways in which our Park Dept. has neglected to abide by the ordinance you unanimously approved, and has abridged necessary environmental and procedural processes. Doesn't this point up the need for more supervision of rather than less?

How much value can there be in a one and a half year evaluation period? What would be the point? Three years is an absolute minimum needed to gain an understanding of how the park would function over time.

On the second page of the Bill Summary you've been given, under 'Other Implications', item 'G', you are told this bike park provides new recreational opportunities for 'residents of Rainier Vista, a Seattle Housing Authority mixed-income community'. Just as when Parks' staff invited these residents to an open house to ask what they wanted to see in Cheasty, here too Parks makes no mention of the opportunities being removed: opportunities to enjoy nature and its beauty, to walk peacefully in the woods, and to join community in educational and restoration programs. The repurposing and slicing up of Cheasty Greenspace cannot be done in the name of social justice.

Our natural areas make up only 1.3% of Seattle's land area. Please heed the city-wide community call to preserve and enhance the remnants of our urban forests for the benefit of future generations. You may not be able to hear them, but they will thank you.
We appreciate your consideration.

Sincerely,

Ruth Williams
President, Thornton Creek Alliance

Thornton Creek Alliance is an all-volunteer grassroots, nonprofit organization of 135 members dedicated to preserving and restoring an ecological balance throughout the Thornton Creek watershed. Our goal is to benefit the watershed by encouraging individuals, groups, schools, businesses, and government to work together in addressing the environmental restoration of the creek system including: water quality, stabilization of water flow, flood prevention, and habitat improvement through education, collaboration, and community involvement.
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