

## SEATTLE URBAN FORESTRY COMMISSION

Leif Fixen, Chair • Tom Early, Vice-Chair

Gordon Bradley • Donna Kostka • Joanna Nelson de Flores • Jeff Reibman • Erik Rundell • Peg Staeheli • 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*

**February 11, 2015**

### **DRAFT Meeting Notes**

City Hall – Floor 7, Norman B. Rice room

600 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Seattle

#### **Attending**

##### Commissioners

Leif Fixen - chair

Tom Early – vice chair

Gordon Bradley

Donna Kostka

Richard Martin (not voting)

Joanna Nelson de Flores

Peg Staeheli

Steve Zemke

##### Staff

Sandra Pinto de Bader - OSE

Jana Dilley - SPU

Katie Gibbons - SDOT

Nolan Rundquist - SDOT

Jon Jainga - Parks

##### Public

Michael Oxman

#### **Absent- Excused**

Jeff Reibman

Erik Rundell

**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**

Leif called the meeting to order.

#### **Chair report**

Introduced Richard Martin as the new appointee to the hydrologist position.

#### **Seattle reLeaf 2014 accomplishments briefing – Jana Dilley, Katie Gibbons (SPU- reLeaf)**

Jana Dilley and Katie Gibbons gave the Commission a briefing on the 2014 accomplishments of the reLeaf program. Jana is the Seattle reLeaf program. Katie manages the Trees for Neighborhoods program and supports the Tree Ambassador.

The program's main goal is to engage Seattle's residents in planting and caring for trees. Focus on policy and planning, outreach, Tree Ambassador project, and Trees for Neighborhoods.

#### **2014 accomplishments:**

- Engaged over 1,000 residents at over 40 events
- Trained 50 new volunteers
- Developed nine new tree walks and held 13 public tree walks
- Distributed 995 trees to 427 homes

- Lead Rainier Beach Urban Forestry outreach and planting
- Supported the Mayor's Summer of Safety initiative
- Hired new permanent staff (Katie Gibbons)
- Maintained website, public email, accounts, and phone line to answer public question.

#### Tree Ambassador

##### Recruitment and volunteer support

- 50 new tree ambassadors
- Training in three project tracks
  - o Tree walks
  - o Landscape renewal
  - o Street tree stewardship
- Continuing education trainings (tree identification, tree biology, and landscape design)

##### 35 public events in 2014:

- 13 tree walks (9 of them new)
- Five landscape renewal work parties
- Five street tree work parties
- Seven volunteer trainings
- Two planting events

UFC question/comment: do you work with Audubon on populating the tree map?

Answer: we encourage volunteers to get in touch with Audubon if they want to participate on populating the map.

Greening Rainier Beach: this year we worked on coordinating our urban forestry work targeting a neighborhood. It's a new model that the Urban Forest Interdepartmental Team adopted in 2014.

Coordinated outreach with SCL, SDOT, OSE, and Parks.

- Arbor Day celebration and planting
- Four street tree care work parties (two in coordination with Summer of Safety work)
- City Light tree planting
- Rainier Beach Tree Walk
- Park(ing) Day

UFC question/comment: have you been able to engage the School District?

Answer: most projects take place in the summer which is when school is out.

#### Trees for Neighborhoods

- Planted 995 trees with 427 residents
  - o 45% in South Seattle
- Trained all participants in proper planting and care
- 80% of participants reported learning something new about planting
- Provide two pruning workshops and watering reminders to past participants.
- Implemented planting assistance help for elderly and disabled residents.
- Conducted pre/post planting workshop survey to measure participant's knowledge
- Filmed planting and care video to make trainings more accessible.

#### 2009-2014 plantings:

- 5,200 trees with over 2,100 residents
- Explore past plantings using interactive map at:  
<http://www.seattle.gov/trees/treesforneighborhoods.htm>

#### 2015 Tree Ambassador Work Plan:

- Recruit and train new Tree Ambassadors
- Support Tree Ambassador projects
- New interactive landscape map
- Hold monthly Tree Walks in targeted neighborhoods
- Provide continuing education opportunities (e.g. Urban Forestry 101 and Tree identification)

UFC question/comment: what is Urban Forestry 101 – this was a training session for Tree Ambassadors and some forest Stewards where we shared information about urban forestry as a field and what’s happening at the regional and national levels.

#### 2015 Trees for Neighborhoods Work Plan:

- Plant 1,000 trees with 400 residents
- Focus on site selection and right tree, right place. Will put together site selection workshops.
- Provide planting assistance to elderly and disabled participants
- Conduct field evaluation of trees planted from 2009-2012

#### Policy, Planning, and Outreach

- Support ID goals and projects
- Respond to requests from Mayor, Council, and Urban Forestry Commission.
- Maintain website and contact portals
- Lead Arbor Day and Park(ing) Day events
- Support Mayor’s Summer of Safety Initiative
- Focus on service equity

The South Park tree walk will take place on February 21, from 10:00 – 12:00 p.m. Will meet in front of South Park Neighborhood Center (8201 10<sup>th</sup> Ave S).

UFC question/comment: is there coordination between tree walks and schools encouraging students to participate?

Answer: tree walks are put together by volunteers. We encourage them to reach out to their community and get them involved. We would like to take on working with schools. It’s a big time commitment to do it right.

UFC question/comment: are tree walks done more than once? It’s important to make connections around the city. Maybe make an effort to reach out to school teachers to use the tree walks as an activity for their class.

Answer: all tree walks are available on line. They can be self-guided. We encourage volunteer to repeat them. They have four repeat walks this year.

UFC question/comment: has there been any attempts to do on-campus initiatives to increase canopy?

Answer: it comes back to having staff time resources. We are always looking into making those connections. It hasn’t been the top priority at this time.

UFC question/comment: why not involve more volunteers around planting?

Answer: we do have planting events geared for volunteers. The size the trees being planted by SDOT is more appropriate for crews. Pruning would be worth improving. Mulching is easy to fix, pruning requires more oversight and training. They are starting with the low hanging fruit.

UFC question/comment: What are next steps for the program? What’s the next limiting factor?

Answer: this year is to develop a 5-year strategic plan for reLeaf and where we want to go. There is no shortage of places where we can work or good ideas, it all takes staff time and resources.

UFC question/comment: has there been any attempt to reach out to nurseries to help educate people?

Answer: haven't worked directly with nurseries at this point because we are giving out for free what they are trying to sell. Have worked with City People's and have collaborated on training sessions.

UFC question/comment: Is there anything happening on Earth Day?

Answer: They did host an Earth-Day themed street tree maintenance in 2014. The problem is that Earth Day is in April and it's not a good idea to plant trees in Seattle then. We have landscape renewal projects.

UFC question/comment: do you have information on invasive species?

Answer: we have a nice brochure on ivy.

UFC question/comment: do you have a sense of how much the program contributes to the UFSP canopy cover goals.

Answer: we don't have that data but would love to be able to assess the impact. With this year's tree evaluation they will get some of that data.

### **Trees and solar – State legislation –Nolan Rundquist (SDOT)**

SDOT is working on a solar policy. They are proposing existing trees to be protected. If solar was there before the tree then consider doing an under-planting of the ROW to accommodate solar. Once a tree reaches 10 ft in height if solar came in the tree would be exempt. The proposed bill wouldn't preclude planting trees as long as they don't shade more than 10% of the array. It would affect canopy if the location could accommodate a large tree, if the solar came before, then it would preclude a large tree to be planted in the future. The canopy impact if for future trees and it's hard to tell the degree of the impact.

UFC question/comment: the SDOT policy in response to this Senate Bill?

Answer: no, we worked on this before this bill.

UFC question/comment: You are talking about solar on buildings. What about solar cars?

Answer: We have not considered that but there are people that also want more sun access for their property.

UFC question/comment: Leif read through this and chatted with people. What worries him is that this is starting to regulate trees in people's back yards. IF a neighbor puts a solar array and I want to screen it by planting trees, then I'm not able to plant trees. This is regulating trees on the opposite direction of what we want to do.

Answer: the SDOT proposal didn't consider private trees. But maybe a Green Factor required tree, even though is not pre-existing, could be considered protected.

Is the UFC interested in writing a letter? This bill is coming up in the next couple of weeks. It depends on how far it's going to go. A concern from the UFC is that this would make more difficult for a private property ordinance to pass. It might be good to reach out individually. Check on the status of the bill to see if there is a hearing scheduled.

**ACTION: A motion to approve a prescribed letter by Tom Early to City Council and the Mayor bringing attention to this issue was made, seconded and approved.**

The letter would be sent if the Senate Bill moves forward to the Executive Action out of committee.

### **GSP 10-year Strategic Plan Update – Jon Jainga (Parks)**

Jon is the supervisor for natural area unit of the Green Seattle Partnership. With the citizens' approval of the Metropolitan Parks District (MPD) and the Commission's support we now have adequate funding to restore 2,500 acres of forested parklands by 2025.

2015 is the ramp up year before the Metropolitan Parks District (MPD) funding kicks in in 2016. City Council approved a \$1M loan to Parks ahead of the funding from MPD to come in.

This year the team will work on the 10[year update of the GSP Strategic Plan. This is the midpoint of the program and update will help us evaluate the program and help plan for the next 10 years.

The idea is to have the draft ready to share at the Shareholder's meeting in September and for the Parks Board and the Urban Forestry Commission to provide input in October.

UFC comment/question: is this plan update going to address the supplemental use guidelines? Of those 2,500 acres to be restored, where in the classification do these acres fall into? It's confusing to hear talk about forested parklands and we don't know what they are referring to.

UFC comment/question: Vegetation Management Plans for these areas need to be considered as well. For example, some locations are too steep for volunteers to work on.

Answer: The original plan took into consideration (and the MPD takes into consideration) the cost that working on steep slope would be for crews to do the work instead of volunteers.

UFC comment/question: How will the UFC be involved in the process?

Answer: there will be events and the UFC will be invited to participate.

### **Parks Supplemental Use Guidelines for Natural Areas and Greenbelts – UFC participation**

Tom to participate in the 2/26 Parks Board meeting to share with them the 2014 Annual report and the 2015 work plan. Sandra will staff him and will send an email to Commissioners to see if someone else can attend. Probably Steve.

Donna to participate in focus group, Steve is also available.

Sandra to re-send the Mini-summit information.

### **Public comment**

Michael Oxman - He wanted to comment on the UF 101 held on Saturday at Camp Long for Forest Stewards and Tree Ambassadors. Panel discussion with staff from SPU, SDOT, SCL, but the Parks person couldn't make it and there was no one from DPD. Different efforts to revise urban forestry related issues, such as the update of the Comp Plan's Environment Element. He has a feeling that there is no coordination to this approach.

When he requested information from Parks staff he was getting the brush off. He requested a work order from the tree crew that worked at Kubota Gardens (where he volunteers). He was told that he would have to file a public disclosure request.

Action: Sandra will send logistics for the tour and warn people that it's a muddy place and to dress accordingly. Michael Yadrick will be guiding the tour.

## **New business and announcements**

None

## **Adjourn**

## **Public input**

**From:** Mark Holland [mailto:solarhound@gmail.com]

**Sent:** Saturday, February 07, 2015 1:59 PM

**To:** Rasmussen, Tom

**Cc:** CheastyPat; Williams, Christopher; LEG\_CouncilMembers; Murray, Edward; Pinto\_de\_Bader, Sandra; Johnson, Sharon; Shiosaki, Michael; Critchfield, Doug; Kathy Colombo; David and Connie Bown(; Sarah Welch; Darrell Howe; Mira Latoszek; Jim Anderson; donnah@nymbledesign.com; Pence, Roger; George.Robertson@consultgra.com; VanArcken, Julie; jenstewfam@comcast.net; Cameron Justam; Rosie Selle; Derryl Durden; barber-osa@comcast.net; Acosta, Rachel; Robert Hinrix; Ed Newbold

**Subject:** CHEASTY PROJECT ADVISORY TEAM (PAT) - OFF TRACK

Council Member Rasmussen,

This letter is in response to your recent blog post about the Cheasty green space. <http://rasmussen.seattle.gov/2015/02/04/%EF%BB%BFupdate-on-the-cheasty-mountain-bikepedestrian-trail-pilot-project/comment-page-1/#comment-10643>

Thank you for your balanced analysis of the Cheasty issue.

Here are few issues of concern to myself and others opposed to the bike park component of the Cheasty trail plan.

### **PARKS DEPT. POLICY WAIVERS**

You are correct to point out that the problems associated with the Cheasty debacle is about the Parks Department suspending multiple policies all at once to get the bike park component of the Cheasty trail plan built to their liking.

Policies are put in place so we the people can have reasonable expectations regarding government actions. Good policies build trust in government when they are followed by conscientious public servants.

When a public servant uses the word "pilot project" to chuck multiple long standing policies out the door, the opposite of trust occurs.

### **CURRENT DESIGN OUT OF COMPLIANCE**

The point of the Cheasty PAT was to design a trail plan that was NOT like the infamous Beacon Bike Park plan. The current design is exactly like the original concept plan, except without cross trails - yet. The current plan is not a multi-use trail as described by the city council in council bill 118151.

Here is a link to the council bill. <http://clerk.seattle.gov/~scri...> Here is the language of the bill.

Council Bill Number: 118151 Ordinance Number: 124546

"Section 5. Before approving a final plan for the Cheasty Greenspace Trails and Bike Park, which is proposed as a three- year pilot project, the Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) shall complete a full public process and technical review of the proposed design for the **a multi-use bike and pedestrian perimeter trail,**

including review of engineering, environmental, design, and community factors, make necessary revisions to the proposed design, and report to the City Council's Parks, Seattle Center, Libraries and Gender Pay Equity (PSCLGPE) Committee. The report shall include a summary of the public engagement process and a plan outlining the method and criteria for evaluation of the pilot project."

A multi use trail is what every member of the PAT signed up for, and what the public expected at the start of the PAT process. The Parks Department decided a multi use trail could not be done so they separated the trails and gave the bulk to mountain bikers. Most trails will need "no pedestrian" signage to keep people off the bike tracks.

The current design is not what anyone signed up for - except mountain bikers. Pedestrians keep getting squeezed out with every new version of the plan. How about a design for pedestrians only?

The Parks Department refers to their current design as the "one alternative". "One alternative" is an oxymoron. The word "alternative" suggests there is at least one other option. Where is it?

The other choice is a passive use, low impact pedestrian only option that finds a suitable location for the high impact, active recreation bike park component of the Cheasty trail plan.

#### BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES (BMP)

Regarding policies not followed in Cheasty Greenspace, please read the following document, The Seattle Parks Departments "Best Management Practices" manual for natural areas.

<http://www.seattle.gov/parks/projects/BMP/chapter5.pdf>

Check pages 5-27 and 5-28.

On 5-27 you will see that community enthusiasm for restoration activities unfortunately coincides with nesting season for birds and other creatures.

On 5-28 the chart shows best management practices indicates NO restoration should occur during nesting season.

This is a fatal flaw in the volunteer based forest restoration system.

Throughout last years nesting season in Cheasty green space, the Parks department led restoration in Cheasty often with more than 100 volunteers. This is an unusually high number of participants for a restoration project. Is the impact also higher than with a typical number of volunteers? I assume enthusiasm for mountain biking also coincides with nesting season. Bike Works and the Evergreen Mountain Biking Alliance (EMBA) already announced they plan to hold classes and work shops in Cheasty. At Duthie Hill in Issaquah, a bike park often compared to Cheasty by mountain bikers, There are often 500 people a day tearing through the park. The difference? Duthie is a 135 acre park in a 3000 acre wilderness. If creatures are disturbed by mountain bikers, they can go into other parts of the forest. Cheasty Greenspace is a 57 acre urban forest surrounded by a dense urban environment. If creatures are disturbed by mountain bikers in Cheasty, there will be no where else for them to go - but away.

What effect will that intensity of activity have on the ecosystem of the Cheasty forest?

#### A COMPLETE LIST OF ALL WAIVED POLICIES

Maybe we need a complete list from the Parks Department of exactly how many policies they waived throughout the Cheasty saga.

There is the BMP regarding restoration activities, public involvement policies regarding process, exemption from the bicycle use policy, there may be violations of policies regarding active use in passive use only designated natural areas etc.. the list goes on.

The list of policies waived by the Parks Department for the Cheasty bike park component should then be posted on the Cheasty PAT website along with all the other relevant documents.

[http://www.seattle.gov/parks/projects/cheasty/gs\\_bike\\_trail.htm](http://www.seattle.gov/parks/projects/cheasty/gs_bike_trail.htm)

It would be nice to know what we are missing.

#### DENSITY IS NO EXCUSE FOR DEVELOPING THE LAST 14% OF URBAN FORESTS IN SEATTLE

Mountain bikers insist increasing density means we must open up these few (14% of all park land) remaining natural areas to active sport facilities like mountain biking; and who knows what other active sports interests are waiting in the wings?

I say that increasing density is the very reason we must double down on Seattle's long standing cultural traditions of putting nature first.

ENVIRONMENTAL REGRESSION is not what Seattle needs right now.

We need an urban forest management agency (Department of Forestry?) to take control of the few remaining natural areas left in Seattle. At 14% ( around 830 acres) Seattle is near the bottom of the list among American cities for percentage of natural spaces to total park acreage.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROGRESSION is what Seattle needs right now, and the bike park component of the Cheasty trail plan is headed in the wrong direction.

We need to turn the that plan around.

Thank you,

Mark Holland  
2218 14th ave. S.  
Seattle, WA. 98144