

SEATTLE URBAN FORESTRY COMMISSION

Weston Brinkley (Position #3 – University), Chair • Joanna Nelson de Flores (Position #7 – NGO), Vice-Chair
Steve Zemke (Position #1 – Wildlife Biologist) • Sandra Whiting (Position #2 – Urban Ecologist)
Sarah Rehder (Position #4 – Hydrologist) • Stuart Niven (Position #5 – Arborist – ISA)
Michael Walton (Position #6 – Landscape Architect – ISA) • Andrew Zellers (Position #8 – Development)
Craig Johnson (Position #9 – Economist) • Bonnie Lei (Position #10 – Get Engaged)
Whit Bouton (Position #11 – Environmental Justice) • Jessica Jones (Position #12 – Public Health)
Shari Selch (Position #13 – Community/Neighborhood)

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

November 14, 2018

Meeting Notes

Seattle Municipal Tower, Room 2750 (27th floor)
700 5th Avenue, Seattle

Attending

Commissioners

Weston Brinkley – chair
Joanna Nelson de Flores – vice-chair
Craig Johnson
Jessica Jones
Bonnie Lei (via phone)
Sarah Rehder
Michael Walton
Sandra Whiting
Steve Zemke

Staff

Sandra Pinto de Bader - OSE
Vera Giampietro - OPCD

Guests

None

Public

None

Absent- Excused

Whit Bouton
Stuart Niven
Shari Selch
Andrew Zellers

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

Weston called the meeting to order.

Public comment

None

Green Factor Director's Rule update – Vera Giampietro (OPCD)

Vera briefed the UFC on the Green Factor's Director's Rule update back in September. The UFC provided input and now Vera would like to update the UFC on the work.

Green Factor is the City's landscaping requirements for new development. It was first adopted in 2006 and updated in 2010 to include more zones. The Director's Rule was last updated in 2015.

Stated benefits for Green Factor:

- Improves the look and feel of a neighborhood
- Reduces stormwater runoff
- Cools cities during heat waves
- Provides habitat for birds and beneficial insects
- Supports adjacent businesses
- Decreases crime

Qualifying landscape elements:

- Trees
- Shrubs and other low plantings
- Groundcovers
- Vegetated walls
- Green walls
- Structural soils

What materials guide designers:

- Briefed the UFC in September 2018, legislation was forwarded to Council on November 2017.
 - o Score sheet
 - o Seattle Municipal Code update
- New changes proposed (current briefing)
 - o Worksheet
 - o Director's rule (last updated in 2012)

Why is the City updating Green Factor?

- Mandatory Housing Affordability (MHA) efforts
- Community feedback
- City and designer identified issues with the Director's Rule

What are we trying to achieve?

- Improve aesthetic quality of landscape elements
- Improve survivability of landscape plantings
- Mitigate experience of building height and bulk
- Transition to the pedestrian scale
- Improve landscape performance
- Increase overall health, wellbeing, and livability benefits associated with nature contact.

What changes are proposed?

- Clarify irrigation requirements
- Apply maintenance requirement for longer duration
- Increase and clarify soil requirements for trees
- Restrict use of vegetated walls only to places that can't accommodate other options
- Update and clarify vegetated wall requirements
- Indicate responsibility for landscaping in the ROW
- Align with tree and plant lists used elsewhere in the City (SPU, SDOT)
- Ensure consistency with Stormwater Code and ROW Improvements Manual
- Improve user experience for designers

Next steps:

- Circulating draft update with SDCI, OSE, SDOT, and SPU staff

- Testing updates with landscape designers and UFC
- Requires 21-day comment period
- Goal is to become effective concurrent with MHA ordinance
- Asked the UFC for technical input on soil volume and trees sizes.

For more details on the conversation, including the Q&A portion of the presentation, please listen to the digital recording of the meeting at: <http://www.seattle.gov/urbanforestrycommission/meetingdocs.htm>

Tree regulations letter responding to Central Staff questions – continues
Commissioners discussed the revised draft letter.

ACTION: A motion to approve the letter as edited was made, seconded, and approved.

Letter adopted with Sandra Whiting abstaining.

2019 Work Plan – initial discussion

Move to next meeting.

Public comment

None

New Business

None

Adjourn

Public input

From: Lance Young <lance_young@yahoo.com>

Sent: Wednesday, November 14, 2018 2:34 PM

To: Pinto de Bader, Sandra <Sandra.Pinto_de_Bader@Seattle.gov>

Subject: Seattle Tree Code Draft, continuing work

Hi Sandra

Sorry for getting this in so late before today's meeting but I will not be able to attend and wanted to make a few comments

Lance

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To: Urban Forestry Commission, c/o sandra.pinto_de_bader@seattle.gov

Subject: Seattle Tree Code Draft, continuing work

First let me thank all of you for your continued work to help come up with a strong effective workable and understandable tree code for Seattle. Times have changed since the first tree codes where written. We now have eminent environmental concerns form global warming, in city heat island effects, a lack of wildlife habitat and near continuous metropolitan area in the Puget Sound region. Things have changed since thirty years ago so our tree code needs to be updated to keep up with the urgent environmental need of our region.

I have had a chance to read through your most recent draft letter with recommendations for the city council sub-committee and want to commend the suggestions made in it. To name just a few in particular:

1. The recommendation that a preamble be added to the bill to describe the goals of the bill and the value of the trees protected by it. This is an important part of interpreting the code into the future.
2. On the second page paragraph starting with "The tree code proposal should modify the existing definition of exceptional trees..." This section does a good job of defining the two categories of protection, significant and exceptional, and integrating the most important aspects of exceptional trees into the second
3. Page three paragraph starting with "A minor tree removal and replacement permit should be..." clarifies the need for a minor tree removal permit to be simple and inexpensive to encourage participation in the program, and advocates streamline administration and issuance for home owners. A few additions that might be considered:
 1. I do not believe that the current bill requires sufficient posting of minor permits. For simplicity all permits should be posted (and yellow ribbon around removal trees) for at least two weeks, and hopefully be available online by region/neighborhood.
 2. The current code also exempts several city agencies from the oversight system. The Department of Transportation has their own system of preservation requirements, but Parks and City Light should not be excluded from oversight, which can provide a second set of eyes looking at any developments or significant tree removals on public property, just as we are trying to prevent these removals on private property.

Thank you for your consideration
Lance Young
Interurban Trail Tree Preservation Society