



SEATTLE URBAN FORESTRY COMMISSION

Weston Brinkley (Position #3 – University), Chair
Julia Michalak (Position #1 – Wildlife Biologist), Vice-chair
Elby Jones (Position #2 – Urban Ecologist - ISA) • **Stuart Niven** (Position #5 – Arborist – ISA)
Michael Walton (Position #6 – Landscape Architect – ISA) • **Joshua Morris** (Position #7 – NGO)
David Moehring (Position # 8 – Development) • **Blake Voorhees** (Position # 9 – Realtor)
Jessica Hernandez (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

Meeting notes

December 8, 2021, 3:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.
Via Webex call
(206) 207-1700
Meeting number: 2488 743 9350
Meeting password: 1234

In-person meeting are not being held at this time due to the pandemic. Meeting participation is limited to access by joining the meeting through a computer or telephone conference line.

Attending

Commissioners

Weston Brinkley - Chair
Julia Michalak - Vice Chair
David Moehring
Josh Morris
Stuart Niven
Michael Walton
Shari Selch

Staff

Patti Bakker – OSE

Guests

Public

Steve Zemke
Michael Oxman

Absent- Excused

Blake Voorhees
Elby Jones
Jessica Hernandez
Jessica Jones

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 and offered a land acknowledgement.

Public comment:

Steve Zemke – regarding the tree protection update briefing provided to Council today, he is disappointed in direction being taken and the reduced number of proposals being considered, and also believes the proposals are based on flawed input not statistically valid. TreePAC’s outreach included more statistically valid info; there is info on that on their website. Steve also suggested OPCD respond to the amount of info that they will put into the Comprehensive Plan on tree resilience and tree equity.

Michael Oxman also discussed today’s tree protection updates briefing to Council, expressing concern about the timing of the draft coming out in relation to UFC input, and the content of the proposals as discussed in the Council briefing.

Chair, Committees, and Coordinator report:

Sharon Lerman from OSE reported for Patti on a couple of items:

- Elby and Michael have both indicated that they need to step down from their positions. As noted recently, recruitment for these positions is underway. Michael offered to continue through the end of the year, and Elby indicated they can try to attend when available while a replacement is being recruited. We thank them both for their service on the Commission and to the City. Michael was present at the meeting and offered some words as this is his last meeting. He noted his appreciation for the opportunity to serve on the Commission, and recommended to the group to keep being the squeaky wheel communicating to the Mayor and City Council the importance of trees and the issues important in their protection. The world is moving fast, and much can be lost if not moving along with it.
- As noted in recent meetings, the Commission desires to prepare a letter welcoming in the new Mayor and setting the stage for a productive relationship with the new administration. We can add that to January agendas; wanted to note it here in case a Commissioner(s) wants to volunteer to begin drafting that. Josh offered to draft a letter; Weston noted that there have been at least two Mayor letter that can be used as templates.

Weston mentioned the special session planned for next Wednesday to continue discussion on tree protection updates.

Chair and Vice-Chair Elections

As discussed last week, there were no Commissioners able to take on the Chair role. The concept of altering the leadership model, so that 2-3 Commissioners operate as Co-Chairs rather than having a Chair and Vice-Chair, was discussed last week. Weston checked in with the three Vice-Chair nominees to verify their interest in serving in a Co-Chair role; all three confirmed this. Discussion among Commissioners included support for this concept and none expressing concern.

This would require a change to the bylaws. A motion was made and seconded to amend the bylaws to allow this structure, so that alternative to a Chair and Vice-Chair structure, the Commission may opt to elect up to three Co-Chairs to serve for one year and share responsibility of Commission leadership. This motion

Action: The motion to amend the bylaws as discussed was approved.

The Commission then voted on the Co-Chair nominees, with Joshua, Julia and Shari being confirmed.

Action: the Commission elected Joshua Morris, Julia Michalak and Shari Selch as Co-Chairs

Seattle Comprehensive Plan update – OPCD presentation

Aja Hazelhoff and Patrice Carroll from OPCD provided this briefing. Aja noted that this process is just getting started and they wanted to come update the UFC and map out how this group can be involved in the process. Aja outlined what the plan is, that this is the start of the next 8-year update, and the core values that are proposed initially and will be updated as necessary as the process consults with boards and the community.

The Plan is a strategy for housing and job growth, both of which are expected to be substantial. Existing strategy since the 1990s, centered around urban centers and villages. The update will explore if and how that should be changed. New ideas potentially to be explored include the concept of “15-minute” neighborhoods and growth centered on transit.

Many city actions are guided by this Plan. In addition to housing and jobs/economy, actions covered include those around transportation, environmental justice/climate change, parks/open space and livability.

This plan update will be unique due to many factors, including the pandemic, the national reckoning with systemic racism, impacts of climate change, the persistent housing crisis and the expected high rate of population growth.

Community engagement will focus on equitable engagement value and effective communication. They will focus on types of engagement that center co-creation, and aim to have the processes be responsive and transparent.

Aja outlined the engagement phases of the project timeline. This will start with sessions focused on listening and learning, then will begin to receive concepts to include in the Plan, followed by reviewing and confirming Plan content, and Plan adoption and implementation.

Questions from Commissioners included how locations of urban villages are determined. Patrice covered how those were identified initially and how determination will change in this update. The 2016 canopy cover goals are included in the current Plan, as referred to in many parts of the Plan. Climate goals identified by OSE as well as the County and the State will be incorporated and will be focus areas for the Plan. This is very much an interdepartmental update effort. The Commission has talked about the need for a comprehensive plan for tree planting and effecting canopy cover in the city; can that be incorporated into the Plan? That level of specificity is difficult to incorporate, but we can potentially look at policies that can help and include a citywide map that highlights areas needing focus. It is possible and it will be important to balance need for housing and tree canopy. The updated canopy cover assessment being worked on now will help inform this. We don't yet have an urban biodiversity plan for the city, but that is something to think about.

David and Stuart offered to work on a follow-up letter to OPCD on initial input.

Ordinance 123052

Weston outlined the issues on this. The Commission would like the City Attorney to weigh in on these process questions that have been discussed, so that the Commission can focus on the specific technical work they are experts in. Weston walked through the current version of a draft letter to the City Attorney's Office regarding the UFC's enabling legislation, the main question being the UFC having the ability to weigh in on policy changes in a timely manner, and then the consequences of when this does not happen. Commissioners discussed and edited the letter.

Action: A motion to adopt the letter as amended was made, seconded and approved.

Tree protections update recommendations

David outlined the letter drafted in response to SDCI's presentation from last week on the tree protection updates. The letter describes the understanding of the process and the proposals being considered. It also

lists additional documentation the Commission would like to see, and offers preliminary feedback on the proposals. The recommendations include items that have been in the UFC's prior recommendations that have not yet been seen in the proposals described. Commissioners discussed and edited the letter.

Action: A motion to adopt the letter as amended was made, seconded and approved.

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Public comment:

Steve Zemke suggested getting drafts of materials out sooner for earlier review. He also urges looking at the draft UFC tree ordinance to see what issues are not covered in the current proposal. The current proposal is pared down and doesn't include a permit system. It also doesn't include the limit of two non-exceptional trees to be removed in three years, and the exceptional tree replacement requirements are inadequate.

Michael Oxman appreciated the presentation on the Comprehensive Plan, and discussed historic tree canopy goals in previous plans. There was a natural capital assessment requested by Council in 2015 but not funded. The UFC should have committees formed by the Chair and members of the public.

Adjourn: The meeting was adjourned at 5:02 PM.

Meeting Chat:

from Stuart Niven to everyone: 2:59 PM

Hi Weston, I am still having trouble with my mic.....trying to fix it as we prepare for the meeting! (In case you hear muting and un muting)

from Stuart Niven to everyone: 3:04 PM

Here but still cannot make sound at your end!

from Stuart Niven to everyone: 3:08 PM

As I cannot seem to get the microphone to function, I will either have to type my questions and comments here and/or try calling in from my mobile. Sorry about this but such is the life of a luddite.

from Stuart Niven to everyone: 3:13 PM

Is streaming this meeting live on Facebook allowed? I certainly do not agree to this.

from Weston to everyone: 3:13 PM

<http://seattle.legistar.com/View.ashx?M=F&ID=10330976&GUID=5AE8DCBB-0BEC-42E7-A252-E489B814A890>

from Lerman, Sharon to everyone: 3:15 PM

I'm not aware of the rules regarding live streaming on facebook. I can look into this for future meetings.

from Stuart Niven to everyone: 3:18 PM

Thank you Sharon, while I understand the meetings are public to anyone interesting in attending and/or watching/ listening to live or after the fact, I do not agree to what i see as an invasion on privacy when a member of the public records the meeting and streams it live without seeking the permission of the participants. Mr Oxman has done this before in other public meetings beyond the City and this has not been well received. I will contact him directly and ask him to stop recording until we know what is allowed and/or accepted by the members of the UFC.

from David Moehring Pos 8 to everyone: 3:19 PM

Thank you, Michael, for your astute comments and your time as a Commissioner! Keep us informed!

from Joshua Morris to everyone: 3:19 PM

Thank you, Micheal and Elby! :)

from Julia Michalak to everyone: 3:20 PM

Yes, thank you Michael and Elby!

from Stuart Niven to everyone: 3:23 PM

Thank you Elby and Michael, your input will be missed. Good luck for the future and hopefully we will cross paths again somewhere?!

from Julia Michalak to everyone: 3:25 PM

Thank you for that David

from Joshua Morris to everyone: 3:25 PM

Thanks, David, will take you up on that!

from Steve Zemke to everyone: 3:26 PM

suggest amend to have 2 or 3 co-chairs

from Stuart Niven to everyone: 3:28 PM

Aye

from Steve Zemke to everyone: 3:29 PM

suggest you vote

from Stuart Niven to everyone: 3:50 PM

Are urban centers and villages planned or do they evolve randomly? That is to say, were the areas of the City classified as an 'urban center / village' that exist currently planned by the City or have they simply been designated due to their relative density and access to transit etc? I am seeing increasing numbers of areas around the City where increased density is taking place and likely will result in the location becoming what is classified as an urban village but likely is not evolving in such a way that the City is aware of them. I have asked OPCD about this before and the response suggested that the placement of urban centers/ villages is not something that is planned necessarily, which if true is deeply concerning. Do OPCD and SDCI work together proactively to create a plan for where density makes sense to exist, or are these departments working reactively based on where density is evolving 'naturally'?

from Stuart Niven to everyone: 3:56 PM

Thank you Patrice, this helps me understand the situation.

from David Moehring Pos 8 to everyone: 3:56 PM

May we reference the 2016 Seattle Tree Canopy Assessment?

from Stuart Niven to everyone: 3:57 PM

If "climate change and adaption" is at the forefront of the plan, will OPCD be actively working with other City departments to ensure that 'climate resilience' is considered through proactively supporting the protection of existing trees and pushing for the planting of many many many more trees?

from Steve Zemke to everyone: 3:59 PM

HB 1099 would add a climate resilience element to Comprehensive Plan. Will be considered again in Jan session of legislature.

from Lerman, Sharon to everyone: 3:59 PM

Ah, I had thought your question was to Patrice. I'll try to pull it up now.

from Steve Zemke to everyone: 4:05 PM

Trees create healthy communities in many ways.

from Stuart Niven to everyone: 4:09 PM

Thank you David, great comments.

from David Moehring Pos 8 to everyone: 4:12 PM

Just for reference ... pages 6 and 7 on tree equity and tree canopy growth objectives by land-use management unit is at
<http://www.seattle.gov/Documents/Departments/Trees/Mangement/Canopy/Seattle2016CCAFinalReportFINAL.pdf>

from David Moehring Pos 8 to everyone: 4:13 PM

Thank you Aja and Carroll!

from Joshua Morris to everyone: 4:13 PM

Thank you!

from Joshua Morris to everyone: 4:14 PM

Yes please, would love to be added to an email list.

from Stuart Niven to everyone: 4:14 PM

Thanks Weston, trees are the easiest, best and cheapest organisms to help manage pollution as well as many more ecological and human health benefits. It will be devastating to the liveability of Seattle if we opt for technological development to deal with climate related problems when we have been gifted with one solution that is already in place and simply needs to be enhanced through a sensible approach to the growth of the City.

from Julia Michalak to everyone: 4:14 PM

Agreed. Thank you both

from Stuart Niven to everyone: 4:15 PM

Happy to do so

from Stuart Niven to everyone: 4:15 PM

we can 'co-write'

from David Moehring Pos 8 to everyone: 4:15 PM

Thank you Stuart!

from Stuart Niven to everyone: 4:22 PM

I also like the changes and it clearly defines the reasons we are asking the questions we are asking.

from Stuart Niven to everyone: 4:24 PM

Great point David. According to my friend and colleague who served on the Portland UFC for 6 years as the arborist, he claims there was a representative from the city Attorney's office at every UFC meeting.

from Steve Zemke to everyone: 4:24 PM

Suggest you also cc copy to incoming Mayor. That could also affect how city departments respond to UFC.

from Steve Zemke to everyone: 4:26 PM

New city attorney coming in so if you want Pete Holmes to respond suggest respond before end of the year.

from Steve Zemke to everyone: 4:28 PM

Torgelson said today there would be draft language and SEPA analysis by end of year. He responded to question by Chair Strauss.

from Steve Zemke to everyone: 4:33 PM

But you shouldn't not keep pressing for transparency. Maybe Harrell be be more responsive in his direction to Department cooperation in working with UFC

from Stuart Niven to everyone: 4:33 PM

aye

from Steve Zemke to everyone: 4:40 PM

Seemed to back away from tree permits for significant trees removal today in Land Use and Neighborhoods Committee

from Stuart Niven to everyone: 4:41 PM

I am sorry but I have not yet had the time to listen to all of the presentation given last week and would like to be able to know more about the details provided before agreeing to adopt this letter, so hope that we can discuss it today then vote to adopt at the first meeting next month? The details are incredibly important and as I was one of the few arborists present in the listening session and thus one of only 29 lucky people to attend the outreach sessions, I want to cross reference my own experience with the summary report that Chanda Emery was using to form her presentation last week.

from Stuart Niven to everyone: 4:42 PM

(Hope this makes sense?)

from David Moehring Pos 8 to everyone: 4:43 PM

Or our meeting added for next week?

from Steve Zemke to everyone: 4:45 PM

Should probably maybe say single family aka neighborhood residential

from Stuart Niven to everyone: 4:46 PM

If ok with the rest of the group?

from Stuart Niven to everyone: 4:47 PM

you're the boss.....(not for much longer!)

from Stuart Niven to everyone: 4:47 PM

I can always put something together as an addendum later?

from Stuart Niven to everyone: 4:47 PM

if needs be

from Stuart Niven to everyone: 4:50 PM

Sounds fine, thank

from Stuart Niven to everyone: 4:50 PM

s

from Stuart Niven to everyone: 4:50 PM

and makes sense

from Steve Zemke to everyone: 4:50 PM

Agree that it is draft to be finalized next week works

from Steve Zemke to everyone: 4:52 PM

Suggest people review draft UFC Ordinance before next week to check issues missing.

from David Moehring Pos 8 to everyone: 4:53 PM

will do

from Stuart Niven to everyone: 4:53 PM

Aye

from Stuart Niven to everyone: 5:00 PM

Thank you all and especially to Sharon!

from Stuart Niven to everyone: 5:01 PM

and Weston of course

Public input: (see next page and posted notes):