



SEATTLE URBAN FORESTRY COMMISSION

- Julia Michalak** (Position #1 – Wildlife Biologist), Co-chair
- Joshua Morris** (Position #7 – NGO), Co-Chair
- Joe Sisneros** (Position #2 – Urban Ecologist - ISA) • **Falisha Kurji** (Position #3 – Natural Resource Agency)
- Becca Neumann** (Position #4 – Hydrologist) • **Stuart Niven** (Position #5 – Arborist – ISA)
- Hao Liang** (Position #6 – Landscape Architect – ISA) • **David Moehring** (Position # 8 – Development)
- Blake Voorhees** (Position # 9 – Realtor) • **Laura Keil** (Position #10 – Get Engaged)
- Jessica Hernandez** (Position #11 – Environmental Justice) • **Jessica Jones** (Position # 12 – Public Health)
- Lia Hall** (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

May 18, 2022, 3:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.
Via Webex call
(206) 207-1700
Meeting number: 2483 619 1137
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

- Josh Morris – Co-Chair
- Julia Michalak – Co-Chair
- Lia Hall
- Becca Neumann
- Stuart Niven
- Falisha Kurji
- David Moehring
- Hao Liang
- Joe Sisneros

Staff

- Patti Bakker – OSE

Guests

Absent- Excused

- Jessica Jones
- Blake Voorhees
- Jessica Hernandez
- Laura Keil

Public

- Steve Zemke
- Michael Oxman

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: Josh called the meeting to order and offered a land acknowledgement.

Public comment:

Steve Zemke welcomed all of the new Commissioners and urged them to review the UFC's past recommendations and the UFC's 2019 draft ordinance. He made the request that presenters giving briefings provide documents related to them ahead of time, such as the tree management policy presentation from SPR today. He also noted that there are some documents not posted to the website: the final recommendations on the canopy cover assessment, draft meeting notes for the April 20 draft meeting notes.

Chair, Committees, and Coordinator report:

Patti shared a couple of items:

- Comprehensive Plan update –OPCD is scheduled to come back to the Commission at the June 15 meeting to provide updates on the process and to get feedback from the Commission. In the meantime, they have shared information on resources they have set up for folks to weigh in on the Plan update process:

Last week, they launched their [One Seattle Plan Engagement Hub](#), which their central platform for all virtual outreach for the plan. They are sharing this information and the link to the hub widely, as they hope it will help increase accessibility of the engagement process to communities which have been historically and systematically under-represented in the Comprehensive Plan.

They also have a [Comp Plan Phase I survey](#) active now through May 31st, which is an initial opportunity for folks to share their thoughts on Comprehensive Plan development; again, this plan will guide where and how the city grows over the next 20 years and will guide investments in our community to meet current and future needs.

- Some updates to the Open Public Meetings Act and what they mean for meetings: the Governor recently announced that that Proclamation barring in-person meetings will end as of June 1. Meanwhile guidance on the Open Public Meetings Act allows for remote options but states that in-person options need to resume. The Commission's next meeting is June 1st, so there will be an in-person option offered for that. Details on that location will be included on the Commission website and in the Bulletin that goes out about meetings, and via email to Commissioners. Offering remote options for participation in meetings will continue indefinitely and there is no requirement that folks come to the physical location for meetings.

Welcome new Commissioners

Josh welcomed the new Commissioners present in the meeting who were confirmed by City Council last week. All Commissioners introduced themselves with their position role and background on themselves. Josh urged new Commissioners to provide any feedback to the Chairs and Patti on how to promote participation or make meetings more engaging or productive.

Ship Canal Water Quality project tree mitigation

Patti provided some background on this SPU project, which includes tree mitigation. SPU has provided several briefings between 2018 and 2020 on this project, and the Commission has adopted recommendations related to the project. Caitlin Rohan, Project Coordinator, and Alan Lord, Program Manager, from SPU want to provide an update on this project since implementation is now happening.

Caitlin provided an overview of the project, updates since the last briefing in February 2020, the timeline of the tree mitigation, and their tree inventory and assessment. The project is needed in order to protect water quality by preventing overflows of stormwater combined with sewage that happens now during heavy rain events. The project is required by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and needs to be complete by the

end of 2025. The project involves several phases and significant drilling operations. Final designs have been completed for all phases and tree counts have been updated.

There was an MOA developed with SDOT for tree mitigation. Trees will be planted through the project phases until construction is complete in 2025. The initial tree count was done in 2017 based on 60% design. Another tree count was done at final design. This final count showed less mitigation was needed off-site (more trees were able to be accommodated into one of the project sites), but they decided to still abide by the existing terms of the MOA. Only seven trees needed to be mitigated off-site.

Questions from Commissioners included what tree species are to be planted. Caitlin and Alan will follow up with the Commission on that, but noted that the UFC has also made recommendations previously. Alan explained how the tunnel solution was determined. Alan also provided more details on the off-site mitigation with SDOT. SDOT already had a project happening in the area; the SPU project paid into that project to increase tree work there. It includes some new planting and caring for some existing trees. Regarding the maintenance and survivability plan for trees planted, there is a three-year establishment period and then trees are turned over to SDOT for continued care, unless the trees are on an SPU facility in which case they become part of operations plan for the facility.

Commissioners discussed preparing a follow-up letter, to include:

- Appreciation for the presentation; this is an impressive project
- The UFC would like to see the replacement tree list
- Consider a longer survivability plan
- What kinds of things SDOT is doing related to improving/increasing tree health.

Josh will draft the letter.

City budget process follow-up

David drafted a recommendation letter incorporating some input from Josh, some historical context from Patti, and content from a previous letter from Weston Brinkley. Patti provided input on where the city is currently in the budget process and how these UFC recommendations can fit in.

The letter contains a list of bullet points summarizing key budget items the UFC would like to see in the budget. Commissioners discussed the draft letter and made edits to the content and structure. The current Statement of Legislative Intent (SLI) is included in the letter. Patti provided background on what SLIs are in general, the current Chief Arborist SLI and the SLI from last year regarding urban forestry consolidation.

Equity is an important value for the UFC and city budgets are reflections of city values, so it was noted to ensure that is appropriately included in the letter. Commissioners will continue to consider the content of the letter, provide any additional input to David, and work on it again at the next meeting.

SPR Tree Management Policy

Patti provided some background for this item: the last briefing from Parks and Recreation was in December 2020. That briefing covered several items, including the Cheasty Bike Trail and Green Seattle Partnership, but did not include two items of interest because they were not far enough along, including SPR's tree management policy. SPR has now developed a draft update to their Tree Management Policy and Todd Burley and Nich Johnson will provide the briefing on that today.

Todd noted that the feedback from the UFC will not end at this meeting, but will continue afterward. He also noted that this effort to update the tree management plan has been some years in the making, it has been an

iterative process to get this point of having the draft prepared. They have gone through an internal process of review and are now getting input from other departments and stakeholders like the UFC.

Key changes to the plan include:

- Ensuring alignment with current best management practices and industry standards.
- Incorporation of climate change impacts and considerations
- Adding equity language for prioritization
- Including grounds management practices as part of tree care
- Expanded and updated recreational use language
- General updates and clarification
 - New template
 - List of affected departments
 - Definitions
 - References

In the management framework, the criteria were clarified and updated for making tree management decisions. Safety, park function and urban forest health were retained and updated, and equitable distribution of services was added which highlights the use of heat maps, equity index maps and health disparity maps to help determine areas that would benefit from increases in canopy.

Specific language on procedures and practices was removed, in favor of referencing ANSI standards. They also removed the requirement to phase in removals and plantings in larger projects, to provide arborists the ability to make the best decision for each situation.

The section on private property, pruning and views also received some updates, including clarifications regarding how to deal with trees that cross property and expanded language regarding cutting for views.

New content in the policy was introduced to cover recreational use of trees, which wasn't something the department had as much need to deal with when the last policy was developed 20 years ago. The new language covers tree protection during such use, covering individual use versus commercial use (requires permit for commercial), and risk warnings.

Tree protection language was retained, such as ensuring that nothing is done to damage trees and that they are protected during construction, and language was added to ensure protection of trees during maintenance such as mowing.

Other updates include ensuring that Vegetation Management Plans and other park-specific plans are consistent with city code and this policy. Climate resiliency is incorporated into planting elements, as well as support for habitat benefits such as leaving cut trees on sites. Establishment periods for trees planted are not specified as to how many years, but state that the establishment period will be sufficient to meet the needs of the tree.

Todd noted that they are open to additional ideas of stakeholder groups to reach out to as they seek feedback on the updated policy.

Follow-up questions included how tree health is defined and how many tree removals happen and how they are handles.

Commissioners discussed preparing a follow-up letter, to include

- What does tree health mean? Recommend stronger guidance on what healthy means and what establishment and maintenance means, include a minimum number of years rather than leaving it open ended with a more vague description.
- Does SPR have enough arborists to implement their policy?
- What are the biggest causes of impacts in tree decline?
- Illegal tree removals
- How policies are evaluated
- Other stakeholders to reach out to (Got Green is one suggestion)
- Tree equity, areas where canopy is not as large or healthy; this is the first time this policy will include an equity component(s), so ensure it is robust enough.

David volunteered to draft a recommendation letter.

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Public comment:

Steve Zemke appreciated the quality of questions posed by Commissioners today. He put NPI-TreePAC poll results from last year in the chat; results note that 72% of respondents support a new Seattle Department of Environment and Climate that would include a consolidated urban forestry division. SDCI has only two arborists and no clear urban forestry oversight. He heard today about a large chestnut tree being removed on a property and the person reporting it couldn't file a complaint or raise the issue because SDCI wasn't open. Many trees are taken down on weekends. Complaint-based systems don't work. Longer noticing periods are needed. A permit system is important.

Michael Oxman had five comments: 1) a Seattle Department of Natural Resources was proposed to the City Council in 2014, 2) the SLI for the Natural Capital Assessment was originally funded and then rescinded, 3b) agrees that metrics of trees planted is important, the canopy cover assessment doesn't show available space for trees to be planted, 3b) the number of trees planted per year is only recorded by the departments, 3c) no attempt to survey the public tree planting numbers has been made by the city, 4) he asked if SPR used ANSI A133.1 safety standards, 5) the establishment period for trees planted by SPR needs to match SDOT's.

Adjourn: The meeting was adjourned at 5:03 PM.

Meeting Chat:

from Hao Liang to everyone: 3:42 PM

This is a list from SDOT as tree species guideline

from Hao Liang to everyone: 3:42 PM

https://www.seattle.gov/Documents/Departments/SDOT/PublicSpaceManagement/2015-Street_Tree_List.pdf

from D Moehring Pos 8 to everyone: 3:48 PM

Thanks Hao

from Steve Zemke to everyone: 3:54 PM

One issue to consider is size of trees removed and mature size of trees used for replacement.

from Steve Zemke to everyone: 3:54 PM

2 for 1 replacement was by mayor Nickels for all city trees

from Steve Zemke to everyone: 4:04 PM

https://www.fs.fed.us/nrs/pubs/jrnl/2019/nrs_2019_hilbert_001.pdf

from Steve Zemke to everyone: 4:04 PM

Urban Tree Mortality: A Literature Review

By Deborah R. Hilbert, Lara A. Roman, Andrew K. Koeser,

Jess Vogt, and Natalie S. van Doorn https://www.fs.fed.us/nrs/pubs/jrnl/2019/nrs_2019_hilbert_001.pdf

from Joshua Morris to everyone: 4:05 PM

Thanks, Steve

from Michael Oxman to everyone: 4:08 PM

Natural Capital Assessment SLI 75-1-A-2

https://www.seattle.gov/Documents/Departments/UrbanForestryCommission/2019/2019docs/NatCapFundIngLtrSGSCtoCouncil09_10-2019.pdf

from Steve Zemke to everyone: 4:09 PM

Natural Capital Assessment by Council was approved but never funded is my understanding.

from Steve Zemke to everyone: 4:12 PM

Urge consideration of creating a new Dept.of Environment and Climate with an Urban Forestry Division.

Strongly supported by public in NPI poll last year.

from Michael Oxman to everyone: 4:21 PM

Seattle DNR was called for in this 2014 video by Michael Oxman & John Fox. <https://youtu.be/5xgOykI9jzk>

from Steve Zemke to everyone: 4:24 PM

NPI Poll results last year - QUESTION: Oversight of trees in Seattle is currently overseen by nine city departments. Do you support or oppose creating a new Seattle Department of Environment and Climate that would include a consolidated urban forestry division?

ANSWERS:

Support: 72%

Strongly support: 44%

Somewhat oppose: 28%

Oppose: 18%

Somewhat oppose: 6%

Strongly oppose: 12%

Not sure: 10%

from Steve Zemke to everyone: 4:25 PM

Can draft be posted as draft on meeting notes so public can review it?

from Bakker, Patricia to everyone: 4:27 PM

Yes, Steve, the draft will be posted.

from Steve Zemke to everyone: 4:28 PM

Thanks Patti.

from Steve Zemke to everyone: 4:34 PM

Corrected poll numbers. QUESTION: Oversight of trees in Seattle is currently overseen by nine city departments. Do you support or oppose creating a new Seattle Department of Environment and Climate that would include a consolidated urban forestry division?

ANSWERS:

Support: 72%

Strongly support: 44%

Somewhat support: 28%

Oppose: 18%

Somewhat oppose: 6%

Strongly oppose: 12%

Not sure: 10%

From Bakker, Patricia to everyone: 4:36 PM

[One Seattle Plan Engagement Hub](#)

[Comp Plan Phase I survey](#)

from Michael Oxman to everyone: 4:37 PM

Does SPR use ANSI Z133.1 Tree Worker Safety standards?

from Michael Oxman to everyone: 4:38 PM

Can SPR align definition of "Establishment Period" with SDOT's Establishment Period, which includes 3 year in the budget for followup watering & maintenance?

from Steve Zemke to everyone: 4:39 PM

How many arborists does Parks currently have and is it enough to be able to keep pace with needs?

from Michael Oxman to everyone: 4:41 PM

Natural Capital Assessment must include human resources available.

from Michael Oxman to everyone: 4:45 PM

How many trees were planted in Parks in 2021?

from Michael Oxman to everyone: 4:46 PM

How many trees were removed from Parks in 2021 ?

from Steve Zemke to everyone: 4:47 PM

What is current thinking on maintaining natural areas and trees as they are versus other uses eg bicycle trails etc.?

from Michael Oxman to everyone: 4:48 PM

Are trees being reduced in size, or topped, to increase safety?

from Michael Oxman to everyone: 4:49 PM

Please ID sources of funding for SPR arborists.

from Lia Hall to everyone: 4:50 PM

Got Green?

from Michael Oxman to everyone: 4:53 PM

Is there a pruning cycle, when a repeat treatment by the arborist can be expected?

from D Moehring Pos 8 to everyone: 4:59 PM

https://www.seattle.gov/documents/Departments/SDOT/Trees/Public_Notice_Yellow.pdf signs steve reference

from Burley, Todd to everyone: 4:59 PM

10,573 trees planted by SPR in 2021 and 53,694 native plants.