



## City of Seattle

### Urban Forestry Commission

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#### SEATTLE URBAN FORESTRY COMMISSION

**Becca Neumann** (Position #4 – Hydrologist), Co-chair

**Joshua Morris** (Position #7 – NGO), Co-Chair

**Laura Keil** (Position #10 – Get Engaged), Co-Chair

**Julia Michalak** (Position #1 – Wildlife Biologist) • **Falisha Kurji** (Position #3 – Natural Resource Agency)

**Stuart Niven** (Position #5 – Arborist – ISA) • **Hao Liang** (Position #6 – Landscape Architect – ISA)

**David Baker** (Position # 8 – Development) • **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*

#### Draft meeting notes

June 21, 2023, 3:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Via Webex call and in-person at the  
Seattle Municipal Tower, Room 1872 (18<sup>th</sup> floor)  
700 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Seattle

(206) 207-1700

Meeting number: 2492 526 1378

Meeting password: 1234

#### Attending

##### Commissioners

Becca Neumann – Co-Chair

Laura Keil – Co-Chair

Josh Morris – Co-Chair

Falisha Kurji

Stuart Niven

Hao Liang

David Baker

Jessica Hernandez

Lia Hall

##### Staff

Patti Bakker – OSE

##### Guests

##### Absent- Excused

Julia Michalak

Jessica Jones

##### Public

Steve Zemke

Tina Cohen

**NOTE: Meeting notes are not exhaustive. For more details, listen to the digital recording of the meeting at:**  
<https://www.seattle.gov/urbanforestrycommission/meetingdocuments>

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

**Public comment:**

Steve Zemke wanted to ask again when Commissioners will be appointed to Positions 1 and 2. He also again urged the UFC to weigh in on potential updates to the tree protection ordinance and provided some more examples: there are no tree protection areas for 6-12" trees – they are protected but without tree protection areas; add in the tree tier definitions, and add back in the tree inventory requirement and requiring maximizing tree retention.

**Chair, Committees, and Coordinator report:**

Patti provided a reminder that the July 5 meeting was rescheduled to July 12. She also noted that OSE has announced that two funds that it manages have opened for applications: the [Environmental Justice Fund](#) (EJ Fund) and the [Duwamish River Opportunity Fund](#) (DROF). The EJ Fund supports projects that benefit communities most impacted by environmental hazards and climate inequities, and applications for that fund are due by July 26. The DROF supports community-led projects and programs that enhance the quality of life in the Duwamish Valley, and those applications are due August 7. Folks are encouraged to share this information widely with their networks to share the word with any community groups interested in applying. Patti shared a blog post containing more information: [2023 Environmental Justice Fund and Duwamish River Opportunity Fund Applications Are Now Open!](#)

Patti provided the update that Council has been still too busy as yet to schedule the appointments for Positions 1 and 2. They may be taken up at the Land Use Committee's special meeting on July 6; she's waiting for confirmation of that.

Josh noted that that he signed up for the USDA Urban Forest Connections webinar series that Patti noted previously and reviewed the website. There is a long list of past webinars and other cool information on the site. The [link](#) to the site was posted in the chat again. Josh also noted that he would be taking a sabbatical for the month of July, so will not be at the July meetings.

**Adoption of May meeting notes**

**Action: A motion to approve the May 3, 2023 meeting notes as written was made, seconded and approved.**

**Action: A motion to approve the May 17, 2023 meeting notes as amended was made, seconded and approved.**

**Position 9 appointment process**

Josh outlined the process for recruiting for Position 9 - Economist, financial analyst, Washington State licensed real estate broker, or any other similar professional. We ran an application process and received an application from Nathan Collins, who is a Financial Analyst with many years of experience. Laura, Josh and Patti interviewed Nathan last week, and unanimously agreed that he would be a great choice to advance to the Commission for further discussion.

Position 9 is the Commission-appointed position on the UFC, so appointment to the position requires majority approval of the UFC, and then also approval of Council once a candidate is selected by the UFC. Nathan attended the meeting to talk with the UFC, introduce himself and provide information on his background and interest in serving on the Commission. Commissioners then had opportunity to ask Nathan any questions they had of him. Questions for Nathan from Commissioners included:

- Can you give some examples of disparities you've experienced in communities, as mentioned in your application?
- Do you have experience working with Indigenous communities?
- Of the companies you've worked with and partnered with, have any of them donated to tree or urban forest protection efforts to offset their carbon footprint?
- One of your interests is in ecosystem services valuing – do you have thoughts for incorporating that into the work of the Commission?

Nathan excused himself from the meeting, and Commissioners continued discussion around his appointment. Josh, Laura and Patti provided some additional information and reflections from the interview with Nathan. Commissioners voted anonymously on whether to advance Nathan as the Position 9 appointee, with the result being unanimous to approve moving Nathan's appointment forward.

### **Tree protection ordinance amendments process**

Josh noted that the process of working through the tree protection ordinance update was quick and demanded a lot of time and attention, and it came out in different pieces and formats, with the final package being approved by Council on May 24. There hasn't been time yet to fully review that final package of policy provisions that was adopted; that's something that should happen so the UFC can fully understand what the new tree protection ordinance is.

There was a subgroup working on ordinance recommendations as it was being developed. Josh noted that perhaps that subgroup can be maintained so that the UFC can continue looking at and developing recommendations. Some of the recommendation items the UFC was working on may have a path forward through the budget process, including the monitoring, evaluation and reporting requirements that could be addressed through a Statement of Legislative Intent. The subgroup could work on determining what the avenues are for making updates.

One major question about following the effects of the ordinance is how will the tree tracking data be recorded and fed back into the system to effect management? It would be beneficial for the UFC, Council and the implementing departments to continue discussion on the effects of the ordinance as it goes into effect. The UFC could have a standing agenda item to check in on the status of the ordinance. The Planning Commission has task force meetings between their regular meetings – maybe the UFC can have those on the second and fourth Wednesdays, 3-5:00? Five Commissioners expressed interest in this possibility. Patti will need to check on the feasibility of providing support for two extra meetings a month. This work group could then report back to the full Commission at the regular meetings.

Stuart noted that he's started collating some examples of what the new ordinance means for sites being developed, as noted at the last meeting. Those could be presented at the subgroup meetings and/or at the full UFC meetings.

### **City budget process**

Josh noted that the City Council turns their attention to the budget in September and city departments are working now on their workbooks related to budget, so this is a good time for the UFC to start providing initial recommendations. The UFC has been doing two budget letters a year; this letter would be the first for 2023.

Josh walked through the draft recommendations he prepared, which notes that adequate funding for urban forest management is really important, especially given our declining canopy and increasing inequities that show that the city's investments are not yet sufficient. The recurring issue of not being able to determine how much is spent on an annual basis on urban forestry in the city was discussed, and Patti provided the recap that the Statement of Legislative Intent on city urban forestry investments is aimed at getting past this obstacle by providing the baseline understanding of that overall city investment across the departments.

Commissioners continued discussing and editing this first draft of recommendations. Patti will share this updated version with Commissioners, who can then continue working on them in preparation for continuing work as a group at the next meeting.

### **Seattle City Light briefing follow-up**

Commissioners discussed that there was not a presentation de-brief after the SCL briefing, so touched quickly on this. Stuart volunteered to draft a follow-up letter.

**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>**

**Public comment:**

Steve Zemke noted the good work of the UFC in moving things forward. He noted that tree replacement gets very expensive and affects the number of trees that can be planted with the available funds. The amount of funds received for the different size trees, will allow for a certain number of trees to be planted for each removal. He again urged maximizing retention of trees on site – it's much less expensive and retains the environmental benefits of the trees. The state bill that didn't proceed would have allowed avoidance of existing ordinance requirements to save trees in cities and have the trees planted in tree banks. That's what our ordinance does now. The priority has to be retaining as many trees as possible where people live, not just in parks. Retention of canopy in residential areas isn't be addressed at this point. That could come through the Comprehensive Plan update, the EIS for which is due out in September.

Tina Cohen thanked the commission for all the fine work and carefully crafted documents. CM Strauss said from the beginning that he would look to the UFC to be a resource in developing the ordinance. She wondered how the UFC feels about being ignored in the process.

**Adjourn:** The meeting was adjourned at 5:00 PM.

**Meeting chat:**

from Jessica Hernandez to everyone: 3:04 PM

Hello everyone!

from Jessica Hernandez to everyone: 3:10 PM

Question: for those funds, what kind of expenses can UFC put forward in the grant application? Thank you.

from Bakker, Patricia to everyone: 3:10 PM

2023 Environmental Justice Fund and Duwamish River Opportunity Fund Applications Are Now Open!

from Sandy Shettler to everyone: 3:11 PM

Patti, can you clarify that the new commissioners' terms start when they are approved and start, not from the March 31 term end?

from Jessica Hernandez to everyone: 3:11 PM

Oh ok thank you for the clarification.

from Bakker, Patricia to everyone: 3:12 PM

<https://greenspace.seattle.gov/2023/06/2023-environmental-justice-fund-and-duwamish-river-opportunity-fund-applications-are-now-open/#sthash.xRFtMwwi.zvMYCRCv.dpbs>

from Sandy Shettler to everyone: 3:13 PM

Thank you Patti for confirming that the start dates do not change. I think it's important to note that the new commissioners' terms will be at least four months shorter than the defined term. Thank you.

from Joshua Morris to everyone: 3:13 PM

[https://www.fs.usda.gov/research/products/multimedia/webinars?field\\_webinar\\_series\\_target\\_id=2801](https://www.fs.usda.gov/research/products/multimedia/webinars?field_webinar_series_target_id=2801)

from sage miller to everyone: 3:23 PM

I attended the council meeting approving the tree ordinance. the council stated the ordinance could be "amended", revised, etc

from sage miller to everyone: 3:23 PM

what is the status of that?

from Lia Hall to everyone: 3:25 PM

Sorry I'm unable to speak at the moment. Welcome Nathan!

from Sandy Shettler to everyone: 3:28 PM

Thank you Nathan--so great to hear of your support for Scouts and helping youth having access to nature!

from Lia Hall to everyone: 3:42 PM

I may have missed this but I'm curious how many responses we got for this position

from Jessica Hernandez to everyone: 3:46 PM

Thank you Josh, Laura and Patti for interviewing him!

from sage miller to everyone: 3:49 PM

i have to leave..maybe i can check in with Joshua or Patricia later for updates

from Stuart Niven to everyone: 3:50 PM

Were the amendments meant to be put to Council before the start of it on August 1st?

from Steve Zemke to everyone: 3:57 PM

Why do you want to avoid public meetings? Public has interest in what is happening. Maybe one meeting a month would be good.

from Jessica Hernandez to everyone: 3:58 PM

Depends on time of day

from Stuart Niven to everyone: 3:58 PM

Slow and steady wins the race!

from Jessica Hernandez to everyone: 3:59 PM

Can't make it in person bc I get off work around this time lol

from Stuart Niven to everyone: 3:59 PM

It is a myth, Hao!

from Stuart Niven to everyone: 3:59 PM

Hao, sorry

from Jessica Hernandez to everyone: 3:59 PM

Maybe hybrid for accessibility

from Steve Zemke to everyone: 4:04 PM

Need more urban forester qualified people ,not just arborists.

from Steve Zemke to everyone: 4:05 PM

Land use Committee proposed 3 additional positions in SDCI and additional person in SDOT to add to budget.

from Joshua Morris to everyone: 4:06 PM

Heres the City's interactive budget: <https://openbudget.seattle.gov/#!/year/default>

from Steve Zemke to everyone: 4:08 PM

Should urge annual reporting, not just biennial.

from Hao Liang to everyone: 4:17 PM

<https://www.phila.gov/documents/urban-forest-strategic-plan/>

from Sandy Shettler to everyone: 4:17 PM

Philadelphia has acres of urban blight and much more work to do in terms of reforestation. Having lived there.

from Hao Liang to everyone: 4:17 PM

<https://www.phila.gov/media/20230223005617/Philly-Tree-Plan.pdf>

from Steve Zemke to everyone: 4:22 PM

<https://seattle.legistar.com/View.ashx?M=F&ID=11946575&GUID=6DAB16AA-16CC-46EC-947D-9F9D128FAE93> here is link to 4 budget positions Council was proposing to add to budget for forestry positions that was adopted May 4th by Land Use Committee

from Steve Zemke to everyone: 4:25 PM

Seattle Planning Commission has 2 full time staff positions.

from Jessica Hernandez to everyone: 4:26 PM

great question Hao.

from Steve Zemke to everyone: 4:28 PM

Propose funding to create Urban Forestry Division in SDCI or move oversight to OSE as proposed to be considered per land Use Committee vote

from Steve Zemke to everyone: 4:29 PM

Need an urban forester in SDCI

from Steve Zemke to everyone: 4:32 PM

Companion bill added 3 SDCI positions and one to SDOT

from Steve Zemke to everyone: 4:33 PM

One position was site inspector, one for data collection and 3rd position?

from Steve Zemke to everyone: 4:35 PM

Need tree qualified inspector, not just cog

from Steve Zemke to everyone: 4:37 PM

they have code inspectors but ? is are they need to be qualified to do tree inspections Agree with Stuart

from Chris Gaul to everyone: 4:38 PM

Who tracks planting of replacement trees? Is there a system in place?

from Steve Zemke to everyone: 4:41 PM

. Obviously it is expensive to replace trees and you lose the environmental benefits the existing trees already supply to the city.

from Steve Zemke to everyone: 4:42 PM

Need to continue to urge maximizing retention of existing trees!

from Jessica Hernandez to everyone: 4:48 PM

i missed that meeting lol

from Tina Cohen to everyone: 4:51 PM

Yes, Tina

from Stuart Niven to everyone: 4:57 PM

Dan Strauss lied, about that and many things!

from Chris Gaul to everyone: 4:57 PM

You are breaking up.

from Stuart Niven to everyone: 4:58 PM

I for one, am very angry about the way the UFC has been ignored and false claims were made about our level of involvement in the writing of the ordinance

from Stuart Niven to everyone: 4:58 PM

(Very choppy comments but please write them to us Tina!)\

from Hao Liang to everyone: 4:59 PM

I feel we need to be kept in loop among the key conversations, and we need publically available data.

from Stuart Niven to everyone: 4:59 PM

Oops was that on the public record? (Wink)

**Public input (additional comments received):**