



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

August 16, 2023, 3:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

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

(206) 207-1700

Meeting number: 2496 890 9145

Meeting password: 1234

Attending

Commissioners

Becca Neumann – Co-Chair

Laura Keil – Co-Chair

Josh Morris – Co-Chair

Stuart Niven

Hao Liang

Alicia Kellogg

Lia Hall

Staff

Patti Bakker – OSE

Guests

Toby Thaler

Absent- Excused

Falisha Kurji

David Baker

Jessica Hernandez

Jessica Jones

Public

Steve Zemke

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

Public comment:

Sandy Shettler expressed an issue regarding the way the public notices are being implemented by SDCI. She noted that SDCI is considering when a project was vested in determining what noticing requirements they follow; projects vested prior to the tree service provider registration ordinance going into effect only need to post notices three days ahead of work happening. She urged the UFC to write a letter on this in the future.

Sage Miller noted she'll be attending a meeting tonight about a development that is being planned on a property in the Cascade neighborhood. She is concerned about four cedar trees on the adjacent property. These trees are significant to the character of the neighborhood and she wants to alert people to the danger to these trees when the development work begins.

Steve Zemke noted an issue around a practice developers are using that is deceiving, regarding the protection of trees. Site plans are noting that trees would be saved, the project is approved and then later the plans are changed and the trees removed. He noted there are at least four instances of this happening. Also, SDCI has issued a 2022 annual report; he recommends the UFC request a briefing on it. One highlight: to better understand the impact the code has on trees, they've conducted analysis of sites where exceptional trees were; 69% of the total exceptional trees impacted by development were saved, and 5,192 new trees were planted associated with the permits analyzed to date. UFC should get an update on this.

Chair, Committees, and Coordinator report:

Patti provided an update on this year's Urban Forest Symposium, which has the title Interweaving Indigenous Eco-Ethics & Healing into Urban Forestry and will be held November 2 at UW's Intellectual House.

Josh noted he had a great conversation with Jamie Martin of the Snoqualmie Tribe about culturally modified trees. She is interested in talking with the UFC about issues.

Tree protection ordinance process updates and next steps

Lia provided an update on the TPO subgroup work. Naomi from CM Strauss's office made contact to lay the groundwork for working with the UFC. The subgroup would like to review the final adopted ordinance and associated code changes, and also work with community, including the Snoqualmie Tribe, developers especially those involved in affordable housing projects and LEED certified developers, Beacon Hill Council, CID neighborhood group and Rainier Beach Access Coalition. There is a new Ethiopian development in south Seattle that has no trees around it. The subgroup noted the value in developing a presentation on who the UFC is, what they do, and key points on the TPO.

There is interest in developing a map tool/story map highlighting example areas of what's happening with trees in different parts of the city. This could include crowdsourcing, with community members submitting examples to the UFC.

Commissioners discussed the logistics of subgroup meetings, potentially meeting weekly for one hour. To start with, meetings will be Mondays at 10:00; this can be adjusted as necessary based on member availability. It was suggested that the group make a plan for what they want to accomplish, and develop a work-back from that to outline what needs to be done at the meetings.

It's not yet clear how the Land Use Committee work on a potential TPO resolution will unfold, but it could start as early as their next meeting on September 13.

Urban heat + urban forestry

Patti presented slides containing summaries and links to the resources she has mentioned in recent meetings, around recent studies that have been published around urban heat and urban forestry. She also noted work that is being done and planned to be done in Seattle and King County around these topics. The slides with the links to the studies and other information are posted to the UFC website.

Follow up on previous briefings –

- Seattle Public Utilities follow up letter

Patti reviewed the draft letter prepared by Falisha, which included appreciation for the presentation and a request for follow-up on the RainCity partnership program when it gets started. Commissioners discussed and edited the letter.

Action: a motion to accept the SPU follow up letter as edited was made, seconded and approved.

- SDOT response to UFC letter

Patti walked through the letter provided by SDOT staff in response to the UFC's follow up letter to their presentation. Commissioners discussed various components of the letter, including the breakdown of funding between tree planting and maintenance, pruning cycles SDOT is currently able to do versus recommended cycles, budget numbers to accompany budget descriptions, responsibilities for maintaining right of way trees, potential support for the city helping to remove hazard trees in the right of way, and the West Seattle light rail expansion project. The UFC will invite SDOT staff to attend a future meeting to continue this dialogue.

Recognition of past UFC members

Josh noted that it used to be practice that there would be a letter of recognition sent to Commissioners upon their leaving the Commission. That practice hasn't been employed for some time now, so this item to discuss how to pick that back up. There is desire to do something to mark when Commissioners end their service, rather than them leaving without acknowledgement.

Josh will draft a template letter, and bring a first round of letters to catch up on this process to the Commission at a future meeting.

Hao raised the question of how to add/change UFC positions. He expressed the need for a GIS specialist/data scientist position on the UFC. Another suggestion was that there could be two arborist positions. Patti explained that the process for changing UFC positions requires an ordinance. Potentially a subgroup could explore this further.

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 UFC needs an Urban Forester position and the city needs one also. There is a distinction between Urban Forester and Arborist. The Comprehensive Plan's Draft Environmental Impact Statement will be coming out for public comment in September. They will be selecting a project for the final EIS in December. HB 1110 will drastically change the type of lot coverage that can be available and the number of trees that can be protected on lots; need to evaluate what alternatives are there other than just townhouses to meet that requirement.

Jessica Dixon noted concern for not knowing how the new tree ordinance will impact trees on private property. We're in a climate crisis, and trees are what mitigates impacts like particulates and heat, so why aren't we keeping more trees? We need design standards that help developers retain trees as they build, and we need to hold them accountable.

Adjourn: The meeting was adjourned at 4:53 PM.

Meeting chat:

from Sandy Shettler to everyone: 3:08 PM

This is a direct quote of SDCI Director Nathan Torgelson's communication to the Snoqualmie Tribe, explaining why they do not require online 6-day notice in advance of tree removals:

Our current online tool is built to support projects that must adhere to our most current regulations. This particular project is vested to our tree regulations in effect on 10/19/22, before the most recent updates to the tree public notice requirements that now require online posting for 6 business days. Any public notice the applicant creates for this project and that our system automatically posts online can be disregarded as it is not required for this project. The applicant must create their own notice, meeting the content requirements of the regulations in place for that project, and post it on-site for three full calendar days before tree removal.

from Sandy Shettler to everyone: 3:11 PM

Many projects currently occurring vested prior to the TSP notice law, so they are presumably exempt from following any of the law at all, if this is taken to its logical conclusion. Thank you everyone for considering this for a future letter.

from Sandy Shettler to everyone: 3:23 PM

Well said! What else could one say? Thank you Josh!

from Steve Zemke to everyone: 3:24 PM

Good idea Josh.

from Lia Hall to everyone: 3:29 PM

i can feel it!

from Sandy Shettler to everyone: 3:30 PM

Over 55 trees many exceptional will be cut down in the next week within the Seattle city limits.. We cannot plant our way out of this heat crisis.

from Sandy Shettler to everyone: 3:32 PM

These removals are available on the SDCI "Notice of Tree Work" site,

from Hao Liang to everyone: 3:34 PM

@Sandy, would you drop a link of the site

from Sandy Shettler to everyone: 3:38 PM

Thanks Hao, copied here. Under "type of notice" select "SDCI Notice of Tree Work" Amazingly, this is not a complete list, because of the separate "vesting" protocol I noted above which allows notices which are not online, only on site.

https://cosaccela.seattle.gov/portal/Cap/CapHome.aspx?module=DPDPublicNotice&TabName=DPDPublicNotice#SearchForm_Start

from Hao Liang to everyone: 3:39 PM

Thanks!

from Stuart Niven to everyone: 3:43 PM

I have to drop away from the meeting for a short while to deal with some time sensitive issues (our heat and ongoing drought is causing increasing numbers of 'sudden limb drop' around the city which is a timely reminder of how we need as many large, healthy trees in all neighbourhoods all over the city, to help cool the ground, shade root systems and help reduce the heat island effect Patti will likely be talking about! Watering helps reduce the risk of this type of event happening but the simple fact remains, more trees means cooler temperatures, which means healthier people and trees!

from Hao Liang to everyone: 3:44 PM

Thank you Stuart for stewarding our urban forest!

from Toby Thaler to everyone: 3:54 PM

"Smoke" should be "Particulates"

from Joshua Morris to everyone: 3:56 PM

<https://seattle.gov/documents/departments/opcd/seattleplan/seattleclimatevulnerabilityassessmentjuly2023.pdf>

from Steve Zemke to everyone: 4:00 PM

what is status of canopy equity and resilience plan? when will it be done?

from Sandy Shettler to everyone: 4:01 PM

This report clearly illustrates the importance of retaining our existing trees. Even native conifers which may not survive in 100 years in the PNW are serving a valuable, life-saving function for people living in urban areas. I am preaching to the choir but the ordinance promoting the removal of our existing forest is a mistake and dangerous to public health.

from Sandy Shettler to everyone: 4:02 PM

Thank you Becca. People cannot live in cooling centers. They need trees where they live. Especially multi-family housing and mixed zones, which already have fewer trees.

from Steve Zemke to everyone: 4:03 PM

We need trees where people live in their neighborhoods. Not that many people live in parks.

from Sandy Shettler to everyone: 4:03 PM

Trees on private land are the most important because they cool people where they live. People who die of heat stroke are usually inside their homes.

from Lia Hall to everyone: 4:05 PM

Which departments are required to review the information in the Climate Vulnerability Assessment?

from Sandy Shettler to everyone: 4:06 PM

Many cities assume responsibility for trees in the ROW. There are economies of scale which allow municipalities to do this much less expensively than individual property owners can do.

from Steve Zemke to everyone: 4:08 PM

HasOPCD

from Steve Zemke to everyone: 4:09 PM

Has OPS

from Steve Zemke to everyone: 4:11 PM

Has OPCD been invited to UFC to discuss urban forestry issues being considered in Comp Plan?

from Steve Zemke to everyone: 4:14 PM

Here is the link to SDCI's annual report. New Tree Tracking Information is on page 12.

<https://www.seattle.gov/documents/Departments/SDCI/About/SDCIAnnualReport.pdf>

from Sandy Shettler to everyone: 4:18 PM

Thank you Steve!

from Sandy Shettler to everyone: 4:29 PM

Unfortunately the community notification on newly planted trees has not been happening. Nearby property owners are a largely untapped resource as many would be glad to water if they understood that it would help.

from Sandy Shettler to everyone: 4:30 PM

I live in a commercial area and the property owners near new street trees were unaware of why the new trees suddenly appeared. Thankfully, they were very happy to help and are watering, which is essential because SDOT was scheduled to water and didn't come. I like Laura's idea--we could look at getting the word out through new-utility set-up notices etc.

from Sandy Shettler to everyone: 4:31 PM

Everyone has to set up a new SCL account (not SPU any longer) When they do that it would be great for them to get a general notice

from Laura Keil she/her to everyone: 4:32 PM

Good idea Sandy

from Jessica Dixon to everyone: 4:35 PM

As the city develops, there is a trend toward privatizing street trees. This may be problematic for the health of our street trees if property managers don't know this is their responsibility.

from Steve Zemke to everyone: 4:37 PM

SDCI should require developers to notify new property owners on new houses that they are responsible for watering and maintaining them for 5 years now.

from Steve Zemke to everyone: 4:44 PM

Link to Seattle Comprehensive Plan updates - subscribe to join mailing list.

<https://www.seattle.gov/opcd/ongoing-initiatives/seattle-2035-comprehensive-plan>

from Steve Zemke to everyone: 4:46 PM

how about urban forester position ?

from Jessica Dixon to everyone: 4:48 PM

Jessica Dixon

from sage miller to everyone: 4:48 PM

thanks for a very informative meeting. leaving to prepare for meeting regarding 222 minor

from Laura Keil she/her to everyone: 4:48 PM

Thanks Jessica, you're next!

from Lia Hall to everyone: 4:52 PM

Thank you Jessica

from Steve Zemke to everyone: 4:53 PM

It was a graph in the 2021 seattle canopy study. It has no authors listed bur ose oversaw the writing

Public input (additional comments received):