



City of Seattle

Urban Forestry Commission

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

Alicia Kellogg (Position 2 – Urban Ecologist) • **Becca Neumann** (Position 4 – Hydrologist)

David Baker (Position 8 – Development) • **Nathan Collins** (Position 9 – Financial Analyst)

Timothy Randazzo (Position 10 – Get Engaged) • **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

October 9, 2024, 3:00 – 5:00 p.m.

Via Webex meeting and in-person at the
Seattle Municipal Tower, Room 1876 (18th floor)
700 5th Avenue, Seattle

(206) 207-1700

Meeting number: 2503 580 2233

Meeting password: 1234

Attending

Commissioners

Josh Morris – Co-Chair

Alicia Kellogg

Lia Hall

Becca Neumann

David Baker

Nathan Collins

Timothy Randazzo

Absent

Jessica Jones

Staff

Lauren Urgenson – OSE

Alan Guo – OSE

Sharon Lehrman – OSE

Guest

Akshay Iyengar – CBO

Public

Cindy Kozak

Steve Zemke

Nolan Rundquist

Dave Gloger

Dave Moehring

Sandy Shettler

Michael Oxman

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 Morris called the meeting to order, offered a land acknowledgement, conducted a roll call of the commissioners, and reviewed the agenda.

Public Comment:

Michael Oxman noted that Mayor Harrell has asked departments to cut their budget by 15%. Michael also noted that the Parks department spends about \$4,000 per tree for the 500 trees planted in 2024. Michael noted that to reach 30% canopy goals, there would need to be about 80,000 new trees assuming that there are no trees removed. Michael stated that single family residential (SFR) lots are being covered with 6 homes and trees can only be planted between houses and tend to only be shrubs. Michael also stated that City will be under-tree'd while there are many tree removal applications and wants to communicate to City Council that the situation is not working well.

Steve Zemke talked about the Omnibus Bill passing while several amendments were not passed. Steve brought up the issue of basic tree protection area – modified and asked for alternative site designs to help save trees. Steve also mentioned to look at the tree ordinance.

UFC Commissioner and Coordinator updates:

Alicia Kellogg asked for update on the interviews for the vacant commissioner seats. Lauren Urgenson gave an update on the interview process and timeline for the 6 positions that are open. Lauren emphasized that the team would try to make nominations to Council at 11/20 Land Use meeting.

Josh wanted to share that the Urban Forestry symposium is on 10/22 and that it brings together urban forestry experts from the region.

City budget presentation:

Sharon Lehrman gave an introduction about the Office of Sustainability and Environment (OSE), Healthy Communities, and the budget.

Akshay Iyengar gave a presentation about the CBO and their role during the budget process.

Josh asked if there was any context for the Statement of Legislative Intent (SLI) besides for the budget. Josh asked about the process of a biennial budget vs a single year budget. Akshay stated that the biennial budget is for the framework of the two years while the City Council needs to approve the budget each year.

Sharon gave a background presentation about Urban Forestry at the City of Seattle, the responsibilities of each department, and the activities that they engage in (direct management, policy and planning, and community engagement). Sharon introduced the 2024 budget in relation to direct management, policy and planning, and community engagement.

Josh asked Sharon what they believe the necessary funding for Urban Forestry would be to meet all the goals. Alicia asked if there was a graph/trends over time about budgets and changes for Urban Forestry

Akshay gave an overview about the budget changes in 2025 for Urban Forestry including budget adds for OSE adding climate change data analysis and Seattle Public Utilities (SPU) constructing a tree nursery. Akshay noted some non-direct impacts in the budget changes including Parks department reduction in land acquisition funding and Seattle City Light's (SCL) addition for vegetation management.

Sandy Shettler asked why SPU would need their own nursery as opposed to the using nurseries in the private sector. Lauren answered that it has become difficult to source certain trees due to climate change impacts on tree nurseries and they need to be sourced by themselves.

Presentation Q&A

Josh asked about revenues in 2024 and if there was a modification to add expected payment in lieu fees from the tree protection ordinance. Josh wanted to follow up on the UFC's May letter of recommendation and ask about tree fees and where the money from the fees goes to.

Akshay did not have an immediate answer and noted that they will follow up.

Josh asked if there were any positions that were reduced that were Urban Forestry based.

Akshay responded that there were position cuts in the proposed budget but none of them that had a direct impact towards Urban Forestry.

Josh asked about the Bargaining Wage Allocation items in the budget.

Akshay responded that the items were the wage increases for City workers under the collective bargaining agreement.

Josh asked about bonds and ways for the City to increase revenue funding for services used.

Lia Hall reemphasized a comment in the chat about the Trees for Neighborhoods monitoring statistic that 90% of planted trees survive past the establishment period.

Lauren responded that the 90% data point comes from a UW study where randomly selected trees from Trees for Neighborhoods were monitored for survival. Lauren also noted that Trees for Neighborhoods will try to increase their tree planting from 1000 to 1300.

Josh asked if the budget assumes that the Move Seattle Levy doesn't pass and asked if the Move Seattle Levy will increase Urban Forestry budget.

Akshay responded that the budget does not include the Move Seattle Levy.

UFC Next Steps:

Alan Guo, Sharon, and Lauren gave a summary of the 2025-2026 Biennial recommendations written by the UFC in May. They also provided a timeline for potential next steps that the UFC can conduct for the budget process including sending a letter of recommendation to City Council by 10/16.

Alicia noted that they have trouble contextualizing the budget and believe that the UFC has a lack of the background knowledge for how the budget works. They stated that they don't know how to respond to the budget.

Josh briefly explained the context of funding Urban Forestry and its importance to the budget and UFC recommendations.

Josh noted that they would like to write a letter of recommendation on the budget because the budget is the most important aspect the UFC can work on.

Lauren noted that there were two clear additions to the budget regarding urban forestry in the SPU nursery and OSE climate data and reporting. Lauren mentioned that endorsement could be a possibility for the letter of recommendation or suggested that the UFC could focus on areas of work in specific departments.

Lia Hall asked if the UFC should bring up other funding sources for urban forestry in the letter of recommendation.

The commission agreed that they would hold a special budget meeting on 10/16 at 4PM to vote on a letter of recommendation for City Council.

Adoption of August 14 and September 11 meeting notes:

Josh read comments in the chat.

The UFC adopted the August 14 meeting notes.

The UFC adopted the September 11 meeting notes under the condition that grammatical and formatting edits be made.

Commissioner and co-chair roles discussion:

Josh mentioned that the co-chair role for 2025 will be opening, and nominations can be forwarded to Lauren. Josh noted that November meeting would include co-chair nomination pitches and voting would be held in December. Josh gave a brief description of the co-chair responsibilities.

Subgroup reports:

The UFC decided to wait until the November meeting to report on subgroup updates.

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Public Comment:

Michael Oxman wanted to go back to the climate data analysis and reporting and believes City should go to an ecosystem model instead of individual tree stem model for reporting. Michael stated that soil, water, air, animals should also be looked at under canopy. Michael mentioned that he filed a complaint about too many buildings on a lot which led to no space for trees. Michael got a message from SDCI that they were backlogged for 67 days and a permit got issued without any violations. Michael noted that residents are forced to do repeat violation complaints.

Steve Zemke wanted to follow up on the idea that tree canopy is only one issue. Steve mentioned that canopy volumes should also be accounted for. Steve also stated that it is important to note that SDCI was derelict in reporting how many trees were removed and replanted. Steve wanted to mention how sparse SDCI budget is and how the City can verify what is going on, on the site.

Josh read comments in the chat.

Adjourn:

Meeting was adjourned at 5:08PM.

Meeting Chat: