



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 16, 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
Timothy Randazzo
Nathan Collins

Guest

Public

Michael Oxman
Bridget Moehring
William Dixon
Dave Moehring

Absent

Jessica Jones
David Baker

Staff

Lauren Urgenson – OSE
Alan Guo – OSE
Sharon Lehrman – OSE

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 commissioners, and reviewed the agenda. Josh gave a quick summary of the purpose of the Special Budget Recommendation Meeting which is to finalize a set of recommendations for upcoming City Council budget deliberations.

Public Comment:

Michael Oxman brought up the cost of labor to plant a tree. Michael noted that the tree planting crews planted 500 trees in one year resulting in each crewmember taking approximately 2.5 days to plant one tree. Based on salary of crewmembers, Michael states that it costs about \$500 to plant one tree. Michael stated that to plant the 80,000 trees necessary to meet the tree canopy goal, it would require \$40 million dollars in labor.

UFC Discussion:

Beginning of Letter of Recommendation:

Josh began the review of the draft letter of recommendation by summarizing the beginning of the letter:

- Paragraph 1 – Acknowledged that they are addressing the proposed budget based on presentations to UFC from the October 9th meeting.
- Paragraph 2 – Endorsement of the two funding additions in Mayor Harrell’s proposed budget (nursery and OSE data analysis). Acknowledgement of no funding or position cuts.
- Paragraph 3 – Acknowledgement that current funding levels are not sufficient to meet City’s tree canopy cover and equity goals.

Lia Hall asked if there was a way to make the beginning of the letter more succinct for the audience. Lia suggested reversing the order of the paragraphs to put the key points at the beginning of the letter with an additional emphasis on equity and environmental justice priorities/communities. Becca Neumann followed Lia’s comment by asking if the bolded phrases in third paragraph should be placed before the acknowledgements in the first two paragraphs.

Understanding Urban Forestry Investments:

Josh noted that the letter understood that the overall investment in urban forestry is an ongoing challenge, and that the UFC continues to support a more comprehensive process to track urban forestry-related expenditures. Recommendations for outcome monitoring in the letter included:

- Itemization of all urban forestry funding and expenditures
- Costs split by City department
- Tree inventory by City department
- Inclusion of finer level of details of urban forestry budget

Josh noted that this section wanted to understand if the UF budget increase is due to costs associated with tree removal or tree planting and what specific actions are leading to changes in the budget.

Alicia Kellogg pointed out that there is a recommendation in this section that would better align with the recommendations in the earlier section. Josh suggested changing the title of section to “Recommendation for Refining Urban Forest Monitoring and Budget Reporting” to better reflect the contents.

Becca brought up that an earlier draft of the letter included a section about analysis on what it would take financially and logistically for Seattle to meet canopy and equity goals. Josh responded that it has been long-standing topic of the UFC. Lauren Urgenson mentioned that the analysis fits as part of an urban forest management plan or tree equity plan since it has a larger impact on planning compared to budget. Lia mentioned that it is always vague about the goal and that they should point out that there's no clear-cut path to achieve the goal. Josh said that there might be more work on the recommendation in the budget and would require long term planning. Becca mentioned that they could include the data analysis section as support/necessary work to understand the resources for the city to meet canopy goals.

Budget recommendations:

Josh noted that the letter supported two budget adds in Mayor Harrell's proposed budget:

- \$680,000 to SPU to establish and maintain a publicly owned tree nursery noting that it would save money and allow for diverse tree plantings selections in the future.
- \$100,000 to OSE for climate impact data analysis as the first portion of the work would integrate urban forestry data and information that is dispersed across multiple reports.

Josh read the following budget recommendations in the letter:

- Funding departments with sufficient resources so they can inventory all trees they manage and update inventories on ongoing basis. The letter recommends to Council to consult with departments to figure out the right budget for the task.
- Funding departments to meet the 3:1 replacement requirement in Mayor Harrell's One Seattle Tree Plan Exec Order. The letter recommends to Council to consult with departments to figure out the right budget for the task.
- Adding a one-time funding to study what resources would be required for SDOT to assume maintenance and care of all street trees. The letter notes that SDOT approves permitting for tree planting but only maintains a small portion of them while the rest of the trees are stewarded by adjacent property owners which can disproportionately impact lower income residents and disincentivizes tree planting, leading to inconsistent care by unaware owners. The letter also notes that other cities like San Francisco do all the stewardship for street trees.
 - Lia wanted to add a point that SDOT stewardship protects initial investments in planted trees and canopy cover
- Regarding the \$440,000 reduction in SPR New Park Acquisition, asking council to consider future canopy potential and impact.
 - Alicia wanted to ask if the City can make up for the reductions with external grant funding and if the UFC wanted to put grant funding in the letter. Lauren and Sharon Lehrman noted that the City regularly applies for funds but are unaware if there are specific grants for urban forestry.
 - Lia suggested including adding a suggestion to incentivize applicants who enhance urban forestry in their design for different grant programs at the City.

Considerations for Funding the Urban Forest:

Josh noted that the letter states that the UFC believes there is inadequate funding for urban forestry based on climate and land use changes. The letter suggests using Madison, Wisconsin as a model for future funding strategies and suggest the City to consider what new or creative funding sources may be available to bolster urban forestry. Josh suggested adding Lia's suggestion, regarding incentivizing applicants on urban forestry design, into this section. Becca wanted to clarify that this section is not about the current budget but rather about future funding instead.

Sharon noted that the UFC was coming up with two recommendations in the suggestion which are 1) finding new funding and 2) using existing funding to prioritize projects that

enhance/expand urban forestry. Sharon suggested having two explicit recommendations to note the differences.

Alicia had to leave the meeting but gave final notes on the draft recommendation that it long, comprehensive, and appropriate for the UFC.

The UFC added a section to the letter about incentivizing grant applicants to prioritize enhancement and protections for urban forestry in their proposed design and programming work. Sharon wanted to clarify if that the grants would be for City programs or broader topic. Lia responded that the addition would be exclusive to City funded grants.

Lia noted that the chat log included assessing how much forest habitat is worth and if there was a section where it could be added into the letter.

VOTE – UFC Recommendation Letter:

Becca motioned to move ahead with adopting the letter under the condition that a smaller group will work on finalizing content, formatting, and edits with Sharon and Lauren. Timothy Randazzo seconded the motion. The UFC unanimously adopted the letter with recommendations with edits to come.

Next Steps:

Josh noted that a subgroup of the Commission will work with Sharon and Lauren on the final edits before sharing with City Council.

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Public Comment:

Michael Dixon noticed that the City is spending \$26 million already and the cost should be noted to City Council. Michael noted that the budget does not recognize green infrastructure as an asset even though it needs to be considered to assess the true value of urban forestry. Michael stated that he believes that City will need to go back to drawing board to fully understand the budget and value of urban forestry.

Dave Moehring reemphasized his chat message about the SDCI director's message about the 2023 tree ordinance. Dave reemphasized about the lieu fees from Parks and SDOT and encouraged the UFC to address the lieu fees with the Land Use Committee. Josh noted that the UFC has requested meeting with SDCI to further understand the lieu fees.

Adjourn:

Meeting was adjourned at 5:04PM.

Meeting Chat:

Michael Oxman 10/16/2024 4:06 PM

This month's Trees For Seattle says the 5-person Parks Tree Crew planted 500 trees in one year.

This means each crew member spent 2 1/2 days to plant each tree.

With a salary for each crew member of, say, \$50K/year, this means the labor cost to plant one tree is \$500.

Alicia Kellogg (she/her) 10/16/2024 4:24 PM

Do we know for sure that the "tree crew" is only responsible for planting trees for Trees for Seattle? Or is it possible they are a subset of SPR staff who come together to work as a crew for Trees for Seattle work?

Michael Oxman 10/16/2024 4:34 PM

Seattle should document its ecological assets. A Natural Capital feasibility was budgeted for in the 2019 Seattle budget. The SLI in 2015 described the need to account for the asset value of our green infrastructure. This natural capital assessment was unfunded at the beginning of covid in 2020. The Budget item needs to be re-added in this letter.

Michael Oxman 10/16/2024 4:40 PM

There is nothing in this letter about how much the forest habitat is worth. Why not? Please answer the question asked by councilmembers and the Mayor: How much will we save by grooming the forest?

Michael Oxman 10/16/2024 4:50 PM

Love the "Ancient Trees" shirt!

Michael Oxman 10/16/2024 4:52 PM

Background on Natural Capital Assessment. Seattle Should Count Its Ecological Assets - The Urbanist

Dave Moehring AIA 10/16/2024 4:55 PM

Appreciate the budget to consider other funding sources to meet the City's equitable canopy cover goals. For example, at an average of just 14% canopy cover, South Park needs 6000 trees to be planted and maintained above the number being removed annually. So, 6000 new trees at roughly \$4000 per tree is over 24-million just for South Park. In three years, Seattle planted just 30 trees in South Park industrial areas.

Dear Commissioners, on August 9, 2024, the Director of SDCI issued a 4-page letter to the City Council Land Use Committee that outlined the track record of the 2023 ordinance so far.
Issues (as marked)

A. UFC has been copied, but not referenced in any other way within this memo. UFC should request per the Seattle Municipal Code to be consulted for all recommendations, especially on page 4.

C. Over 90% of tree removal activity is within Neighborhood Residential (NR) zones. In May 2023, City Council member Sara Nelson indicated their understanding that the 2023 tree ordinance was impacting multifamily zones, not Neighborhood Residential. UFC may recommend how to reduce the impact as the Council Members were led to believe.

D. UFC already recommended the tree tracking maps be corrected such that the number of 'protected trees' during development is not artificially inflated.

E. Tree removal requires replacement does not consider (a) one-third new tree planting mortality, and (b) new trees are planted in much smaller planting areas than the tree removed. For instance, a new tree planted within a 100 sq ft area is not going to flourish like a tree removed from a 700 - 1000 sq ft planted area.

F. NR Zones building permits are within a few months... with a goal to be even faster. What is the recommendation to improve tree items response times that take about 40 days.

G. In lieu fees are not effective after one year. UFC recommendations should be shared.

Michael Oxman 10/16/2024 4:59 PM

Powerpoint of SDCI's August, 2024 update on the effectiveness of the new Tree Protection Ordinance.
PowerPoint Presentation (seattle.gov)

How much income has been generated by Tree Permit fees and Fines?