

Urban Forestry Commission (UFC)

December 1, 2010

Meeting Notes

Seattle Municipal Tower Room 1940

700 5th Avenue, Seattle

3:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Attending

Commissioners

Elizabeta Stacishin-Moura (ESM) - chair

Matt Mega – vice chair (MM)

Nancy Bird (NB)

Gordon Bradley (GB)

John Hushagen (JH)

Kirk Prindle (KP)

Jeff Reibman (JR)

John Small (JS)

Staff

Sandra Pinto de Bader (SPdB) - OSE

Roy Francis (RF) - SDOT

Absent- Excused

Peg Staeheli (PS)

Call to Order

Public Comment

Steve Zemke: King County Superior Court tossed out the petition for review of the Ingraham High School case saying that the petition did not meet conditions, without saying what those conditions are. The City and the School District are okay cutting down trees. The Court supports DPD's current interpretation of the law. Existing policy as written does not have any teeth.

JH question: With the Court striking down the petition, what's the groups' next move?

SZ: They have until December 9 to appeal, but if they appeal and lose they are liable for the other party's attorney's fees. It's difficult for a citizen's group to be able bear the cost if they lost.

JR – The group appealed the original determination by the School District. Cutting 70 trees was not significant. They appealed the last decision by the hearing examiner and the school did not consider the alternative site.

GB – Requested for Steve to send a copy of the most recent document to Sandra for distribution.

SZ- They are still removing a quarter of the trees on the grove. These are the oldest trees in the city (70 years old). Mark Mead from Parks testified saying that those conifer trees are the type Seattle wants to preserve.

Michael Oxman: Wanted to give an update on the UW dorm project. 50 trees were removed. Elm Hall had eight exceptional trees. The UW did not take into account the arborist reports and did not include them in the plans review process. There is one Elm tree that is being preserved. Michael asked for a larger buffer zone for it to have a chance to survive. December 15 is the appeal hearing.

Approval of November 3 meeting notes

ACTION: A motion was made to approve the November 3 meeting notes as written. The motion was unanimously carried.

Seafair Parade briefing – Roy Francis (SDOT)

Roy Francis from the Seattle Department of Transportation wanted to give the Commission a heads up regarding an issue related to the Seafair Parade on 4th Avenue. In the past, the organizing committee's CEO has asked SDOT to prune trees along 4th Avenue route to accommodate the parade's balloons. SDOT has done so reluctantly because 4th has become a beautifully canopied street and pruning weakens and damages the trees. This year they decided to tie back the branches instead of cutting them.

SDOT will be sending a letter to the Seafair committee saying that SDOT will not be tying or cutting the branches in 2011.

The City-wide Seafair Committee is likely to support the pruning of trees. SDOT believes it's a bigger issue than pruning trees. Pruning has adverse effects and is inconsistent with efforts to increase canopy in the city. SDOT receives other requests from people to prune trees for different reasons. This specific request conflicts with the overall goal of the Urban Forest Management Plan (UFMP).

JH – He would tell them to go pound sand. This is at cross purposes with what we are trying to accomplish. The carbon footprint of Seafair is astonishing. It's an archaic form of entertainment.

MM – Was this part of the Urban Forestry Interdepartmental Team (IDT) discussion?

RF – yes it was. 6th avenue would be perfect. It's wide and has little canopy. He sees digging of heels going on.

ESM – What organizations are we talking about?

RF – the Seafair Committee is a non-profit organization. There is a City Special Events Commission formed by city departments. But SDOT is not part of that commission, and the chair was not sympathetic to Roy's plea. The next step is going to be for Roy to draft a letter to the Seafair committee.

NB – what is their muscle?

RF – They could portray the city as the Grinch that stole Christmas. That's why they are trying to address this issue early on.

ESM – this could be an opportunity for the City to be on the spotlight. Seafair is changing streets in support of the UFMP's goal of 30% canopy cover.

KP – Why are we concerned about the trees on 4th avenue?

RF – because they are healthy, mature trees.

JH – looking into the future, if the parade were to take place on 6th avenue it's important to begin planting columnar trees that would be appropriate.

GB – it would be helpful to understand the magnitude of the problem when drafting the letter. Talk about number of trees, species, impact, that would help with the argument.

RF – pruning pushes trees to grow branches in odd ways and weakens the whole tree.

GB – when making the argument on the letter include data.

ESM – the city would not move a light pole to accommodate a parade. Trees need to be considered infrastructure just as a light pole is.

First year Work Plan discussion – Nancy Bird

NB took the 5-year work plan with actions and benchmarks and decided on something that was reasonable for 2011. She is open to feedback. Nancy walked through the draft 2011 UFC work plan. Jeff Reibman is working on the permitting issue and not all the details of the plan are pinned down today but this document is more of a guide.

JH question: Last month the UFC submitted a statement to Council regarding the Tree Protection Ordinance. Where is that? Was it well received?

NB – it would be important to understand the feedback loop as part of the 2011 work plan.

JR – the UFC needs to work with Council and other City groups to formalize expectations on feedback loop

NB – She proposed committee leads for different sections of the plan. Position papers supporting the UFC work would be posted on the website.

Under Engagement and Outreach – she proposes working with DPD on how things work in the city. Invite guests and have more direct engagement. Put together a list of visitors (internal and external) with dates.

ESM – do we get to schedule tasks out delegate them into the committees? Tackled first by the UFC as a whole and then go to committee?

NB – It would be more the committees instigating the conversation and then bringing it to the UFC as a whole. Another column on the work plan could have start dates.

JR – some issues might be addressed by a single person, not always by a committee

ESM – Do we want to re-visit the conversation about creating ad-hoc committees or keeping the current committee structure?

JS – At the end of the last meeting it was considered having full Commission meetings twice a month. It might be more efficient to have one person plug away at something and then bring it to the full commission.

MM – the full commission took over committee meeting times when dealing with complex issues. Need more time to do the work

JR – The UFC has been in a three-meeting cycle to go from inception to vote

JS – Having a concrete work plan to guide work will be useful

NB – a decision needs to be made. Keep standing committees with ad/hoc meeting times?

JR – proposes to meet every other week as a full commission

ESM – Having structured committees might not be helpful. Having groups tasked with work plan items might be more productive

NB – if keeping committees, the community committee could help further the conversation taking place elsewhere

JR – it would be easier to address more issues at the same time. More full commission meetings and going with individual task groups to do more work independently. Right now the committees are one arm of the full commission which is stifled due to meeting only once a month to make decisions

MM – proposes to meet twice a month with different agendas

JS – Made a motion to disband all standing committees

MM – Seconded the motion

ACTION: The motion disbanding all standing committees was unanimously carried

JR – Made a motion to have full commission meetings twice a month

JS – Seconded the motion

ACTION: The motion proposing to have full commission meetings twice a month was unanimously carried

By-laws will need to be amended accordingly.

JR – What would be the actions for January?

- Position paper – DPD is asking for specific ideas on what the permit system would look like. They are looking for direction. The Management committee was having conversations on specifics of a permit system. Made assumptions on who should apply, etc. Go back a step and say “we believe there should be a permit system” and it should look like this, make baseline assumptions

JH – can lift quite a bit from the second letter sent to Council

NB – we could get input from other municipalities

KP – would like to invite Deb Powers from Kirkland. They have a successful system

MM – include different options with specific recommendations

JH – get Deb Powers here sooner than later to hear from her.

MM – include Deb in briefing and discussion

JR – DPD is putting together comments, planning to revisit the proposal, modify and work with elected to produce a revised proposal. They would like ‘finger prints’ in the knife.

KP – doesn’t think Brennon has been faithfully representing what the UFC has said and doesn’t know that DPD’s director is very informed

NB – other things should make it in the position paper also, such as protecting existing, significant trees

GB – permit ideas are a means to an end. Say what we are trying to accomplish

JH – we might want to get more information from Atlanta, since it’s a city closer in size to Seattle. Maybe talk to Kevin Laclaire from Bellevue?

JS – we need to produce position papers for other pieces of the letter sent to Council

JH – is the interim ordinance still in place? Will there be a new re-write?

JR – the process is the same with an extended time line. DPD will talk to the Mayor and City Council.

MM – invite DPD to hear on the other issue papers

JH – are we then stuck with the Ingraham and UW situations?

KP – the UFC could comment on both cases

JH – might be looking at 2012 for full implementation. The State of Washington can’t cut its way into solvency and the City of Seattle can’t preserve its way to 30% canopy cover.

MM – provide comments to document provided by Nancy. Send them to Matt directly

JH – How does the city move forward to cut pavement and plant trees? It would be interesting to learn the institutional history of how some of the large planting projects were done, such as Forward Thrust in the 60s

MM – pro-parks levy – habitat restoration. Maybe 2013-2014 another initiative to work on infrastructure and ecosystems.

GB – Ecosystem metrics wouldn't that get to the issues we are talking about?

Elections: Chair, Vice-chair, Position #9

JH – Due to personal circumstances he doesn't believe he will be able to fully perform the duties of vice-chair if elected.

Voting by secret ballot took place with Matt Mega running for the chair position; and John Small, Jeff Reibman, and John Hushagen running for the vice-chair position. Commissioners also voted on whether to re-appoint or not Nancy Bird in Position #9.

Voting results:

Chair – Matt Mega

Vice-chair – John Small

Nancy Bird re-appointed to Position #9

2010 Annual Report

ESM – Work is being done on the 2010 annual report. A draft will be circulated for commissioners to provide input

New Business and Announcements

None

Adjourn

Community Input:

From: Michael Oxman [mailto:michaeloxman@comcast.net]

Sent: Monday, November 08, 2010 1:47 AM

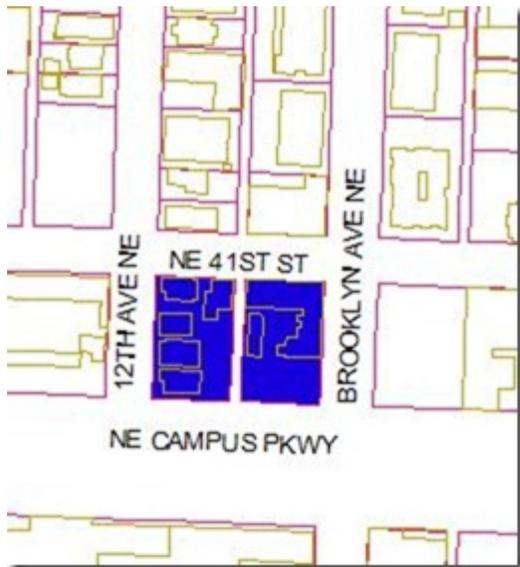
To: SeattlePOSA@yahoogroups.com

Cc: McGinn, Mike; Sugimura, Diane; O'Brien, Mike; Licata, Nick; Conlin, Richard; Bagshaw, Sally; Clark, Sally; PintodeBader, Sandra; Burgess, Tim

Subject: UW dorm to take out 8 Exceptional Trees

Howdy,

This is yet another letter where a citizen says that developers plans announced to destroy huge trees are being rubber stamped by the Seattle municipal government.



Here are some details. The deadline for filing an appeal is tomorrow, November 8th, 2010. Friday I went down to city hall to get info on this proposed project at 1218 NE Campus Parkway (the entire block between Brooklyn & 12th Ave, bounded by 41st St on the north), the site where UW plans to take out 8 exceptional trees. The Brooklyn building & 5 houses are to be torn down.

The file with the documents in the planning office didn't have the arborist report included. The planner wasn't in. Neither the UW project manager, nor the UW Landscape Architect were able to be reached by phone. Via voicemail, I found the UW Campus Arborist only knew about the Brooklyn Elm that is to be 'saved', but not the 8 other Exceptional Trees to be bulldozed.

The N/S alley will be given to UW free of charge by the Seattle Department of Transportation. (Lessee, we need money, and we're donating a piece of real estate that is 20' wide X 200' long [about 4,000 Sq Ft., or \$400,000] to the State of Washington so they can build a \$17 million dorm?) Guess how many parking spaces are proposed? It appears 2 (yes, two) parking spaces will be built.

Rather than be set back away from the sidewalk as required by design guidelines, this 7 story dorm was given a departure to build right up to the property line. This won't leave enough room for planting trees or landscaping.

A single large American Elm tree will remain, but its health & roots will be compromised by excavation, stockpiling, compaction, sterilization, & drying out of the soil, exhaust from hundreds of vehicles tailpipes blowing into the canopy during months of construction, pollution from building materials like pressure treated lumber, gasoline & diesel fuel, paint spray drift, and fertilizer, and dozens of holes to be dug under the dripline for planting shrubs. Trenching scars that look like Frankenstein's neck will traverse the root zone for installation of irrigation and electrical lighting. All light will be blocked from the West and North sides of the tree by the 70' tall, 230 bed structure. The actual extent of the root system of this tree goes way beyond the dripline, but the city is allowing construction in this zone.

A similar Elm nearby at Roosevelt High School is mostly defoliated, only a few years after the \$90 million dollar construction project chopped up all the roots. The Brooklyn Elm won't last long, either.

SMC 25.11 requires large trees that fit into the Exceptional category be preserved. Why won't the city planning department do this?

The answer is that the planning department is in the business of helping people build seventeen million dollar dormitories, not saving trees. The DPD does not have an arborist on staff. The environmental goals in the Seattle Comprehensive Plan are just goals, anyway.

So, what's an activist to do? What else? File an appeal! If any intrepid open space advocates out there want an up close & personal view of what it is like to get the city to enforce its own code, please let me know. I could sure use some help with this.

I attended the City Council Budget Committee meeting 2 weeks ago when they said the UW builds anything they want, regardless of city regulations. I'm sure that if you spoke to the Mayor, he would say that compromises must be made which condemn healthy trees in order to make 'progress'. Right?

Arboreally yours,

Michael Oxman
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