

Urban Forestry Commission (UFC)

May 4, 2011

Meeting Notes

Seattle Municipal Tower Room 2750
700 5th Avenue, Seattle
3:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

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

Attending

Commissioners

Jeff Reibman (JR) – acting chair
Nancy Bird (NB)
Gordon Bradley (GB)
John Floberg (JF)
John Hushagen (JH)
Peg Staeheli (PS)

Staff

Sandra Pinto de Bader (SPdB) - OSE
Jana Dilley (JD) - OSE

Public

Steve Zemke (SZ)
Michael Oxman (MO)
Larry Lange (LL)

Absent- Excused

Matt Mega (MM) – chair
John Small (JS)– vice chair

Call to Order

JR, acting chair, called the meeting to order once quorum was present

Public Comment

Michael Oxman – Thank you for volunteering your time and hope this will be a productive session. Wanted to point out that there is a Parks grant for \$625,000 for the Troll's Knoll. The SDOT ROW on HWY 99 at the north end of the Aurora bridge there are three dozen cottonwoods that are condemned because they are under the wires. SCL will do that but it's SDOT property. Parks money, SDOT property and SCL will cut the trees. There is no record of drip line of trees. After the money has been spent there won't be any record of the impact on the canopy. City needs to begin considering the impact of this loss of canopy. Should the money have been awarded to do this work?

JH – what's the rationale for taking down those trees?

MO – they are under the power lines

JH – what's the plan for replacement?

MO – the Friends of Troll's Knoll created a landscape plan that now has changed due to the trees being slated for removal

Steve Zemke – Save the Trees Seattle. Wanted to give a summary of what Portland is doing on Urban Forestry. They currently have 26% of canopy cover. More than half of the trees are deciduous. Large coniferous trees are in parks and natural areas. 2007 report states that it would cost \$500M to replace Portland’s street trees and \$1.8M to replace trees in parks and natural areas. Their estimated tree canopy value is \$5B. They put an economic value on trees.

Full report located at: <http://www.portlandonline.com/shared/cfm/image.cfm?id=171829>
This overview puts in perspective what the Seattle UFC is doing. You guys are doing good things.

JF – do you know where the economic figures came from?

SZ – he didn’t check those out. He can send the link to the report. There was an article on Sightline and it referenced the document.

Approve March 2 and March 9 meeting notes

JR – would like to move to approve past meeting minutes.

ACTION: A motion was made to approve the April 6 meeting notes as written. The motion was seconded and carried.

ACTION: A motion was made to move approval of the April 13 minutes to the next meeting because only one Commissioner present at the April 13 was present at today’s meeting with no one to second his motion to approve the minutes. The motion was seconded and carried.

Draft Shoreline Master Program Recommendation – vote

GB – the document has incorporated all the issues.

JF - The document has been discussed and well vetted. He is prepared to vote unless there are other comments. He might want to add something more general around this idea of native vs. non-native. The issue is not native vs. non-native but lack of mature trees to perform adequate ecologic function. It can stand as it is.

PS – move to vote and adopt as is.

ACTION: A motion was made to approve the letter as written. The motion was seconded and carried.

SPdB will finalize and send out.

Draft Recommendation regarding tree pruning for Seafair

NB – one thing that sticks out is that if this does not get addressed now the problem will remain. The need to deal with this is not going to stop. Why not just deal with it this year. Maybe add that to the letter.

JH – For those who were present at that meeting, was SDOT okay with it?

GB – saw the letter they wrote. He said they were pretty emphatic when they wrote the letter. They asked what's going to change next year. There was quite a bit of attention on the press and pressure on SDOT. There are a lot of people not on the side of the trees.

SPdB – What SDOT said is that the letter was sent to Seafair at the staff level. What has changed is that now the Mayor's Office and City Council are involved in the issue.

JR – it's pressure

PS – that's why we exist. We should be bold. I don't quite get it because there are other streets that can handle it.

JF – it's not our job to figure out what streets might be appropriate for the parade. Should we be picking our battles?

PS – then cut out the part that mentions about Sixth Avenue. We can't judge what street would work best. We have to be careful that we don't move a problem. But it's obvious that Second and Sixth would have no problem. It's a larger issue that the City needs to plan. What's a festival/parade street? Plan for that. That could be a positive statement; parade streets are a good thing for the city, planning a downtown parade street in order to preserve canopy downtown.

NB – that's why wide streets are there. Don't hinder what you have going.

JF – have a parade for one day and have the trees year around. You have the trees, structure and framework year around to increase the use of the downtown corridor. It's a value that should be captured.

JH – if the City said "we are not going to do this"... then the parade people would have to say that they can't have any balloons?

SPdB – based on the briefing done to Council is that balloons are more affordable with floats being much more expensive for sponsorships

JR – the parade logistics are not an UFC issue

PS – we are going to have loss of canopy. We are going to have a structural problem.

JH – we will have trees that are flat on the inside to accommodate balloons for 10 minutes. In terms of allocation of resources it just seems...

JR – a couple of things that came to mind. Like the idea of making a positive statement on making long-term provisions for a parade route. Pick a street and use it in the long run. If the

long term decision is to use Fourth Avenue then they should mitigate and do canopy replacement. There is a value to the impact.

PS – let’s follow logic. Trees removed for moving a house – they had to mitigate. The City has to be careful... we didn’t say they are establishing a precedent. Who gets to decide what parade gets balloons in the future? They are moving to balloons because floats are too expensive. Two balloons or 25 balloons is the same issue.

PS – she was in NYC when the balloons went haywire in the NYC parade. Balloons were going sideways and they were getting caught on people and buildings.

JR – if the City has already backed off their position, we are basically saying we disagree with you for backing off. Should that be the tone of the letter? There might be pressure but the issue will not go away and we encourage the City to resolve the issue before next year.

GB – the concern is about loss of canopy over the long-haul. Why not, rather than offer alternatives, UFC is disappointed with the City’s position but the issue is the canopy replacement. Without coming up with alternative routes...It should be the obligation of the City and Seafair to make sure replacement of loss canopy.

PS – Council has moved in that direction and they should step up and use Council funds to replace canopy. Every decision has an effect. It would be nice to see that they dedicate “x” dollars to tree planting this year.

JF – looking at an annual number undervalues the benefits of trees. Remove the table if the UFC is not comfortable with the numbers.

PS – I would take it out

JR – The majority of the number is property value

GB – Consider trees as infrastructure if you think about the parade route and if they were going to compromise, and if utilities are in the way, they would have to bury them.

PS – I wouldn’t put this in the letter. Your thinking is valid. The main thing is trees being there with the balloon. What’s the cool thing at a parade? To have them come to you. You can’t look at them as a little kid in the summer because of the trees... View points are hindered by the tree’s canopy?

NB – are they pruning or thinning?

JH – they are creating space for balloons to go through. The City has the goal to cover Fourth Avenue with canopy. If this is parade route

SPdB - They are asking for 24 feet wide space to accommodate the balloons.

JH – these trees are round crowned. They want to keep on growing.

JH – Seafair is counting on having its way with the City from here on out.

PS – This is an awkward one because they are coming to us late. There needs to be compensation to plant trees downtown this year. There should be compensatory measures to plant trees downtown this year.

NB – pressure is very strong. That’s probably where Mayor and Council are.

PS – maybe our angle would be to look for money.

NB – pressure of economic need – balloons are sponsorship

JR – Giving the economy of the parade and shift to balloons. Long-term route should be identified to accommodate parades, and this route should be without trees, for viewing the balloons.

JF – Am I the only one that would like to go see the route? What does 24 feet look like?

PS – two lanes in downtown. On Second Ave that wouldn’t be an issue. On Fourth they are going to have to prune and tie back.

JH – not good use of public employees time

JF – how do you agree to heavy prune in terms of location. When it comes to heavy pruning isn’t it more difficult?

PS – there are ways to measure

JH- You devalue a tree by heavy pruning

JF – what are those values?

NB – is the collective value of the group of trees...

PS – I would do 200 trees. What was the cost to plant a tree downtown?

SPdB – I’m checking but I remember the figure \$500 per tree, depending on how much concrete needs to be cut

JR – is the value of the tree really about its storm water interception or is it really about this is a priority of the City to make this corridor a pedestrian friendly, business district, tourist attraction...

PS – both

JR – this number pales in comparison

PS – I think it's both the value of having a vibrant, green retail street, that's one. There is also the atmospheric value of shade, habitat, stormwater is a second one and they are both very powerful. Second avenue trees are columnar. They are big but don't have as much canopy.

JF – I see where Jeff is going, the value to the business district. Business is better, people frequent those treed streets.

JR – I wonder if the DSA has weighed in yet. Would they be a good voice in the conversation for a long term solution.

PS – A lot of people don't get the issue. They think, "c'mon prune the trees." I deal with this all the time, it's a few branches... I don't think they would get the nuance of the long-term effect

JF – Say again what you were thinking... 200 trees.

PS – You might need to define 'downtown' because it might be difficult to plant 200 trees downtown on certain streets this year. If we expand it to the industrial area to lower Queen Anne. That's \$100K.

NB – are they one-to-one?

PS – I think that if you plant 1 ½ to 2 inch trees

MB – if they were to mitigate... they could also show that they added trees downtown

PS – if we want to move in the direction of developers mitigating. You have to practice what you preach. The City needs to be doing best practices in advance of their code changes.

NB – this is very visible and sets precedent

GB – would be interesting to devote time to a special field trip to know what we are talking about in the letter.

JF – would feel more informed. We are a new commission

PS – trees as infrastructure. We are stewarding the infrastructure. We have a 40% goal in the Comp Plan. We are stewarding that goal.

JH – The way they say: don't tax you, don't tax me, tax they guy behind the tree

NB – letter is a good opportunity to educate the public. To draw out issues and inform the public.

JH – how long has the City been doing this? How many years? It's hundred of dollars per tree; traffic and pedestrian control. Logistics. Seafair doesn't pay close to what it costs.

PS – where does this pruning cost come out of? Do we wait to do the walk of the avenue to send the letter?

PS – If Seafair is not covering the whole cost, where does the remainder of the budget come from? What's the source of funds?

ACTION: A motion was made to request a full report from SDOT on a budget for the pruning work to be done to accommodate Seafair's Torchlight parade and to identify the source of funds for the work that is not going to be covered by Seafair. The motion was seconded and carried.

ACTION: A motion was made to meet with SDOT staff on site and do a tour of the parade route to see the impact pruning would have. The motion was seconded and carried.

SPdB will make the request and also get a report after work was done for actual expenditures.

NB – try to aim at the second meeting of the month?

UFC fact sheet, messaging, and speaking opportunities calendar

PS – talked with Matt. He has some ideas and will make the first cut. Good to go out to neighborhood meetings but should have speaking points available.

UFC – fact sheet to move to next week

Seattle reLeaf Materials – Jana Dilley (OSE)

Jana Dilley (OSE) presented the outreach materials she has created as part of the Seattle reLeaf program.

JH – How many trees have you planted this spring?

JD – she doesn't plant in the spring

JR – is there an particular gap in the information out there?

JD – there are a lot of resources beyond what the City provides. ISA information. A seasonal brochure would be great – hasn't see anything in that format.

JH – advocate to get word out similar to what SPU did – with bill inserts.

JD – has done work with other local organizations such as ECOS in south Seattle. Worked with them last year going door to door and promote

OS – keep grass out of tree zone? Are you seeing that would it be beneficial to reach to an institution?

JD – it's important to identify the main issue. Such as mature tree care. You need different materials for different target markets.

JF- maybe need additional capacity?

PS – white a letter advising the City to address certain issues. When grass grows around trees damage happens.

NB – residential side of things. Address the love-hate relationship people have with trees. How to help people that want to do the right thing and needs resources

JD – has the 'ask the expert' area. There is a formalized archive of questions and answers. There is an 'ask the expert' button with specific questions that Jana responds to.

NB – we can be more direct. Need piece for people to feel related to. Website is the right tool.

PS – is that something that we would like to do? Provide input to the website?

JD – will put on workplan for next year.

JH _ role of the UFC – to encourage out of the box thinking. Developers should have been asked to plant trees when they built the stadium. Get movers and shakers to invest in trees.

JR – CLC has been conduit for those connections

JF – Having problem with this agenda item. There is a link to GSP and reLeaf from UFC website. Could take the form of a massive campaign to get millionaires involved.

Are other Commissions in Facebook?

GB – it's an awareness issue. Plan has a goal, part of implementation of plan has to do with awareness. His concern is how is the city doing? What is the comprehensive awareness of the plan?

NB – there isn't enough community understanding. Very good idea to bring up at meeting with IDT.

JR – think about messaging of UFC. Different from message around canopy cover and trees benefits

NB – Facebook page allows the community to provide input.

JR – can push information. Once people 'like' your facebook page.

JF – would need somebody to respond to comments right away

NB – will need monitoring

JF – who would play that role?

NB – the chair?

JR – this goes more to advocating for canopy cover goal. Interesting to propose advocacy as part of the plan.

PS – confused as to where the link is....

NB – in order to advise the Council, there needs to be more information about value of canopy so citizens protect it.

PS – huge gap about the value

NB – Do we do it or advise Council to do it.

JR – it's about marketing of UFC vs. marketing of the UFMP

NB – consistency policy moves

PS – When does UFC get involved

PS – As UFC matures have role more intuitive rather than reactive

NB – start Facebook face and link it to UFC website

PS – advantage would be to get linked

GB – how departments do the work to implement the UFMP – UFC should be aware of that.

JF – main focus is to advise Mayor and CC

NB – residents are protecting or not trees. Sees lots of trees being cut down

PS – that's why the Seafair issue is important to address. Sacramento has great canopy.

New Business and Announcements

JR – Great City – Green infrastructure group focusing on trees as infrastructure. Potential for collaboration.

PS – two weeks ago had Parks and SPU presenting. This week have Parks presenting. Make case for trees as infrastructure, find alternative funding sources – find gap – find people with interest and connect them to get into action.

PS – it's a mixed group. They don't all think alike

JF – announcement – he is no longer to CLC. He is now the Washington State Parks Foundation Executive Director

Adjourn

Community input:

From: Steve Zemke [mailto:stevezemke@msn.com]
Sent: Friday, May 06, 2011 4:34 PM
To: Pinto_de_Bader, Sandra
Subject: Portland's estimates of its urban forest economic value

Here is where I got the information from I mentioned at the UFC meeting on Wednesday:

<http://www.portlandonline.com/portlandplan/index.cfm?a=270966&c=51427>

The economic value is also referenced here:

<http://www.uercportland.org/?q=node/9>

"Results reveal that Portland's urban forest canopy is a complex, multi-species, multi-aged resource valued at roughly \$5 billion that produces over \$52 million in environmental and aesthetic benefits annually. Roughly 1.5 million trees grow on publicly owned property, comprising just under half of the urban forest canopy, costing the city and private property owners over \$6.5 million annually to maintain, and returning \$3.80 in benefits for each dollar invested in their care and maintenance."

And here is the actual report from 2007:

<http://www.portlandonline.com/shared/cfm/image.cfm?id=171829>