

**Urban Forestry Commission (UFC)
December 12, 2012
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

Matt Mega (MM) – chair
John Small (JS) – vice chair
Gordon Bradley (GB)
Tom Early (TE)
Leif Fixen (LF)
John Floberg (JF)
Jeff Reibman (JR)
Erik Rundell (ER) Non-voting

Staff

Sandra Pinto de Bader (SPdB) - OSE
Phyllis Shulman – CM Conlin’s office
Mark Mead (MMead) - Parks

Public

Steve Zemke
Nicholas Dankers
Michael Oxman

Absent- Excused

Peg Staeheli (PS)

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>

Call to Order

2013 Work Plan – discussion continues and possible vote

People assigning ownership to different items in the work plan

GB – Phyllis mentioned at the last meeting to do working meetings with Council central staff and CM Conlin’s office.

MM – We have done these type of meetings this past year.

JF – can you explain the item related to the budget under the UFMP piece?

MM – This is a big task

SPdB – the Commission could request information on individual budgets from members of the IDT to get acquainted with the new biennial budget.

ACTION: A motion was made to approve the 2013 Work Plan as amended and as a living document. The motion was seconded and carried.

MM – the most important thing is that Commissioners are tasked with bringing items forward

Leif- remove Parks from the item of private views.

JF – Going to Council in the morning to testify in Second and Union rezone. Would like to make a comment as a UFC member in terms of the UFMP. Spurring re-development would be a benefit providing for relief of pressure from neighborhoods doing heavier lifting on canopy. The more we can concentrate development the better for the City's ability to increase canopy cover.

Bell Street Park briefing – Mark Mead (Parks)

MMead – this project has been in the works for 3 years. Ambitious plans for putting in tree protection and growth structures. There were discussions with SPU and Parks staff around potential impacts of planting trees close to water mains. To accommodate existing UG utilities UG structures wouldn't fit. Instead installed quite a bit of structural soil. One can drive over it and it doesn't compact. There is a specific aggregate size of crushed rock, compaction doesn't reduce air pockets and thus allows larger tree growth in the area. Purple Ash (60') and Locust. He proposed tulip trees but they were not accepted because they get too large. 18 locusts and 19 purple ash. Also 6 shore pine and a combination of 15 small maples in three different forms and they'll be in the planter boxes. Drawings are by block. It looks similar block to block but there are differences depending on existing conditions UG. They are trying to create a non-linear walkway. Create this as a walking space (not jogging on linear). The big thing has to do with the addition of the structural soil. This will be an experiment to see how it works. It will be a few years before the emerald ash borer before it gets here. Trees should be mature and not as susceptible then. There is a large diversity of plantings to create both canopy for the downtown area and keep open space. Bell Street gets a lot of foot traffic late at night on weekends and people want to feel safe. Parks had to re-create as-is drawings of the existing water mains so as to be able to place trees 5 feet away.

JF – where is the dog park? At 3rd or 4th. How is that park integrated?

MMead – we talked to the dog off-leash people and keeping trees inside the off-leash area has been a struggle because dog owners don't want them.

As the neighborhood is infilled there has been more use of the dog park and drug usage has gone down. The dog park has had a lot of usage.

JF – he walked there the other night and it's well lit and well used. Quite different now.

MMead – compliments to Park's PMs, Landscape architects, architects, and engineering staff that took on the idea of installing large trees.

JR – So Lake Union development... maybe someday those areas can be linked up.

MMead – as you walk in that corridor as it is today it's still feels confined. The new park will help.

TE – how has SPU determined the 5 feet distance?

MMead – I don't know. They believe that tree roots will go 10 feet underground. That was something that we are still discussing with them. This is a good plan. This is experimental. The structures (silva cells) would have been an increased cost. Structural soil is around 30-40% more than regular soil. To install silva cells you have to do a lot of excavation and then fill them up with structural soil. They are going 30" with structural soils. Originally they were going to install silva cells on one side of the street and structural soil on the other to mix it up and experiment. Estimate 15-20% more canopy at maturity. Existing trees were not in good condition and close to the end of their life (there were ash and columnar maple) and very close to structures and had been cut back a lot.

JF – in the future, calculating impact to canopy cover ahead of time would be good.

MMead – golden locust – looking at color and resilience. Had to compromise on type of trees going in Linden and Tulip trees were too large for the site. This space is not big enough for conifers.

TE – have the structural soils doubled the planting space?

MMead – what they were going for was to create the recommended volume of soil (10 cubic yard per inch diameter of tree at maturity) , in most cases they were only able to accomplish only 40% of the goal. They looked at the idea of tunneling, but that didn't go through the SDOT and SPU review but it was looked at.

TE – would identify the increase in soil volume and the amount that would be ideal for a mature tree and the actual tree canopy.

MMead – they did do that study. SVR did a study by tree species and types of soils.

TE – my point is that if you put in a 60' tree in less soil than it requires, then you can't count on that tree getting to 60 feet.

MMead – the idea behind the structural soil is that they provide growing place and control the amount of available resources and thus control the height of the tree. Such a large tree (60 feet) would be out of context for the site, so, if we reduce the soil content to 40% you'll have an impact on the actual height of the mature tree and be able to manage the actual tree size. Might be getting 40-45 feet trees.

LF – is there anything that, as we update the UFMP, is there anything that we can write into the plan to support this type of project?

MMead – I asked the engineers and PMs about that. The main issue was the utility specs. The value of the UFC is to support that discussion. (Sandra mentioned the item in the Action Agenda to develop a policy for decision making in cases of conflicts between trees and other infrastructure).

JF – trees are recognized as infrastructure of comparable value as other infrastructure might do the trick.

MMead – asset value of trees has been sorely undervalued.

JF – what’s the next project like this?

MMead – Mapes Creek Bear Shiva – creating a cross between a landscape and a Salmon bearing riparian stream in the middle of an active park. Interesting project because it’s right next to a wetland. Looking at restoring a creek that has been contained for 60 years. How to bring back Salmon and introduce trees. Very interesting project. Another project is the Jefferson Park reservoir – worked with the cherry blossom group and will be planting more trees there. It has 250 trees in, 30% of them won’t survive due to poor planting and condition they were brought in. Trying to turn it into an arboretum.

Parks Department is in a huge turnaround on how we maintain things and coming up with the true cost of maintenance is. We are talking about the additional cost (besides maintaining trees), such as leaf removal, etc.

ER – is this wholly funded through the levy?

MMead – it was a mix of levy and funding from SDOT. Parks will not be maintaining the street surface (that will be SDOT).

MM – thank you.

2012 Annual Report – initial conversation

MM – haven’t had an opportunity to go through this in detail. Are we missing anything?

TE – the other project we heard about was the Seawall.

JR – other projects reviewed without recommendation. In addition to recommendations issued we held meetings and reviewed on the following issues: LIST THEM (Seawall, Major Institution Overlays, Bell Street Park, etc....)

JS – the Seawall raises the piece of when should we be talking to the larger project of the waterfront.

TE – the Seawall is fully funded and sets the framework to what happens on the waterfront (which is not fully funded).

MM – Peg also brought the issue of when should we begin talking about tree planting for the waterfront. We as Commissioners should keep track of those issues.

Phyllis – Encourage the UFC to get involved sooner than later on the waterfront. The way they are dealing with trees is interesting and are working on design ongoingly. Their approach was more about design and aesthetic and not so much ecosystems.

Contact person – PM is DPD.

GB – We had a number of presentations on i-Tree. Had the UFC been involved from the get go, they would have ask different questions.

MM – good point. We are in a good position to try and influence these types of metrics.

MM – how much is it a problem with design professionals

JF – it’s a tension between aesthetics and native species

LF – the urban settings is not really a native setting.

JS – smaller meetings is better.

MM – we are at point where we need Brennon to give us another presentation on the newest draft.

JS – I would like to know what is happening with the street tree ordinance.

MM – the idea was to deal with all three pieces at a time. WE have not commented on the UFMP. Maybe a small group could get together and tackle the UFMP sooner than later. MM can be a part of it Leif and John F will participate.

MM – cancelling January 2. Agenda items for the 9.

TE – is there an opportunity to contact DPD – SANDRA TO TALK TO DPD TO SEE WHEN THE NEXT ITERATION OF THE REGS ARE READY TO PRESENT.

SANDRA TO SCHEDULE A BRIEFING FROM SEAWALL AND WATERFRONT – FOR 1/9/13

GB – Brennon talked about the different cities they looked at when developing the tree regs. Is that of interest to explore. The merits of having someone come up and talk about.

Erik – to get Sandra a contact name.

Phyllis – was recently briefed by Brennon. Want to make sure they have the right framework. Asked Brennon not to do more work at this point. That’s why she wants to engage with the UFC before DPD keeps on moving forward.

MM – do you have concerns about what he is proposing?

Phyllis – has ideas on all of it. UFMP, St. tree ordinance and DPD’s piece.

MM – Check Brennon’s availability. Michael Jenkins, Phyllis, for January 9.

Public comment

SZ – Tree Ordinance – invite someone from Portland to visit and hear what they have done. They went through a very thorough process.

Next month’s agenda items

Adjourn