

SEATTLE URBAN FORESTRY COMMISSION

John Floberg, Chair • John Small, Vice-Chair
Gordon Bradley • Tom Early • Leif Fixen • Matt Mega • Jeff Reibman • Erik Rundell • Peg Staeheli

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

March 13, 2013

Meeting Notes

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

Attending

Commissioners

John Floberg (JF) - chair
John Small (JS) – vice-chair
Gordon Bradley (GB)
Tom Early (TE)
Leif Fixen (LF)
Erik Rundell (ER)

Staff

Sandra Pinto de Bader (SPdB) - OSE
Hannah McIntosh - SDOT
Jessica Murphy - SDOT

Public

Steve Zemke

Absent- Excused

Matt Mega (MM)
Jeff Reibman (JR)
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

Chair report

JF – we'll be hearing from SDOT on seawall and waterfront projects.

Report – UFSP committee has met and will meet again on 3/28. Phyllis just handed a draft stewardship approach language.

On April 3 we are going to be hearing from the IDT. They will present the 2012 UFMP progress report and the 2013 work plan.

We are hearing from departments on budgets. We heard Parks and we'll be hearing from SDOT, SCL, and reLeaf in the next month or two.

Looking at the possibility to move the 5/1 meeting to 5/15.

GB – something was sent out on DPD's project.

JF – yes, we'll be working on a recommendation at the 4/3 meeting.

Erik – one thing we didn't touch on was enforcement. Are we going to have that discussion?

JF – yes at the next meeting.

Seattle Waterfront project timeline briefing – Hannah McIntosh (SDOT) and Seawall project update – Jessica Murphy (SDOT)

Deputy program manager for the waterfront redevelopment program. It's a big body of work. Big-picture overview. The opportunity is made possible by the fact that the Alaskan Way viaduct is coming down. The Seawall is seismically vulnerable and needs to be replaced. There are several public agencies and private partners involved.

The boring machine is currently in transit from Japan. City of Seattle is coordinating with other agencies. The first section of the seawall is funded and work will start in the fall. The second phase is not yet funded.

Waterfront Seattle is the bundle of the different elements of the waterfront project. There are three partner projects.: Colman Dock redevelopment (WA state ferries) marine borers are eating away the dock, the terminal needs to be replaced as well. Coordinating closely as well. Seattle Aquarium will be doing a sizable expansion that will happen along the way. The other project is part of the Pike Place market, redevelopment of a surface parking lot. There is a lot happening.

Beginning of 2016 is the point in which the bored tunnel will be open and the viaduct will be demolished. The seawall project is on an accelerated schedule to get as much of the project complete by then.

Concept design is finished for the Waterfront. Endorsed by CC and Mayor in August 2012. We are 60% secure with the funding for the overall waterfront program. Our next large piece of funding will be a local improvement district for downtown. Property owners that are positively impacted by the project will be asked to contribute. If successfully formed (mid-2014) then majority of program will be funded.

This sets the stage for all the City-led work.

GB – seismic issues with the seawall. The tunnel starts first and then the seawall starts. Isn't it risky to have the boring machine working while the seawall is being repaired?

Jessica Murphy – we are going to be coordinating closely and managing the risk.

Want to talk about the boundaries of the seawall project. Two phases, central phase (Washington to Virginia) and the north phase. I'll talk about the central phase. The seawall is old and vulnerable to seismic damage and marine storms. The ballot initiative passed to help fund it. Goal is to build a stable foundation for the rest of the elements to come and to restore the aquatic habitat adjacent to the wall. Opportunity to improve the ecosystem. Can't restore the natural habitat fully but trying to make a corridor of enhanced habitat. Construction phase of Seawall is to be finished before the viaduct gets demolished. The structure is compromised due to erosion by sea borers. Restored condition will provide habitat for migrating salmon, the sidewalk surface will have a glass component to allow light through and encourage marine life. Replacing timber piles and are injecting cement slurry into the ground to

stabilize soils. Some elements will be permanent and will stay on for the waterfront. Other elements will be temporary and will be removed (the road will be replaced with the pedestrian promenade of the waterfront project).

The urban forestry element: we are being mindful that there are things the seawall needs for its construction, but what could be put back knowing that the rest of the project is temporary and will be removed. Maybe looking at temporary planting boxes that can be moved once the waterfront project comes in, providing interim canopy.

LF – similar to the Big Dig in Boston.

Jessica – we are looking at options. Existing trees are in conflict with some of the seawall construction. We will have to remove the trees that are out there today to accomplish the replacement of the seawall. Are some transplant potential? Trying to be mindful of that as they plan the project.

JS – There won't be any trees in the re-design that will be as close to the water.

Jessica – we are looking at the space that is between the road and the railing to put planter boxes with trees.

GB – we may have seen something like this. Sounds like they are dismissing the ornamentals as inconsequential. They do provide value.

JS – we challenge you to find literature to support that statement. The design is what we challenge. Planter boxes are not going to provide ecological services they currently provide.

Jessica – we have been doing extensive studies and will continue to do it to see impacts after 10 years. Trying to manage the transitions between light and dark as the corridor progresses.

Putting a beach at Washington street. Will include an inter-tidal zone with trees and other plantings. 150 ft wide.

JS – the last time they presented to us there were planters closer to the wall face. We gave our comments back then.

Jessica – took this project from Jennifer Wieland. Sorry if she doesn't have the background. Can investigate how the evolution of the project happened and get back to you.

ER – what will happen to the trees in the planters?

Hannah – the idea is that they will be incubators and then they will be re-planted. The schedule is very accelerated for the seawall.

Landscape architect of the project has been advocating for the trees. Advocating to save maples. Still trying to coordinate with final selection of the trees that will go in the planter boxes.

LF - how long is this temporary phase?

Jessica – we are trying to keep things as long as they can stay and put things back at the earliest opportunity. Construction sequence will dictate when we plant trees. The waterfront project has to go through construction sequencing as well, to be able to know how long is temporary.

Hannah, the earliest the road can start construction is 2016.

LF – if this is planting trees for four years. Like the incubator idea but what's the cost of that.

Jessica – trying to keep the area vibrant for the businesses. Trying also to make attractions out of construction. But it's important to keep a sense of normalcy in the long construction process.

JF – how about the resiliency of the wall in relation to climate change.

Jessica – was designed to accommodate the highest potential sea level rise. Designed drainage systems to be better equipped for future threats due to climate change.

Steve – if we could get discussion of diversity of trees that will be included in the incubator plan. What mix of conifer vs. deciduous and number of trees. What's the end plan.

Hannah – Talking about the Waterfront project.

Three elements:

1. New Alaskan way road. The majority of the traffic that currently uses the viaduct will use the deep bore tunnel. Anticipate street trees as part of the design. In the southern portion there will be a landscaped median.
2. dedicated bike facility – cycle track likely
3. Pedestrian promenade is the third element. There is new space for plantings and seating areas and for pedestrians to stroll . Are exploring how feasible are opportunities to introduce GSI items.

LF – like the idea of having the bike facility support soils for trees to grow into.

Hannah – the viaduct is a huge utility corridor and the bike path is being considered to be where the utilities would go. Will do pedestrian friendly crossings. Thanks to the wheel. Large landscaped pedestrian connection between the market and the aquarium and water front (pier 62, 63) as part of the overlook walk. A plaza between the aquarium and overlook walk. Working on an overall sustainable strategy for maintaining all these elements.

Schedule – 30% early 2014. Will have more detail then.

JF – is there an opportunity before 30% for the UFC to give input.

Hannah – yes 2013 is a good time to have a more in depth conversation.

LF – as long as the temporary trees come from the approved street tree list, then they can move forward.

TE – as long as they are temporary, we shouldn't constrict choices to the street tree list.

SZ – are there going to be overhead utilities?

TE – the thing that I’m concerned about is giving the available soil space to provide for the trees. One of the questions is how is the seawall making accommodations for the waterfront? I haven’t heard a lot from them saying that they are going to do something to accommodate the waterfront.

Hannah – due to the timeline of the seawall (due to safety concerns) we are not able to coordinate better.

JS – salinity issues will threaten the trees.

Hannah – there will be some permeability.

LF – how do we make soil volume for trees a priority instead of dedicating areas for utilities instead of soil? I want to make sure we can affect the results.

Landscape Architect – wanting to use the seawall to do something good for future trees.

LF – how can we advocate for trees and when.

Hannah – a couple more months for a new briefing and then receiving a position paper from the Commission. Especially around preserving soil space.

GB – one of the things that come up with the UFMP is when there is this focus on canopy that ignores the larger urban ecosystem. We are interested in the whole ecosystem and talk about trees in the context of sustainability. That gets us at the spirit of what we are trying to do. A functioning urban ecosystem.

Public Comment

SZ – look at the project as a functioning unit. Think of trees in the context of functional attributes. Habitat value of native trees. What’s the ecological value in terms of maintaining the other natural life that occurs in the city. Insects are important for birds. Look at ways to use the temporary trees. Make certain that they get the flexibility not to be bound to trees in planters. I think you guys are doing a good job and raising the right questions.

LF – this project brings up an interesting idea. What are your thoughts on mitigation. We talked about this in the new DPD plan. Give people the opportunity to give money to mitigate. There is a value to the City

JS – compensation for the loss of ecological function.

LF - Just like you do with utilities.

JS – there is no requirement to mitigate for loss of function due to loss of trees outside critical areas.

LF – start writing the foundation of this concept in the UFMP.

GB – practically, trying to calculate contribution of trees taken down, it would be very challenging. It would have to be theoretical not quantitative.

JF – need critical mass.

LF – in lieu of mitigation you give them a bonus for them showing that they have established trees elsewhere maybe.

JS – can't punish people for having trees on their property. For public projects you could say you need to provide a certain percentage of trees to mitigate the loss of ecological function. With public policy side can be more robust than it would be with private projects.

TE – mitigation would have to take place off site. Street trees won't be able to be accommodated.

GE – if they cut utilities to people, they notice in a few minutes. Not the same case when we talk about trees.

LF – it's more about the City sending the message to the constituency that trees are important.

Next month's agenda items

Adjourn

Community input