

SEATTLE URBAN FORESTRY COMMISSION

Leif Fixen, Chair • Tom Early, Vice-Chair
Gordon Bradley • Mariska Kecskes • Donna Kostka • Richard Martin • Joanna Nelson de Flores • Jeff Reibman
Erik Rundell • Steve Zemke

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

October 14, 2015

Meeting Notes

Seattle Municipal Tower, Room 2750 (27th floor)
700 5th Avenue, Seattle

Attending

Commissioners

Leif Fixen - chair
Tom Early – vice chair
Gordon Bradley
Mariska Kecskes
Donna Kostka
Joanna Nelson de Flores
Erik Rundell
Steve Zemke

Absent- Excused

Richard Martin
Jeff Reibman

Staff

Deb Brown - Parks
Barb DeCaro - Parks
Doug Critchfield - Parks
Sandra Pinto de Bader - OSE
Michael Yadrick - Parks

Public

Ken Shaw
Lex Voorhoeve
John Gibaut
Jean Davis
Linda Murtfeldt – Seattle Audubon

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

Leif called the meeting to order.

Chair report

The upcoming UFC/Urban Forest Interdepartmental Team annual meeting is on November 4
The following meeting (November 11) is a holiday so there will be no UFC meeting.
Steve would like to propose having public comment at beginning of both meetings to be discussed at the end of the meeting under new business.

Carkeek Park presentation – Lex Voorhoeve

Lex has been working as a forest steward for years now. He leads a group that gets together every Friday from 9:00 to noon to do restoration in Carkeek Park.

They are concerned that this valuable asset will be lost in the not too far future. He would like the UFC to be aware of this ongoing process that is wiping out our forests. He is not asking for money, just would like to get the UFC's understanding and support.

The group works 50 days a year rain or shine. They contribute 54,000 sweat equity hours per year. He presented photos showing the work the group does. They are also the ears and eyes for the park. They report things they see and need attention such as an undercut edge along the trails that is dangerous. He has told Parks about this and doesn't always feel heard. That's why he is here with his partners.

Carkeek Park was established in 1920. There were hardly any houses in the park's vicinity. The land used to be agricultural use. The park was left to its own and by 1946 a secondary forest of Alder and maple trees established itself. In 1957 urban development south of the park was fully built out. By 2007 it had become a high forest. It is now 95 years old. If you make a map you can see two types of forests, a young one with evergreen trees (especially north of the playground) and the other, the majority of the park, is over mature red alder and maple forest with trees that are rapidly declining and at the end of its life cycle. The report "Accelerating conifer regeneration in Seattle Parks" confirms this. This is a concerning situation. The group considers this a catastrophe hanging over our heads.

We have to accept that the alder section of Carkeek Park is over mature and declining. We need to be aware of the fact that 20 to 30 years from now that whole section of the park will be gone. What do we need to do, if anything? We need to recognize the chaos that is going to happen. We can decide to be proactive or not. Doing nothing is also a management strategy.

If we choose to be proactive, then:

1. Define the future forest, what are we aiming at?
 - a. A natural forest or an urban forest?
 - b. Natural regeneration or planting?

The park also has an overpopulation of mountain beavers and this is the reason why natural regeneration will not take place. Mountain beavers will eat the seedlings. This is also a challenge with a planting strategy (which is costly) because beavers will also eat new plantings. Providing protection for new plantings is costly.
2. Assuming we opt for an urban forest, what do we expect the forest to deliver? – Diversity in age and composition, presenting a diverse nature experience to the public; diversity in habitats for flora and fauna; safety and accessibility.
3. Develop a long-term forest restoration plan for the next 60 years (planning the complex logistics for a 100 acres forest restoration, in time and space).
 - a. Find the money to do this.
 - b. Find an agency to do this. He doesn't think this would be a task for the Green Seattle Partnership (GSP). He doesn't think Parks would do that (who within the Department would do this?). We'll need to hire somebody to do this work. Carkeek Park has a management plan that was funded by Department of Neighborhoods (DON). He would like to find agreement that this needs to be done, find the money, and find somebody to do this.
4. Include in the plan:
 - a. Rigorous restoration practices like creating gaps and clear cutting certain areas.

- b. Unusual approaches like creating an interim forest.
- c. Place GSP activities in the context of the long-term plan.
- d. Local forest restoration classes to sustain a permanent body of volunteers.

They are currently trying out solutions in a one-acre site to manage beavers. Beavers are the largest erosion source in the park.

UFC question: has the park's management plan (2012) been implemented?

Response: the plan didn't have a long-term planning goal.

UFC question: This is a succession problem which is probably city-wide. Is Parks addressing this long-term forest succession issue?

Response: Michael Yadrick, plant ecologist at Parks agrees with Lex. The problem is the same. Lex is advocating for thinning and gap creation for more favorable light conditions for the appropriate trees to survive. Thanks to Lex for bringing this issue to the UFC. Parks has been studying at different potential solutions for this type of situation. NW Natural Resource group report from last year outlined strategies that could be implemented by Parks. Parks hasn't had staff capacity to pursue those strategies. Work done to date with GSP has been focusing on understory work. Thinning and clear cut strategies have not been done in Seattle although King County has done this in some areas.

Lex – Parks is not looking at natural succession. The report falls short of creating the long-term strategy with specific goals 60 years in the future. The report is a one-time action approach that is not enough. What we could do is hire a consultant and let them write a 60-year restoration plan. In order to get the money it's essential to get the support of the UFC so they can go after new money.

UFC question: why do this over 60 years?

Answer: mainly to spread the cost over time.

Lex – any GSP activity should be in the context of a long-term plan with a connection to an ultimate goal. They have been planting in Carkeek Park for 20 years and results are dismal. Restoration requires detailed attention to get the desired success rate, and they do that with volunteers. He would like to get a letter of support to the Carkeek Park Advisory Council.

UFC comment: besides DON you can go after funding from WA State DNR for a planning grant.

UFC comment: thank you for coming in and for all your work as a forest steward. Recommends including Friends of Carkeek Park to include the orchard that a lot of people are interested in. Talk to Linden Lampman at WA State DNR. The UFC would issue a letter of support for a management plan once the outline is presented and the group is seeking funding.

Doug Critchfield –it's important to remember that this is Parks' land and they are interested in working with community partners through this process.

UFC – include this issue in the next iteration of the UFSP.

Sustaining remnant native forests in Seattle – Seattle resident Ken Shaw

Ken Shaw - He would like to talk about Schmitz Preserve Park. Seattle has many beautiful forested sites and we are losing them faster than we can replant. Friends of Schmitz Park was created in 1992 partly to address crime and because a small group of retirees knew that park and didn't want to lose it. But in spite all the time and effort invested, we are losing the park. He went to elementary school close to Schmitz Park and he was told as a child that it was dangerous. This park is also a fire risk in the city. It might take 30 minutes for a spark to cause a fire and reach adjacent homes. Je has been working hard to keep plants alive by watering in these drier and warmer summers. He would like to keep these places damper longer.

Another issue is that we are letting water pour out of our streets into our park and creating erosion and social trails. He thinks we can engineer underground wells to hold the water and have volunteers use it to water the park when needed. Stewardship of this park will die with him. He can't teach what he's learned over the years.

UFC question: is the proposal to gather water to water plants planted or a more wide-spread area?
Ken – to water all over when it's too dry.

UFC question: does Parks have a fire management strategy for natural areas?

Response – This is climate change response which is work being led by OSE. Parks is looking at their practices and what they should be doing or not considering last summer. We don't know what solutions would apply throughout the system. SPU would be part of that discussion as well. He visited with SPU and they told him that Parks should be involved. He encourages Parks to reach out to SPU to partner up on this. He encourages Parks to log the hard woods especially the invasive ones. Parks is updating plans and could include fire management strategies.

Major Institution Master Planning (MIMP) process – initial discussion

Tom looked through the Code and found select spots where the UFC could weigh in. Will translate that into a letter from Tom for discussion in December.

Comp plan recommendation – continues and possible vote

Erik put together a second version of the draft recommendation. He added an introductory paragraph and didn't include other things from Cass' letter because he thought it was too detailed to include in this letter. The Commission discussed the new version.

ACTION: A motion to approve the Comp Plan comment letter as amended was made, seconded, and approved.

Public comment

Linda Murtfeldt – disagrees with Lex's point of view that the forest is dying at Carkeek. She has been taking a class and believes there are a lot of resources available and communities/groups interested in Carkeek Park. UFC response –would be a good idea to coordinate with parks and be part of the public process.

Audubon sent a letter RE dogs in parks. Worries about the threat to ground nesting birds.

UFC comment – it's very wildlife centric. Sandra will request presentation from Parks around Dogs policy.

New business and announcements

Steve made a proposal to place public comment at the beginning and at the end of both meetings so people have the opportunity to comment on the agenda.

ACTION: A motion to add public comment at the beginning and at the end of each meeting giving people the opportunity to speak for up to two minutes was made, seconded, and approved.

Adjourn

Public input

From: Cass Turnbull [mailto:cassturnbull@comcast.net]

Sent: Monday, October 12, 2015 9:32 PM

To: Pinto de Bader, Sandra; o.rhyan@gmail.com; 'Adam Tyrrell'; 'Amber Vora'; 'Andrea Okomski'; 'Andrew Kirsh'; 'Armando Paz'; 'Barbara O'Halloran'; 'Becky Chaney'; Bradburd, Bill; 'Bonnie Miller'; 'Brian Ramey'; Bultmann, Jan; 'Carolyn Clark'; 'Cathy Jaramillo'; 'Cheryl Trivison'; Clifthorne, Evan; 'Crescent Calimpong'; 'David Miller'; 'Elizabeth Campbell'; Percival, Emily S; 'Eric Carlson'; 'Heidi Siegelbaum'; 'James Davis'; Murphy-Ouellette, Jeanie; 'JeanieMurphy'; 'John Dixon'; 'Kathy Colombo'; 'Kathy Holzer'; 'Kay Shoudy'; 'Ken Yocom'; 'Kristy Bernert'; 'Kyle Stetler'; larrylange36@comcast.net; 'Lauren Urgenson'; 'Linda Murtfeldt'; 'Liz Kearns'; 'Manly Norris'; 'Margaret Thouless'; 'Mark Ahlness'; 'Mary Fleck'; 'Matt Lee'; maxsilver@gmail.com; McConaghy, Eric; 'Melissa Poe'; 'Merica Whitehall'; 'Michael Oxman'; 'Mike Ruby'; 'Paige Hulse'; 'Pat Naumann'; 'Pat Whempner'; 'Patrick Mann'; 'Richard Ellison'; 'Rory Denovan'; 'Ruth Williams'; 'Sara Welch'; 'Shelly Leonard'; 'Siegelbaum, Heidi'; 'Stephen Schreck'; 'Steve Zemke'; 'Susan North'; 'Susan Zeman'; 'Tatiana Choulika'; 'Toby Thaler'; 'Vera Giampietro'; 'Wallis Bolz'

Subject: RE: New documents posted on the Urban Forestry Commission website

Dear good people of the UFC,

I see that you are reviewing the comprehensive plan again. Thank heaven they are keeping the 40% canopy goal. But that is only half the story. I fear that we are losing private land to development at an incredible rate. And that it that private open space that determines the amount of trees that can potentially exist in the future. With that in mind, it is doubly important that we add even more public open space (usually parks), to make up for those losses. The following is my open letter to the City. I hope you find it interesting.

Cass Turnbull

Open letter to Seattle Mayor and City
Council

09-07-15

We know that the environment and the people of Seattle suffer from the ill effects of urbanization. The heat island effect, the sewer overflows and marine pollution, heat exacerbated illnesses, habitat degradation—these are all the result of development which is unmitigated by a sufficient amount of green space and the Urban Forest.

Taken with global warming it all adds up to an environmental crisis for Seattle. What is the City's reaction in the Comprehensive Plan's proposed update? Is it to increase our open space goals, to seek out new funding sources for green space acquisition, or tie greenspace acquisition to development? No. The City's response

is to reduce open space goals to be more 'realistic' and cut the parks acquisition budget to a record low. This is at a time when Seattle is awash in money from development boom, and experiencing unprecedented losses of privately owned open space.

Our current comprehensive plan goal is to have one acre of public open space for every 100 City residents. And we are pretty close to that now. By way of comparison Portland has 2.3 acres per 100 people, DC has 1.3 acres, Atlanta has 1.1, Seattle has .9, Boston .7 and NYC .5 acres.

Because of the predicted arrival of thousands of new people in coming decades, The Department of Development says we would need to add **70 acres of open space** per year to meet those same goals. Between 2000 and 2014 we averaged a gain of **18 acres** per year.

The Seattle Urban Tree Canopy Project Report says we need 410 acres of new tree canopy coverage to make our goal of **40% by 2035**. We have somewhere between **23-29% canopy coverage now**. Pittsburgh has 42%; DC has 35%, Huston 30%, Boston 22%. LA 18% and Jersey City 11%.

By way of a different comparison, the Parks budget for land acquisition in 2016 is \$ **6.9 million**. The City plans to spend **\$28 million** in coming years to improve access to the Westcrest dog park. According to the Move Seattle website, the City will spend **\$83 million** each year over the next ten years on safety measures to 'eliminate crashes and accidents'.

'It's hard to get new open space', the drafters of the comprehensive plan tells us, 'because land just isn't available.' Meanwhile the City is planning to sell 30 surplus properties, the 'substations' which are practically mini-parks now, a large piece of surplus land in the densely packed South Lake Union Urban Village, and it plans to sell 33 acres of sensitive areas--steep wooded slopes, open meadow and wetlands--in an underserved southwest Seattle neighborhood. All to become yet more development.

'But', the City says, 'we need that land for low income housing'. It's not true. Housing can always go upward. Open space **must** be ground based.

Can anything be done to stop the paving of paradise? The transformation of a once scenic City into an intimidating set of concrete blocks, where the water views and back yards are reserved for the rich?

Yes! Adopt the 2015-16 TreePAC Green Agenda: Increase setbacks and landscaping requirements on private property, reduce maximum lot coverage in single family zones, increase tree retention by increasing its value in Green Factor, set robust open space goals for industrial/manufacturing zones, adopt new and innovative funding and acquisition strategies like Tree Fund, require surplus land to stay in the public domain, adopt a strong tree ordinance, offer financial incentives to retain open space and trees (treebates), tie open space/urban forestry funding to development, disallow exceptions to building in sensitive areas, increase open space goals, hold law and code enforcement accountable for legal violations of tree laws, keep an accurate and annual update of tree removals and a more frequent update of the tree canopy, fund non-profits who increase or maintain open space and urban forests. But mostly, stop making excuses and get more open space for Seattle before it really is too late. Once it is gone, it is gone for good.

When you sell the land, it is the end.

From The Good Earth, Pearl S. Buck

Respectfully,

Cass Turnbull

TreePAC/Open Space Advocate

From: Patty Pfeifer [pg_pfeifer@yahoo.com]
Sent: Wednesday, October 14, 2015 3:28 PM
To: aherzog@shorelinewa.gov
Subject: Interurban Trail tree preservation
October 13, 2015

Alex Herzog
Management Analyst
City of Shoreline
17500 Midvale Ave N.
Shoreline, WA 98133

Dear Mr. Herzog,

Thank you for your October 2nd reply to my September 7th email to Shoreline City Council. It would be helpful to know what your role is there at the City, to put your response in proper context. While I do appreciate a response, you appear to have missed the point of my letter. The focus of the concern expressed was the City of Shoreline administration's handling of Seattle City Light's (SCL) proposed changes to vegetation management along the Interurban Trail. The gist of the issue is that the community's faith in City Administration has been shaken by the apparent tacit acceptance of SCL's desire to once again remove trees from this city park. We thought this had been resolved in two separate contracts with City Light where they promised to continue to prune, not remove trees.

The forest canopy preservation interest of the community should be well known to the City staff as they were involved in the franchise agreement negotiations on this topic and were (or should be) aware of the over 750 petition signatures on file on the subject with the City. Given this, why did it take the Shoreline City Council to intercede when City staff should be enforcing the contracts as they are written? Further, if there was any misunderstanding or confusion regarding the contract terms, why did they not ask for direction from the Council and involve the community (which was instrumental in developing the terms) before any decision was made? Sadly, your recent response reinforces the very concerns that have been expressed.

The text of much of your letter appears to be directly excerpted from SCL publications and again appears to support the proposed vegetation management changes which are in direct violation of the letter and intent of the existing contracts. The 2012 Letter of Understanding and 2014 Franchise Agreement state "Trees will not be removed unless the tree poses a safety hazard . . .". Per Shoreline Code, a tree is defined as "A self-supporting woody plant characterized by one main trunk or, for certain species, multiple trunks, with a potential at maturity for a trunk diameter of two inches and potential minimum height of 10 feet". Calling smaller diameter trees "small-caliper stems" doesn't change that reality or the fact that these trees are protected by SCL's existing agreements with the City of Shoreline. While Shoreline Code has definitions for a variety of tree categories, the contracts simply say "trees", which is all encompassing. The protections are not limited to significant trees only, as City Light has posited. So you can see why the community is baffled by staff's continued support for SCL's agenda, instead of the interests of the community it serves and the contracts it should be upholding. Would you please provide a response in your own words regarding the issues addressed there and in this correspondence? Further, while the quoted Seattle City Light text indicates that the vegetation management work is normal and based on universal standards, why if this were the case would SCL be pruning to double the street tree clearances of other cities in our region?

Also, the Washington State Administrative Code you mention (WAC 296-24-960) does not address power line clearances, it only deals with worker safety; in this case holding SCL responsible for proper training for their line workers.

I am bcc'ing this response to everyone you included in your letter as well as a few others. I have also attached both my initial letter as well as your response for reference. I look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,

Patty Pfeifer
Shoreline resident
pg_pfeifer@yahoo.com

bcc: Mayor and Council members
Debbie Tarry, City Manager
John Norris, Assistant City Manager
Eric Friedli, Director of Parks, Recreation and Community Services
Rob Beem, Community Services Manager
Constance Perenyi, Neighborhoods Coordinator
David Bayard, Vegetation Management Supervisor, Seattle City Light
Brent Schmidt, Energy Delivery Operations, Seattle City Light
Sandi Fukumoto, Account Executive Group, Seattle City Light
Bernie Ziemianek, Director, Energy Delivery Operations, Seattle City Light
Nolan Rundquist, Seattle Forester
Shoreline Preservation Society
Seattle Urban Forestry Commission

September 7, 2015

Shoreline City Council
City of Shoreline
17500 Midvale Ave N
Shoreline, WA 98133

Dear Council Members,

I have heard that Seattle City Light (SCL) agreed to your request to delay any cutting of trees along the Interurban Trail until further discussions could take place. I wanted to thank you for interceding in this matter and holding City Light accountable to the terms of the agreements that they signed.

As you are aware, the Interurban Trail Tree Preservation Society (ITTPS) was formed to represent the interests of the community in regards to vegetation management along the Trail. And while both the Letter of Understanding (LOU) and the similar verbiage in the franchise agreement were signed only by City of Shoreline and City Light representatives, the ITTPS was instrumental in the creation of the LOU and the specific terms that were agreed to. The LOU states: "In the event significant changes are made to City Light's Vegetation Management Plan, the interests of the impacted communities will be represented and included in the planning process". Involvement of the community clearly did not occur in this instance, although I don't think there is any question that

removal of about 100 trees would represent a change in the vegetation management approach. I am not surprised that City Light would fail to honor this aspect of the agreement, but I guess I did expect more from the City of Shoreline. As I stated at the 8/24 Council meeting, I am very disappointed that Shoreline chose not to question or challenge City Light's plan, or let the community know about the plan at the time it was presented. My understanding is that City administration did not notify Lance Young (ITTPS representative) until prompted to do so by Council, about two weeks before the scheduled cutting. At that point there was no real discussion, we were simply told what City Light was going to do, and that there was nothing the City could do about it. So we are doubly grateful that the Council stepped in to demonstrate that this is not the case and that City Light is not the only or the final authority on contract interpretation.

As I'm sure you recall from the sizable community participation in meetings, petition signatures, etc. back in 2011, this issue is very important to the larger community of Trail users. It is also of personal importance to me and others who live near the Trail. I hope you can understand that our faith and confidence in the City administration has been shaken by the administration's tacit acceptance of City Light's proposed plan. We don't feel we can completely trust Shoreline to enforce the terms of the agreements with SCL, or adequately represent the community's demonstrated interests. So if we seem pushy or persistent at times, we are coming from a place of concern and uncertainty. We need to know that we can count on the City to keep us informed and involved in whatever happens on this issue, and to hold City Light accountable to the pledge they made to the community to limit vegetation management on the Trail to pruning. We know we can't count on City Light. The more I review the LOU, the clearer that is to me; they have violated the spirit and letter of that agreement in so many ways. It is very unfortunate, as they went a long ways toward earning the good will and trust of the community by working with us to come up with this agreement in the first place. They have now lost both by attempting to circumvent the contract terms and excluding the larger community from the process. I don't want to see that loss of faith happen with the City of Shoreline as well. We still have a lot of confidence in the Council and look to you to support the community's interests; I hope you will direct the City administration to do the same.

Sincerely,

Patty Pfeifer
Shoreline resident
pg_pfeifer@yahoo.com



City of Shoreline

17500 Midvale Avenue North
Shoreline, WA 98133-4921
(206) 801-2700 • Fax (206) 546-2200

October 2, 2015

Patty Pfeifer
pg_pfeifer@yahoo.com

Dear Ms. Pfeifer:

Thank you for your recent email regarding Seattle City Light's proposed vegetation management work along the Interurban Trail. Please know that the City Council requested that I respond to you on their behalf. I wanted to pass along some important information on this topic.

I first wanted to provide a little background. City Light's Vegetation Management unit is responsible for providing public safety and reliable power delivery by ensuring vegetation does not impact the electrical system. Vegetation causes more outages for City Light than any other single cause.

Vegetation management work is scheduled on a 4-year cycle and is based on utility industry best practices, Washington State Administrative Code and the American National Standards Institute requirements. City Light maintains necessary clearances for its lines by trimming trees and removing trees, brush and small caliper stems before they grow in conflict with the lines. In maintaining vegetation near electric lines, the utility strives to balance environmentally responsible, cost-efficient vegetation management with the interests of the communities it serves without compromising public safety or system reliability.

The Shoreline City Council, on August 24, 2015, passed a motion directing staff to ask Seattle City Light to delay tree and shrub removal along a portion of the Interurban Trail to allow time for the City, Seattle City Light, and the affected neighborhood to evaluate options for tree replacement, defining a tree, and for the purposes of vegetation management in the Franchise Agreement, with goals to ensure the safety and reliability of the electrical distribution system, and preservation of tree canopy for benefits to the community. Seattle City Light has agreed to delay the vegetation work as requested by the City and is working with the community on issues surrounding this work.

As such, Seattle City Light is holding a public meeting regarding its vegetation management work on the Interurban Trail on October 14, 2015 from 5:30-7 p.m. at Saint Dunstan's Church located at 722 N 145th St, Shoreline, WA 98133.

If you have further questions, please contact David Bayard, City Light's Vegetation Management Supervisor, at (206) 386-1902 or via email at david.bayard@seattle.gov.

Sincerely,

Alex Herzog
Management Analyst

cc: Mayor and Council members
Debbie Tarry, City Manager
John Norris, Assistant City Manager
Eric Friedli, Director of Parks, Recreation and Community Services
Rob Beem, Community Services Manager
Constance Perenyi, Neighborhoods Coordinator
David Bayard, Vegetation Management Supervisor, Seattle City Light
Brent Schmidt, Energy Delivery Operations, Seattle City Light