

SEATTLE URBAN FORESTRY COMMISSION

Tom Early, Chair • Steve Zemke, Vice-Chair
Weston Brinkley • Leif Fixen • Mariska Kecskes • Donna Kostka • Richard Martin • Joanna Nelson de Flores
Erik Rundell • Andrew Zellers

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

May 4, 2016

Meeting Notes

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

Attending

Commissioners

Tom Early – chair
Steve Zemke – vice-chair
Weston Brinkley
Mariska Kecskes
Donna Kostka
Joanna Nelson de Flores
Erik Rundell
Andrew Zellers

Staff

Heidi Narte - SCL
Sandra Pinto de Bader - OSE
Brent Schmidt - SDOT

Public

Lance Young

Absent- Excused

Leif Fixen
Richard Martin

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

Tom called the meeting to order. Tom wanted to give an update on the Right-of-way Improvement Manual. He met with other commissions and they would like to send a letter but before signing, he wanted to get the UFC' input. He will distribute a draft letter to the group for discussion at the next meeting.

Public comment

Lance Young is a Shoreline resident and wanted to share an article he read about how global warming is affecting the Wisconsin snowshoe hare. The snowshoe hare changes its fur color to avoid detection by predators. It is not adapting well to climate change. The article states: "Almost everything about them screams adaptation to seasons of extensive snow cover:... "The hares have outsized snowshoe feet, thick fur and an annual molt from brown to snow-white. Getting out of sync with the snot turns camouflage into a come-on for predators."

Seattle City Light budget briefing

Brent Schmidt presented SCL's budget. SCL manages 657 miles of transmission lines and 1,700 miles of distribution lines. Brent's work group manages transmission corridors. They have three contractors doing the work. They require power line clearance worker training. They have 5-8 crews working every day and they are all supervised by an ISA certified arborist. They have two arboriculturists. The landscape group takes care of substation grounds and repair for new poles in the ROW.

Before pruning for safety and reliability, they place door hangers to let people know they'll be doing work on their trees. Sometimes months go by between a door hanger/notification and the work getting done. When they have to do a removal, the people notifying find and communicate with the tree owner. Work done in the ROW is usually cheaper than work done on private yards. Work on arterials is more complicated due to the need for traffic controls.

Their maintenance work includes providing tree replanting vouchers in any given year. Within Seattle city limits they provide tree replacement cards. They gave 120 last year and only 80 people traded them in. Outside of Seattle they give tree certificates. They comply with the City's two-for-one tree replacement policy and work with Seattle reLeaf to give priority access to people to the Trees for Neighborhood tree giveaway project.

Seattle City Light Tour

Brent Schmidt and Heidi Narte led a tour of locations on Capitol Hill to showcase the challenges of pruning for safety and reliability of the grid.

New business and announcements

None.

Adjourn

Public input

From: Lance Young [mailto:lance_young@yahoo.com]

Sent: Sunday, May 08, 2016 8:22 AM

To: Pinto de Bader, Sandra

Subject: Interurban Trail and Street Tree Preservation

From: Lance Young (ITTPS)

To: Seattle Urban Forestry Commission

(Sandra.Pinto_de_Bader@seattle.gov)

Re: Interurban Trail and Street Tree Preservation

I enjoyed learning a little more about the power line feeder system and pruning cycles at your last meeting. Thank you for allowing public participation in your meetings.

I wanted to update everyone on the outcome of our Interurban tree preservation efforts that some may recall from last summer and fall, when I spoke to the commission, and to provide some important

perspective on street tree pruning in the city.

Our efforts to save the 100 or so trees from the axe along the Interurban Trail (and power line right of way) north of 145 were pretty successful. This was primarily due to the community support through hundreds of signatures on petitions and letters, and with the help of the City Council support for the community's concerns and the city's environment. If you remember from my comments last fall, this was the second attempt by the Utility to remove these trees, and this removal was attempted even though Shoreline had 2 separate signed contracts with them to protect these trees. Thank you for listening to these concerns from our community last fall!

Street tree pruning is an important issue in Seattle and our region. In Seattle there are probably more city right of way trees than any other single category besides single family residents. According to the 2013 Forest Stewardship plan 27% of the city is right-of-way land like streets etc, only 11% is parks and natural areas so the health of these trees is very important to the health of the city.

When you talk to City Light (and DOT), like everyone else, they like to talk about strengths and not mention problems/issues. The power company is doing a better job than ten years ago of getting their pruners to use proper pruning techniques, properly pruning to train trees away from power lines and poles rather than topping trees which frequently encouraged regrowth. They may well be better at this than surrounding communities like say Jefferson County on the Olympic Peninsula with much smaller pruning budgets. What Seattle City Light does not tell you is that they prune to almost double the distance from the power lines that the surrounding regions do. Portland, Snohomish PUD and others have minimum vegetation clearance distances (MVCD's) of three to five feet (much more in line with Federal Guidelines). Seattle City light however uses 10', removing perhaps double or triple the street tree canopy of others. This begs the question why does City Light need so much more clearance than everyone else around here.

The rationale provided for this difference has varied over time from saying it was a legal requirement placed on them. The administrative code most frequently quoted speaks only to keeping unqualified workers away from energized lines, not vegetation. Properly Qualified workers such as those used by City Light do not have the same restrictions. Most recently the explanation has shifted to needing more than twice the distance of other utilities because the voltage of their street wires is twice that of many others. However logical this sounds on the surface, it ignores the science involved, and the Federal (FERC & NERC) guidance provided on the subject which specifies a "Minimum Vegetating Clearance Distance" (MVCD) of about 1.2 feet for much higher voltages than Seattle or any one else uses in their street lines (69kV at our altitudes). Please see the chart included below, based on studies done by Battelle for the NERC.

FERC = Federal Energy Regulatory Commission

NERC = North American Electric Reliability Corporation

MVCD = Minimum Vegetation Clearance Distance

Respectfully Yours

Lance Young

(Table from NERC's latest guidelines FAC-003-4)

Nominal AC System Voltage (kV)	MVCD at 1.0 Gap Factor (feet)														
	Sea Level up to 500 ft	Over 500 ft up to 1,000 ft	Over 1,000 ft up to 2,000 ft	Over 2,000 ft up to 3,000 ft	Over 3,000 ft up to 4,000 ft	Over 4,000 ft up to 5,000 ft	Over 5,000 ft up to 6,000 ft	Over 6,000 ft up to 7,000 ft	Over 7,000 ft up to 8,000 ft	Over 8,000 ft up to 9,000 ft	Over 9,000 ft up to 10,000 ft	Over 10,000 ft up to 11,000 ft	Over 11,000 ft up to 12,000 ft	Over 12,000 ft up to 13,000 ft	Over 13,000 ft up to 14,000 ft
765	11.6	11.7	11.9	12.1	12.2	12.4	12.6	12.8	13.0	13.1	13.3	13.5	13.7	13.9	14.0
500	7.0	7.1	7.2	7.4	7.5	7.6	7.8	7.9	8.1	8.2	8.3	8.5	8.6	8.8	8.9
345	4.3	4.3	4.4	4.5	4.6	4.7	4.8	4.9	5.0	5.1	5.2	5.3	5.4	5.5	5.6
287	5.2	5.3	5.4	5.5	5.6	5.7	5.8	5.9	6.1	6.2	6.3	6.4	6.5	6.6	6.7
230	4.0	4.1	4.2	4.3	4.3	4.4	4.5	4.6	4.7	4.8	4.9	5.0	5.1	5.2	5.3
161	2.7	2.7	2.8	2.9	2.9	3.0	3.0	3.1	3.2	3.3	3.3	3.4	3.5	3.6	3.6
138	2.3	2.3	2.4	2.4	2.5	2.5	2.6	2.7	2.7	2.8	2.8	2.9	3.0	3.0	3.1
115	1.9	1.9	1.9	2.0	2.0	2.1	2.1	2.2	2.2	2.3	2.3	2.4	2.5	2.5	2.6
88	1.5	1.5	1.6	1.6	1.7	1.7	1.8	1.8	1.8	1.9	1.9	2.0	2.0	2.1	2.1
69	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.5	1.5

Table of MVCD values at a 1.0 gap factor (in U.S. customary units)