



## **SEATTLE URBAN FORESTRY COMMISSION**

**Weston Brinkley** (Position #3 – University), Chair  
**Julia Michalak** (Position #1 – Wildlife Biologist), Vice-chair  
**Elby Jones** (Position #2 – Urban Ecologist - ISA) • **Stuart Niven** (Position #5 – Arborist – ISA)  
**Michael Walton** (Position #6 – Landscape Architect – ISA) • **Joshua Morris** (Position #7 – NGO)  
**David Moehring** (Position # 8 – Development) • **Blake Voorhees** (Position # 9 – Realtor)  
**Jessica Hernandez** (Position #11 – Environmental Justice) • **Jessica Jones** (Position # 12 – Public Health)  
**Shari Selch** (Position # 13 – Community/Neighborhood)

*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*

### **Meeting Notes**

September 8, 2021, 3:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Via Webex call

(206) 207-1700

Meeting number: 1464 67 5049

Meeting password: 1234

*In-person meeting are not being held at this time due to the pandemic. Meeting participation is limited to access by joining the meeting through a computer or telephone conference line.*

### **Attending**

#### Commissioners

Julia Michalak - Vice Chair  
Elena Arakaki  
David Moehring  
Josh Morris  
Stuart Niven  
Michael Walton  
Elby Jones

#### Staff

Patti Bakker – OSE

#### Guests

Toby Thaler

#### Public

Steve Zemke  
Natalie Hodis

#### Absent- Excused

Weston Brinkley - Chair  
Sarah Rehder  
Jessica Hernandez  
Shari Selch  
Blake Voorhees  
Jessica Jones

**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:** In Weston's absence, Julia called the meeting to order at 3:10 and provided a land acknowledgement.

**Public comment:**

Steve Zemke sent in some suggestions for the SLI letter and discussed those. He also mentioned that TreePAC will be doing a press conference next week to discuss the results of recent polling regarding public support for tree protections.

**Chair, Committees, and Coordinator report:**

Patti reported that this is Elena's last meeting with the Commission. She has been serving in the Get Engaged position for the last year, and her term is now up. We thank Elena for her service and hope she has gotten much out of the experience. Regarding filling the position, we received an update a few weeks ago from the Get Engaged program coordinator, which stated that they have received much fewer applications this round than previous recruitments, but they were working on making Commission assignments based on the applications they had received as of that time and would continue to accept applications through the end of September. I hope to get an update soon on applicants for the UF Commission in this position.

Patti also noted that Sarah sent word that last week was her last meeting, as she ended up with a conflict for today. She extended her thanks to everyone for the knowledge that has been shared, and expressed that it has been a pleasure to work with everyone and good luck continuing to fight for the urban forest.

One more note on meetings: the October meeting appointments are currently set as in-person at SMT, because we wanted to make sure to reserve that preferred room in case we did start in-person meetings in October. Patti will be updating those appointments soon to reflect that we will still be in WebEx for those meetings.

**City Budget Process**

CBO's Akshay Iyengar provided an introduction to the City Budget Office's role in the budget process throughout the year as well as the roles of their office, the Mayor and City Council. His overview of the City's budget process included descriptions of the budget types and the annual timeline. The process includes budget proposals that are amended and adjusted in the first half of the year, then the draft budget is finalized in the third quarter and sent from the Mayor to Council. Akshay described the different types and sources of funding and shared a graph showing the breakdown of expenditures by category. Other activity during the year is preparation of supplemental budgets where the Mayor and Council can make adjustments to previous budgets, such as allocation of underspent funds.

Commissioner questions:

- Are there any common themes that the Mayor or Council make adjustments for? Staffing adjustments or adds for new needs, grant funds incoming added as adjustments to budget.
- Advice for members of public to recommend and advocate for funding for tree protections? There are Boards and Commissions that make recommendations, and they get their recommendations in by May-June. Another way is to work with Council members to get items into the budget. Recommendations go to Mayor and Council in May-June so that those recommendations can be heard by both sides.
- Relative to positions being considered, are there any positions related to the recent SLI about urban forestry consolidation in the current budget? The budget isn't out yet, so can't speak to that. Spring is the time to get items into budget, so that is the time to get recommendations in for budget items.
- Request for clarification on what the "environment" refers to in the chunk of the budget allocation graph labeled as utilities and environment. It refers to the work of the Office of Sustainability & Environment. The utilities portion is work of Seattle Public Utilities and Seattle City Light.

**Commission Debrief on Presentation**

Commissioners expressed desire to get ahead of the budget next year, so would like to plan for some prep time for next spring. There was discussion and some questions around how to incorporate what recommendations might come out of the SLI evaluation work into the budget if there are staff positions or other funding needs that are part of that. That evaluation work has not progressed to a point of having recommendations on changes to how tree work is structured in the city, though, so there are not corresponding budget needs that are known at this time.

### **SPR Thank you letter**

The Commission does not yet have a draft letter to review, and given time and the need to finalize the SLI letter today, the Commission moved on to the next item.

### **Urban Forestry Consolidation Statement of Legislative Intent letter**

Patti provided an update on the work of staff and the Mayor's Office in responding to the SLI. Staff have been working on drafting a response to the SLI, in coordination with the Mayor's Office, and the response is now ready to send by the deadline next week. The work of addressing the SLI request was approached with an initial examination of the current "integrated" system, to better understand how it works and what the positive aspects of it are. The response contains high level information on the various departments involved and the complexities of their urban forest management processes. However, due to limited staff capacity, staff knew they would not be able to dive into the topic as robustly as Council requested, and specifically, they won't be able to go as far as outlining how a consolidated approach could be implemented. Before doing so, there is an additional step needed of better understanding the potential merits and tradeoffs of consolidation, and whether a new approach to urban forestry is warranted. Due to the limited staff capacity, staff wasn't able to get into that deeper exploratory phase of the work, which would have included more work with the Commission in deliberative sessions, etc. There are still some pretty big outstanding questions, which would be a large body of work in order to be able to answer them.

David had some suggestions on what to include in the evaluation work, including consulting with peer cities like Portland on how their urban forestry model works.

The Commission continued work on the SLI letter initiated last week. The letter was rearranged to update and clarify the recommendations that the Commission wants to convey, along with general editing of the letter.

**Action: A motion to adopt the letter as amended was made, seconded and approved.**

**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>**

### **Public comment:**

Steve Zemke commented that the Commission did a good job in preparation of the letter, but was disappointed in removal of the fee-in-lieu option.

**Adjourn:** The meeting was adjourned at 5:00 PM.

### **Meeting Chat:**

from Elena Arakaki to everyone: 3:11 PM  
Uh oh, is my mic not working...I'm here!  
from Joshua Morris to everyone: 3:15 PM  
Wow! It goes so fast! Thank you, Elana!  
from Julia Michalak she/her to everyone: 3:15 PM  
Thank you Elena!!

from Joshua Morris to everyone: 3:15 PM

\*Elena

from Michael Walton to everyone: 3:16 PM

Thank you for your service Elena!

from Joshua Morris to everyone: 3:17 PM

Best wishes to Sarah as she starts her new life as an orchard farmer!

from Joshua Morris to everyone: 3:45 PM

Thank you, Akshay!

from Thaler, Toby to everyone: 4:05 PM

Related issue: Timing of draft CB in response to Res 31902. Also, SDCI is on agenda to present "quarterly tree report" to LUNC (council's land use committee) on Friday, Sept. 24 (2 p.m.)

from Thaler, Toby to everyone: 4:06 PM

Thanks

from Thaler, Toby to everyone: 4:07 PM

Thanks, need to go to another meeting now...

from Joshua Morris to everyone: 4:22 PM

I. Licensing, certification and training of private property tree care providers as SDOT currently does.

II. Permitting of significant and exceptional tree removal and replacement.

III. Instituting a 2 week tree removal and replacement permit application posting procedure as SDOT does

IV. Tracking of all significant trees, exceptional trees, and tree groves, planted and retained, removed and planted during development

V. Tracking of significant, exceptional and hazard trees outside development that are removed and replanted

VI. Monitoring, maintenance, and as needed, replacement of trees planted as part of mitigation activities that die within 5 year establishment period.

VII. Educating and resourcing the public about tree management on private properties

VIII. Managing and disbursing resources from a Tree Replacement and Preservation Fund

IX. Issuing stop work orders and notices of violations, and imposing penalties and fines

X. Producing regular reports documenting the

from Joshua Morris to everyone: 4:23 PM

these items, including quarterly reports to OSE as other Departments do regarding tree removals and replacements.

XI. Implementing an in-lieu fee system that increases as the tree diameter increases, for trees not replaced both during and outside development.

from Joshua Morris to everyone: 4:49 PM

SDCI there is no urban forestry protection division or structure with oversight and a mission to maximize protection of trees and urban forest.

from Joshua Morris to everyone: 4:59 PM

Great meeting! Thanks Julia, thanks, Patti!

**Public input: (see next page and posted notes):**

**From:** Patricia Carroll <patutie1@comcast.net>

**Sent:** Tuesday, September 7, 2021 9:47 AM

**To:** Bakker, Patricia <Patricia.Bakker@seattle.gov>

**Subject:** Please Update Seattle's Tree Ordinance

Urban Forestry Commission Coordinator Patti Bakker,

I am a big walker and try to walk in different neighborhoods, to get to know our city better.

I am so dismayed at the growth pattern in neighborhoods, where the whole lot is cleared of all

trees/greenery so many townhouses can jam in. I am outside in my yard all summer, and frequently hear chainsaws, and they are no doubt bringing down trees. Also, many of the townhouses don't have a "Homeowners Assoc" that has rules to keep the property (trees/greenery) alive. Such a waste, so the "green rules" offered the builders is a sham, if the owners let the plants/trees die.

It's time to end the delay by the Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections (SDCI) on presenting the Seattle City Council with an updated draft Tree and Urban Forest Protection Ordinance. Over the last 12 years, the City Council has repeatedly asked SDCI for an updated workable and effective ordinance draft to consider and it is obvious SDCI is not responding as requested. In its recent Resolution 31902, the Council gave specific issues for SDCI to address.

If SDCI cannot respond in a timely manner, please remove tree and urban forestry protection from their Department. As the City Auditor proposed in 2009, transfer tree and urban forestry oversight and authority to the Office of Sustainability and the Environment. SDCI has a conflict of interest in tree oversight – their priority mission has been to help developers build, not protect trees. Years of inaction on effective oversight and protection of trees by SDCI demands that a separate entity like OSE take over the city's responsibility to protect and enhance our urban forest.

Seattle's trees and urban forest are vital to keeping our city healthy and livable. Trees and the urban forest comprise a vital green infrastructure. Trees reduce air pollution, storm water runoff and climate impacts like heat island effects, while providing essential habitat for birds and other wildlife. They are important for the physical and mental health of our residents.

Seattle's rapid growth and an outdated tree ordinance are reducing these beneficial effects as trees are removed and not replaced. It is urgent to act now to stop this continued loss of trees, particularly large mature trees and tree groves. It is important to promote environmental equity as trees are replaced.

Please update Seattle's Tree Protection Ordinance as recommended in the latest draft by the Seattle Urban Forestry Commission.

Here are the key provisions that need to be in the updated tree ordinance:

1. Expand the existing Tree Removal and Replacement Permit Program, including 2-week public notice and posting on-site, as used by the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) – to cover all Significant Trees (6" and larger diameter at breast height (DBH)) on private property in all land use zones, both during development and outside development.
2. Require the replacement of all Significant Trees removed with trees that in 25 years will reach equivalent canopy volume – either on site or pay a replacement fee into a City Tree Replacement and Preservation Fund. Allow the Fund to also accept fines, donations, grants and set up easements.
3. Retain current protections for Exceptional Trees and reduce the upper threshold for Exceptional Trees

to 24" DBH, protect tree groves and prohibit Significant Trees being removed on undeveloped lots.

4. Allow removal of no more than 2 Significant non-Exceptional Trees in 3 years per lot outside development
5. Establish one citywide database for applying for Tree Removal and Replacement Permits and to track changes in the tree canopy.
6. Post online all permit requests and permit approvals for public viewing.
7. Expand SDOT's existing tree service provider's registration and certification to register all Tree Service Providers (arborists) working on trees in Seattle.
8. Provide adequate funding in the budget to implement and enforce the updated ordinance.

Patricia Carroll

[patutie1@comcast.net](mailto:patutie1@comcast.net)

6015 3rd Ave NW

Seattle, Washington 98107