

Urban Forestry Commission (UFC)

April 6, 2011

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 – acting chair
Gordon Bradley (GB)
John Floberg (JF)
John Hushagen (JH)
Jeff Reibman (JR)

Staff

Sandra Pinto de Bader (SPdB) - OSE
Brennon Staley (BS) - DPD

Public

Steve Zemke (SZ)
Michael Oxman (MO)

Absent- Excused

Nancy Bird (NB)
Peg Staeheli (PS)

Call to Order

MM called the meeting to order once quorum was present

Public Comment

Michael Oxman – the 2010 UFMP report is a defective way to do qualitative analysis. Should change to qualitative analysis. How many numbers of years are added to trees' lives by management efforts. Translate all numbers to canopy width as a way to reconcile canopy cover with stem count.

Steve Zemke – He'll try and write something up about this because it's confusing. In arriving at what number is reasonable in the Comp Plan. 2010 Progress Report for UFMP he sees some problems with it. UFC should comment and ask for clarification on. The report doesn't include all City departments. Glaring error with the report. Doesn't include SPU, FAS, or DPD. How many trees are being removed as part of the development process? What's the dimensional canopy loss vs. gain. Difficult to grasp.

Comp Plan – calls for no net loss of tree canopy starting 2008. Issues of removing the 1% per year canopy increase. The issue is how you define and interpret the measure. The 2007 and 2010 numbers are different. Big problem with how we are calculating gross canopy cover and number of trees. Needs to be looked at by the UFC and comment. Important to add the elements of biodiversity and patch size to the Comp Plan.

Approve March 2 and March 9 meeting notes

ACTION: A motion was made to approve the March 2 meeting notes as written. The motion was seconded and carried.

ACTION: A motion was made to approve the March 9 meeting notes as written. The motion was seconded and carried. JH abstained since he was not present.

Letter to Urban Forest IDT – vote

MM – Sandra adapted the letter to match comments made in the minutes at the last meeting. Any comments? This letter would be actually addressed to SPdB since she convenes the UF IDT and she would be in charge of distributing it.

JR – Make it more specific on what the goals of the brainstorming session are. Look at agenda and goals in 2012 and how to support each other.

JF – Continuing the need to coordinate. We heard about contradiction of numbers. We could take the opportunity to better coordinate.

GB – 2012 UFMP plan update principal focus. Something very concrete to focus on.

MM – what's the timing on the UFMP update?

SPdB – I'm going to begin asking departments to review UFMP goals that have been accomplished to date. Re-establish priorities. The UFMP was made using information gathered with the LIDAR canopy assessment. The Five Year implementation strategy used the new information gathered via satellite. That's probably why the numbers don't match. The UFMP update would be a good opportunity to reconcile this differences.

JF – Come out of that meeting with a clear idea of what our collective goals are.

MM – Planning meeting to identify goals of UFMP update

JR – other action items for 2012

MM – regular invites. Inviting departments to talk to the UFC

JS – in writing exchanging work plans.

SPdB – That is really my role. That's why we are going through the Progress Report and in a future meeting I would like to present the 2011 work plan

MM – add a sentence talking about inviting IDT members to talk about their work plans.

JH – Found typo that needs correction

ACTION: A motion was made to approve the letter as amended. The motion was seconded and carried.

JF – Do you think this would be an easy sell to the IDT?

SPdB – Absolutely. Every time UFC asks for info or a briefing from the IDT people are very willing and accommodating.

Ideas for Arbor Day

SPdB – WA State Arbor Day is next Wednesday, April 13

MM – Expand this conversation beyond Arbor Day. Has talked to people about this and it is about commissioners' thoughts and willingness to attend public meetings. Benefit for UFC to go to Council meetings too. Doesn't want to put anyone on the hook or set a schedule.

JH – Talking about the trees we are supposed to place in the ground. How is all of this supposed to happen? We have the reLeaf program and other bits and pieces but we are talking about a lot of trees that are not getting in the ground. He decided in his company to begin promoting tree planting. It's amazing how many trees they have helped plant just by talking it up. Arbor Day is a pathway but it's only one day. Once planting season is gone people are onto other things. It requires coordination.

JF – unfortunate that Arbor Day is in April. It's a bad time a year for planting. It would be better if it were a tree care event. It's an opportunity to raise awareness for the needs of trees. It would be great to have an event associated with trees but more about preparing the site for planting later on. There are invasive plants to clear.

SPdB – Jana is having a pruning workshop for recipients of trees from the 2009 session. This is an effort to continue educating people on proper tree care.

MM – Doesn't have anything specific in mind, not just related to Arbor Day. There are issues in removing invasives that serve as habitat for birds that are starting to nest. Might be a good idea to have a master calendar about tree events for the Commission to know what's going on.

JR – UFC message has been co-opted by people saying that the commission has regulatory power. There is misinformation out there. We might want to think about putting out our message more clearly about planting.

MM – we'll put together cards with speaking points. Maybe on the back side could lay out possibilities for participation in community events.

JH – people get inspired by spring. There is a psychological side to it. We should be promoting something every season.

MM – maybe have a fact sheet or brochure on what could be done for tree care during each season.

JS – pass amendment to by-laws around commissioners speaking on the commission's behalf.

MM – Commissioners can talk about things already decided by the Commission.

JH – you'd think there should not be disagreement with planting trees

MM – we need to entertain all questions we are asked when attending an event.

JF – there are competing uses and that needs to be taken into consideration when putting together the talking points. Consider people's rights.

Recommendation to DPD on Comp Plan Update – introduction and possible vote

MM – Let's talk about the Comp Plan

JR – The primary goal is to get to a point where there is no conflict between the Comp Plan and the UFMP so this can be adopted. Nancy did a simple edit to remove the 1% increase per year. Has a couple of points to make. These are the most basic of possible edits. Before introducing new points to that, see if there is anybody who objects to this or comment, amend.

JF – it's in line with what we are trying to accomplish

JR – Comp Plan is most effective when kept general in a way that it allows UFMP to become more agile. i.e. as point of adjustment of goals and re-assessment of goals.

BS – there is discussion on whether the Comp Plan should have targets in it

JR – intrigued by SZ's comment about adding to Comp Plan some general statements about ecological services function. Those would be appropriate statements that would be guiding principles. It doesn't mention anything about a healthy or well maintained urban forest.

MM – Tacoma's Comp Plan has a separate section for the urban forest

JF – CLC help write part of the UF element for Tacoma because they didn't have anything

SPdB – another important issue is to decide whether to submit this recommendation for change the Comp Plan for the 2012 annual update or for the 2013 comprehensive update of the Comp Plan.

JR – this level of recommendation is perfectly appropriate for the annual update. Providing a more comprehensive recommendation would be part of the 2013 update

MM – Met with Sara Nelson and Council is thinking of passing a resolution to in response to the UFC's letter about adoption of the UFMP. Saying that as part of an update to the UFMP will provide answers to these issues. Changes need to take place to remove conflicting goals between Comp Plan and UFMP, since there is going to be an update for the UFMP in 2012 it makes sense to adopt it then.

JF – When it says 'up to a total of 40%'. Maybe take the "up" out?

JH – how about "to at least"?

JR – He has confidence with the land use analysis done to arrive to the 30% goal. Doesn't think Seattle will hit 40% as a dense environment.

MM – what are the scientific basis for 40%

JF – there are no scientific basis for either number. There is analytical basis for 30%

BS – 40% has never been a number that has come out of anywhere or recommended. It was a number for a "regional" scale. Providing background: The 40 came from two places:

1. A off quote statistic that we had 40% at one point (and it was a regional study). The region had 40% and Seattle had 15%.
2. American Forests recommendation that metropolitan "regions" west of the Mississippi should shot for 40% and were saying 25% for urban residential. This is a gross generalization. We don't think either of those numbers are appropriate.

The IDT worked on analyzing the land use in Seattle, looked by zone and came up with 30%.

JS – that report is very outdated

JF – 40% should have never been used. What's the number that we can achieve? He would like to eliminate the 40% and replace it with 30%. It's controversial but 30% is based on some study.

JF – remove the 'striving to achieve'

GB – what is DPD doing to get rid discrepancies

SPdB – I approached DPD saying that there is a discrepancy in the goals and that the UFC is interested reconciling both documents and adopting the UFMP

BS – you can't legally adopt the UFMP with conflicting goals with the Comp Plan. Don't have a plan for reconciling the documents.

GB – what's the approach to update the Comp Plan? It's important to discuss natural systems. Implementation is in more specific documents.

BS – Comp Plan is so big right now that it's not as effective as it could be

BS – from the Growth Management Act – ill advised to set a goal for a regional for Seattle

GB – Do you find it difficult to update the UFMP?

SPdB – UFMP is a very strong document considering all the effort and study that went into it. The 30% goal directs all our activities. Information needs to be updated from the LIDAR to Satellite canopy cover analysis. I will take back to the IDT for them to analyze where we are and what needs to be done to stay on track.

GB – UFMP update is a great opportunity for UFC to provide input. Goals should be reflected in activities of the departments. When UFC was established the UFMP was already there.

JR – Should use a number that has meaning. 30% is meaningful

JF – Jeff makes a good point

MM – concerned about dropping the goal to 40%. What if we tweak it a bit. Set a standard of no net loss of canopy cover and increase tree canopy coverage to meet Seattle’s contribution to a regional goal of 40%.

JF – what’s the metric to meet 40%. Does anybody else share the 40% goal?

BS – From the Growth Management Act – dangerous legally and ill advised to set a regional goal coming from Seattle

MM – how would we say it?

JF – Achieve no net loss of tree canopy coverage and strive to increase tree canopy to 40%....

MM – Politically it’s a big deal to change 40% to 30% as the goal. He is hesitant to change 40 to 30 in this round. Let’s wait until the UFMP is updated.

JR – let’s stick with an aspirational goal of 40% so the UFMP with 30% goal by 2037 can live inside of the Comp Plan

JF – 40% would give us breathing room

SPdB – we would submit a recommendation by mid May and be ready to provide a rationale to explain if DPD requests it.

JF – the minutes can provide the details for the recommendation

JR – the underlying rationale is for the UFMP to be adopted

MM – SPdB will clean up and submit for vote next week

Shoreline Master Program recommendation – review and possible vote

JS – presented a document with more specific recommendations from last meeting. Specifically that non native trees need to be valued, not just native vegetation and that critical root zones need to be considered, not just trees.

Would want to discuss definitions of tree, for instance. He forgot to put in a definition for critical root zone. Proposing 6” DBH for preservation.

JH – If we have a thicket of say cottonwoods and they are all 6” DBH that’s too many. To keep them all is not sustainable. Half of them should go, that way in a few years the remaining ones would be at 12 inches and that’s good. Need to be careful about asking to keep smaller thick cottonwoods (or Alders). It would be good to cut half of them so the other can grow in a more healthy way.

JF – when do we need to vote?

JS – next week

MM – need to consider ecological function and health. There is always flexibility to meet ecological function.

BS – unless you specifically establish an exception then there is no exception. There needs to be flexibility where it is not detrimental to ecological function.

Additional discussion about the details of the ecological function of natives vs. non natives (please listen to meeting digital recording).

Shoreline Management Act establishes 200 feet as a shoreline setback. This is a jurisdiction, state requirement.

JS to provide a revised recommendation for vote next week

Urban Forest Management Plan 2010 Progress Report

SPdB reported on the UFMP Progress Report and talked about 2010 departmental accomplishments to comply with Council resolution 31138:

- DPD released a draft proposal for updating tree regulations and conducted public outreach through the end of the year
- OSE researched tree inventory options and iTree ECO assessment is currently underway with results expected early 2012
- Trees for Neighborhoods program planted 978 trees
- SDOT and SCL are collaborating more closely and have a tree list for use near overhead power lines
- SDOT divisions executed an MOA to guide decisions on tree planting and removals and providing support to sidewalk repair program
- SDOT worked on Green Stormwater Infrastructure with other departments in order to establish retention of trees and planting new trees as a first priority.

There was a net gain of 2,116 trees in 2010 . The Urban Forestry Project (Green Seattle Partnership program) received the Environmental Education Association of Washington's 2010 community Catalyst Award.

MM Maybe we could have an interactive piece for people to input that they planted a tree.

JF – maybe do a study – survey planting trees

MM – He had some ideas he wanted to share:

- Develop metrics in the work plan
- Field trip to areas where trees were planted (maybe with SDOT)?
- Can UFC go to areas where tree cutting is anticipated?
- Is there a way of tracking tree death?
- Is the City mapping trees now?
- Do a canopy conversion – based on the number of stems
- How much canopy did we lose and how big were the trees that were cut?

JF – to get an order of magnitude

JH – would like to see SCL and SPU more on board with trees in the ROW

SPdB – both utilities are contributing to the reLeaf program

JS – maybe proposed something other than the 2 for 1 replacement policy

SZ – All departments should be reporting on trees cut and planted

MM – after hearing the briefing on the SLI, UFC to support the SLI recommendation

New Business and Announcements

None

Adjourn

Community input:

From: Michael Oxman [mailto:michaeloxman@comcast.net]

Sent: Sunday, April 03, 2011 9:39 AM

To: Staley, Brennon; david.miller@mapleleafcommunity.org; Pinto_de_Bader, Sandra; o.rhyan@gmail.com; okomski@msn.com; Bradburd, Bill; Bonnie Miller; Cheryl Trivison; Donna Kostka; elizabeth@campbellcentral.org; escigliano@seattlemet.com; ghuffman@mbaks.com; heidicar@att.net; Murphy-Ouellette, Jeanie; JeanieMurphy; Jenkins, Michael; John "Hooper" Havekotte; nativetrees@gmail.com; shoudypk@comcast.net; larrylange36@comcast.net; lsu@u.washington.edu; Liz Kearns; thouless1@comcast.net; mpoe@ifcae.org; Mike Ruby; Nelson, Sara; nicholas@treesolutions.net; Pat Whempner; richard_ellison@hotmail.com; Ruth Williams; ShellyLeonard; Mr. Steve Zemke; WallisBolz

Cc: Sugimura, Diane; editor@westseattleblog.com; Vanneman, Jill; Kathleen Wolf; O'Brien, Mike; Licata, Nick; Rundquist, Nolan; Conlin, Richard; Francis, Roy; Bagshaw, Sally; Clark, Sally; Burgess, Tim; McGinn, Mike

Subject: Comment to UFC on UFMP adoption

Dear Urban Forestry Commissioners,

You state: **“We strongly encourage the City Council to adopt the UFMP. If it is in the Council’s opinion that a substantive change needs to be made to the document prior to adoption, please articulate this need to the Urban Forestry Commission as soon as possible.”** **2011, Seattle Urban Forestry Commission**
<http://www.seattle.gov/urbanforestrycommission/docs/Final%20issued%20docs/Recommendations/ADOPTED%20letter%20to%20Council%20on%20UFMP%20Adoption%20030211.pdf>

The Urban Forest Management Plan (UFMP) needs to be rewritten by you. This is what the Mayor & City Council are asking for. The UFMP should focus on how management capabilities can improve the condition of a large number of individual trees, not on their width. I do not feel the environmental goals in the Seattle Comprehensive Plan should be watered down because we only have time to sit in an office and look at aerial photos.

We need you to make the case that tree root zones must not be replaced by concrete in favor of population density increases. We need you to strike out the code language that allows excavation within the outer 1/3 of a tree root zone. We need you to document the increased risk from the recent layoff of 3 of our Parks arborists. We need you to find out how many trees are being removed from Seattle by private contractors each year. We need you to locate all of the vacant tree planting spaces, which is known as ‘Seattle’s Virtual Forest’.

We need you to find out what we have, what we must do, and give an estimate of what it will cost. The Seattle Urban Forestry Commission must write a plan that gives us the bottom line.

The basic unit of measurement used in the UFMP is canopy cover, or square footage of the area shaded by branches when the sun is directly overhead. The UFMP sometimes properly defines a tree as an individual plant, but does not state which of these 2 terms is being used for different purposes.

If the number of trees were tied to the canopy cover area, the plan would work. Because a tree can range from 10 feet across to 50 or 75 feet in width, canopy cover is too general of a concept where a specific description of a site is required. This means the UFMP is vague because aerial photos are only a good supplement to a tree inventory, which is something we do not have.

The definition of urban forestry is management of multiple trees with similar cultural needs. The definition of arboriculture is modifying a tree or its site to improve longevity.

The UFMP jumps to the conclusion that arboriculture is not affordable, without having developed cost estimates of the work needed to optimize our green infrastructure, or having presented those estimates for budgetary review. Without the budget to manage trees, staff arborists are left to merely observe the decline of the forest, while new laws are enacted that allow more concrete to replace root systems.

The canopy cover described in the UFMP satellite image survey is mappable, but only shows WHERE a tree is located. Aerial photos have no information about type of tree, size of tree, value of tree, life expectancy of tree, future maintenance needs of tree, recent work done on tree, condition of tree, or understory beneath the canopy cover. Without this information, nothing could be done, even if we had a budget.

There is an endless cycle of not having an inventory that tells us what trees we have, so we don't bother finding out what we must do to help those trees, which means we can't convince the council to fund tree maintenance.

Since the goals are expressed in square feet, we do not know how many trees to plant to achieve a goal.

If a commercial arborist bids on pruning by canopy area, the tree crew will not know how many trees to prune.

If tracking our ability to motivate single family residents is done by canopy area, the homeowner will not know how maintenance funds should be spent in their yard.

In a satellite photo, a half dead tree is just as good as a healthy tree.

If concrete borders a planting area, the type of tree selected must be a species whose roots do not buckle slabs, and there must be clearance between the trunk & the slab. Much of the canopy cover shown in aerial photos is actually concrete, making the reports inaccurate.

The resolution and overhead angle of satellite photos is not fine enough to allow management without ground truthing the actual situation.

The current mapping project does not contain an overlay of recent work done (Pruning, Planting or Removal) in any of the 200 sample plots. Without knowing what has been done so far, we can't know what work is left.

No records are kept of the canopy area of trees pruned or removed by city staff. Only the location, species, and trunk diameter are recorded. Staff has never presented the Urban Forestry Commission with this data. Because the majority of tree crew hours are spent removing trees, the health of the trees is not being upgraded significantly.

Wide, spreading trees will receive more value than a species better able to tolerate existing site conditions. This disregards the superior policy to "Plant the right tree in the right spot".

The result is a plan with good ability for staff to track their planting, and keep on removing rotten or inappropriately sited trees. It does not however, translate into the ability to manage an existing tree to improve its chances for survival.

The best way to save money in the tree program is to follow up the planting by pruning each tree several times in the first 10 years of its life. This work usually involves only one person working for a few minutes per tree, without a crew, or a big truck, or even traffic control barricades.

Arboreally yours,

Michael Oxman

From: Bonnie Miller [mailto:bmiller@serv.net]

Sent: Thursday, April 07, 2011 6:34 AM

To: Pinto_de_Bader, Sandra; o.rhyan@gmail.com; 'Andrea Okomski'; Bradburd, Bill; 'Cheryl Trivison'; 'David Miller'; 'Donna Kostka'; 'Elizabeth Campbell'; 'Eric Scigliano'; 'Garrett Huffman'; 'Heidi Carpine'; Murphy-Ouellette, Jeanie; 'JeanieMurphy'; Jenkins, Michael; 'John "Hooper" Havekotte'; 'John Dixon'; 'Kay Shoudy'; larrylange36@comcast.net; 'Lauren Urgenson'; 'Liz Kearns'; 'Margaret Thouless'; 'Melissa Poe'; 'Michael Oxman'; 'Mike Ruby'; Nelson, Sara; 'Nicholas Dankers'; 'Pat Whempner'; 'Richard Ellison'; 'Ruth Williams'; 'Shelly Leonard'; 'Steve Zemke'; 'Wallis Bolz'

Cc: Bonnie Miller

Subject: RE: UFC - Shoreline Master Program comment draft

Thank you for sending this to me. I do have a comment/concern about the very last item. It reads:

23.60.942 Definitions "V":

o Vegetation cover should be defined as the total area covered times whatever fraction of a real cover exists based on vertical observation, or estimation.

o View corridors should be defined as, "an area of a lot that provides a view through the lot from the abutting public right-of-way to the water unobstructed by structures except as allowed by this chapter or by vegetation.

There is a view corridor at Magnuson Park (north/south view corridor down 63rd NE Avenue from corner of its jog at NE74th Street to Lake Washington) identified in the April 1998 [Sand Point Historic Properties Reuse and Protection Plan](#). Currently there is a willow and Japanese knotweed growing on the shoreline and more recently a Canadian hemlock was planted. How would this instance be treated with the proposed 23.60.942 Definitions "V"?

Bonnie Miller