



**City of Seattle
Seattle Planning Commission**

Josh Brower, Chair
Barbara Wilson, Executive Director

**SEATTLE PLANNING COMMISSION
OCTOBER 28, 2010
APPROVED MEETING MINUTES**

COMMISSIONERS IN ATTENDANCE

Chair – Josh Brower, Vice Chair – Leslie Miller, Kadie Bell, Catherine Benotto, David Cutler, Colie Hough-Beck, Mark Johnson, Martin Kaplan, Bradley Khouri, Kay Knapton, Jeanne Krikawa, Amalia Leighton, Kevin McDonald, Radhika Nair, Christopher Persons

COMMISSION STAFF

Barbara Wilson-Director, Katie Sheehy-Planning Analyst, Robin Magonegil-Administrative Staff Assistant, Diana Canzoneri-Demographer

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT

Matt Roewe

Please Note: Seattle Planning Commission meeting minutes are not an exact transcript but instead represent key points and the basis of the discussion.

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Josh Brower called the meeting to order at 7:35 am.

COMMISSION BUSINESS

▪ **Minutes approval**

Commissioner Mark Johnson moved to approve the September 9, 2010 minutes; Commissioner Leslie Miller seconded the motion. The minutes were approved.

▪ **Chair's Report**

Chair Brower reviewed the upcoming Commission meetings. Chair Brower noted that Commissioner Mark Johnson and Barbara Wilson met with Council members Bagshaw, Burgess and O'Brien to discuss DPD's 3 year workplan and the Transit Communities report.

Chair Brower welcomed Bradley Khouri to the Commission and noted that he was recently confirmed.

APPROVAL & DISCUSSION

– **APPROVAL: Commission Recommendations re: Tree Regulations**

Chair Brower called for any disclosures or recusals.

Disclosures and Recusals:

- Commissioner Chris Persons disclosed that his firm, Capitol Hill Housing, develops multifamily affordable apartments and their work could be impacted by revisions to the City's tree policies especially regarding maintenance bonds that may be required in the future.
- Commissioner Catherine Benotto disclosed that her firm, Weber Thompson, has clients that may be impacted by the regulations. Additionally, an employee at Weber Thompson serves on the Urban Forestry Commission.
- Commissioner Colie Hough Beck disclosed that her firm, Hough Beck & Baird, has public and private clients that could be affected by the regulations.
- Commissioner Josh Brower disclosed that his firm, Tupper Mack Brower Jensen Wells, PLLC., represents developers that could be impacted by the regulations.
- Commissioner Amalia Leighton disclosed that she served on the Emerald City Task Force and that she works with Peg Staeheli at SvR Design who serves on the Urban Forestry Commission.
- Commissioner David Cutler disclosed that his firm, GGLO, designs projects that may be impacted by the regulations.
- Commissioner Bradley Khouri disclosed that his firm, b9 Architects, has clients that may be impacted by the regulations.

Executive Director Barbara Wilson noted that in regards to the timing, Brennon Staley from DPD would like comments by October 31st therefore the goal is to approve the Commission's letter at today's meeting. She also reminded Commissioners that the task at hand is to provide recommendations on one component of the City's larger Urban Forest Management efforts. The Commission's focus is to review the proposal that looks at regulating trees in private property.

Vice-Chair Leslie Miller stated that she felt that we had the right points in the letter but would like it to be made more concise.

Commissioner Martin Kaplan suggested that the City consider approaching the tree policies in a way that brings people to the table: with more of an emphasis on voluntary actions. He felt that focusing on educating

and helping people understand the broader goals would be a good idea. People may react negatively to the idea of regulatory penalties and credits. Commissioner Kaplan voiced his concern that the rebate program might be too complicated to implement, but supported the idea that people could pay a fee to help support common benefit the public gets from trees.

There was some discussion about tree regulations in different types of industrial areas, and the idea of calibrating the regulations differently in those areas. Director Wilson noted that the Commission may want to comment on this in light of previous recommendations the Planning Commission has made on Industrial Areas.

Commissioner Amalia Leighton suggested that the process for allowing departures should be more simple than what is proposed. She also suggested that it is important for DPD's proposal to articulate the role trees play as sustainable infrastructure.

Commissioner Hough Beck noted that merchants can be wary of having trees on their property due to the maintenance costs but that it is proven that trees promote economic development.

Commissioner Chris Persons wondered how the program would be maintained and suggested a very cautious approach and suggested some wording changes in the letter related to penalties.

Commissioner Mark Johnson suggested that City's tree policy should be inclusive in addressing different points at which trees can be preserved and/or planted. He stated that putting the responsibility on only the people who apply for the permit doesn't seem fair. He added that if a person removes a tree, the person should have to replace it. Commissioner Johnson wondered how many single-family permits the City issues per year.

Commissioner Johnson also noted that King County has a maintenance bond and suggested that staff check in with King County and other communities that have maintenance bonds in place.

Commissioner Radhika Nair acknowledged that the data say that most of the tree canopy loss takes place during redevelopment, but she still supports addressing preservation outside of development. She noted that other cities have found that people cut trees down in part because they are not physically able to deal with the maintenance (i.e. raking leaves etc.). She suggested that the City or the community could help the individuals with the maintenance.

Commissioner Catherine Benotto noted that big trees are often perceived as hazards, regardless of their condition and removed. She added that while the city may be limited by liability risks, it could do more to educate residents on understanding potential tree hazards better in order to maintain all healthy big trees.

Commissioner David Cutler acknowledged the lack of consensus and noted that the data available are not precise enough to support the level of nuance in the tree credit program. He added that the margin of error is probably large and that he is not sure that the data supports such nuanced regulations.

Commissioner Bradley Khouri stated that a tree canopy would help the City achieve its Carbon Neutrality goals. He added that the Green Factor is already complicated and that it does not require trees.

Director Wilson clarified that the tree credit is just for single-family properties and that the fall back for multifamily is the Green Factor. She stated that the weight for trees not being high enough in the Green Factor is a point that Commissioners had brought up in discussions before and that this could be reiterated.

Commissioner Khouri suggested that more trees be put in public spaces as well.

Director Wilson noted that according to the analysis if trees are only in public right of way then we cannot reach the 30% goal. Seattle has a very high percentage of land in private ownership compared to many other cities.

Commissioner Kadie Bell noted that preserving existing trees is paramount and asked what portion of the trees should be in single-family zones.

Chair Brower noted that Seattle has to achieve a balance between tree preservation and creating the compact neighborhoods we are striving to achieve. Trees add to our quality of life especially in denser communities.

Commissioner Kay Knapton stated that we focus on offering carrots instead of regulations, encouraging instead of requiring. She added that we should encourage preservation and planting outside of development.

Chair Brower indicated that he'd like a better sense of whether 30% is the right goal. He said that we need to identify the most strategic ways to address the gap in order to achieve the goal? He indicated the City should think strategically about the number of trees, where and types of trees needed.

Director Wilson summarized key proposed changes to the Commission letter and stated that staff would revise and send out letter for final Commission review and approval tomorrow. Letter will be sent to DPD on October 31.

PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comment.

ADJOURNMENT

Chair Brower adjourned the meeting at 9:01 am.