



Urban Forestry Commission

Commissioners Present

Lani Chang (Position 3 - Natural Resource Agency or University) • **Drue Epping, Chair** (Position 5 – Arborist) • **Tristan Fields** (Position 6 – Landscape Architect) • **Maeve Gillis** (Position 10 – Get Engaged) • **Melanie Ocasio** (Position 11 – Environmental Justice) • **Lia Hall** (Position 13 – Community/Neighborhood)

Commissioners Absent

Aaron Clark (Position 1 – Wildlife Biologist) • **David Baker** (Position 8 – Development)
• **Alicia Kellogg** (Position 2 – Urban Ecologist) • **Andrea Starbird** (Position 12 – Public Health)

Briefing

Christa Valles, Director of Policy, Office of the Mayor

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

Members of the Public

Steve Clary, Jessica Dixon, Kristin Jackson, Beth Glosten, Bridget M, FAIA David Moehring, Megan Neumann, and Sandy Shettler

Minutes

November 12, 2025, 3:05 – 5:05 p.m.

[Boards and Commission Room](#) L280, City Hall (Hybrid)

- 1. The meeting was called to order at 3:05 p.m. and public comment was opened. There was not a quorum until more than 40 minutes into the meeting.**
- 2. The approval of the October 2025 meeting minutes was postponed until the next meeting.**
- 3. Public Comment**

- a. **Steve Clary** noted an issue in Seattle of artificial turf and is concerned with the impact on trees dying. Clary suggested this is detrimental to trees, the climate, and overall wellbeing. Clary would be interested in providing a presentation to the UFC in the future.
 - b. **Steve Zemke** noted the importance of reviewing the Urban Forest Management Plan, the Environmental Critical Area Ordinance, and suggested the UFC look at treepack.org. Zemke offered to send a link to the candidate forum so that the UFC will be able to review both candidates' comments. Zemke asked the candidates about doing a Canopy volume study and noted specific responses from Wilson about public right-of-way responsibilities on the city. Zemke later noted Bellevue, Kirkland, and Edmonds definition of a tree grove and referenced Wilson's responses.
- 4. A briefing from the Mayor's Office was provided related to an overview of the [Executive Order, Actions to Increase Tree Preservation on Private Property](#), with Christa Valles, Director of Policy. A full summary of the EO should be referenced via this document. Highlights from the presentation included:**
- a. The new Executive Order (EO) focuses on private property.
 - b. The Office of Intergovernmental Relations will engage with state agencies, and federally recognized Tribes and/ or tribal cultural resources to better understanding Tribal recommendations in compliance with State law.
 - c. Plans for permit reform for onsite tree retention and tree incentives through the permitting process. The City's interdepartmental team (SDCI, SDT, City Light, SFD, and SPU) may advise on improving the permitting process with incentives to applicants.
 - d. Comments related to points included:
 - i. 5. Explore Moving Seattle Department of Construction and Inspection's Tree-related Functions to the Office of Sustainability and Environment Response: Consider that OSE is currently not a regulatory department, and it may be that SDCI functions as the agency for permitting. The process of exploring number 5 has yet to commence so a formal response has yet to be analyzed or determined.
 - ii. Program examples noted by the UFC member was an example of incentivizing private property owners (example, Virginia).
 - iii. UFC member question if there are "only going to be federally recognized tribes" being engaged based on the EO.
 - iv. UFC Chair noted a tax deduction (example, Hawaii) and noted the role of the UFC being part of the conversation based on future recommendations to the mayor's office and council.
- 5. The Values and Vision subcommittee presented a draft of the UFC Values.**

Comments

- Two members of the subgroup requested that the UFC revisit the Vision, Values, and Mission annually and make this a living document, but there was not a vote to approve this suggestion. Next steps: once more parts of the Vision, Values, and other statements are drafted and presented in pieces there will be a final vote at a future meeting in 2026.
- A member of the EDI subgroup suggested that there could be a Land Acknowledgement (LA) that engages and acknowledges tribes. A member of the Values subgroup said that they would like to offer the previous Chair's non-tribal (occupier) perspective as a land acknowledgement and will share that with the EDI group.

6. **Presentation to review UFC onboarding and work planning:**

Evelyn Shapiro, a consultant from Curiosity Growth Labs facilitated a presentation to review the UFC's onboarding, community agreements, collaboration, and retreat review to summarize the work scope and present on the UFC's workplan.

UFC member feedback

- Request from a commissioner to other commissioners to add to this work plan for the commissioners to also ask themselves, individually, *how much time you have? how do you want to spend that time?* then prioritize the work plan off that discussion/feedback
- A way of contributing to the implementation of the EO would be to review it and then reach out to the associated department(s) for learning opportunities as members of the UFC to be part of making recommendations. UF staff will work on making connections for learning opportunities if the UFC decides they would like to weigh in and there is an opportunity to offer recommendations to associated departments.
- Beginning of next year, the UFC may want to learn more about the City of Seattle City of Seattle's municipal code and how this guides management of Seattle's urban forests. The UFC can discuss how or if they are interested and can weigh in on code.
- A commissioner asked if it is OPMA compliant to have some kind of form for the whole commission to establish top interests and aggregate. This would need to be in the public meeting and no asynchronously.

7. The UFC's work planning session was interrupted to offer a second public comment.

- a. **Sandy Shettler** was concerned that the current UFC has spent more time than she has ever seen focused on onboarding. Shettler suggested that the commission meet more than one meeting per month.
- b. **Steve Zemke** suggested that the UFC develop more statements for the public and to add environmental sustainability and healthy urban environments. Zemke suggested that UFC members can have their own opinions and say they are speaking for themselves.
- c. **David Moehring** noted a comment regarding the new EO, that other cities including part of Oregon demonstrate how Seattle should be involved with the urban forestry management of the city

8. The meeting adjourned at 5:05 p.m.

Public Comments via Chat

David Moehring 11/12/2025, 4:58 PM

No other public comment and my apologies about interjecting on the mayor's executive order. I would add that other cities, including Portland OR, have managed their urban forest outside of their Dept of Construction. Currently, SDCI consults with outside agencies including SDOT on private development projects. So the UFC asking that the Executive Order be improved so that SDCI to consult with the City Forestry who is stationed within the OSE prevents the possible conflict of interest when an SDCI assigned planner favors the development plans without due considerations as the Code identifies within Seattle Municipal Code SMC 25.11.060 and Tips 242A (page 3, upper right column). NOTE: See prior UFC written recommendations on this topic the last time a similar SLI was proposed by Councilmember Alex Pedersen.

David Moehring 11/12/2025, 5:05 PM

Agree that Commissioners are required to provide input by the Code of the Seattle... which does not mean simply being informed. In a RACI matrix, the UFC is to be Consulted (C)