

# **Urban Forestry Commission**

#### **Commissioners Present**

Aaron Clark (Position 1 – Wildlife Biologist) • Alicia Kellogg (Position 2 – Urban Ecologist) • Lani Chang (Position 3 - Natural Resource Agency or University) • Drue Epping (Position 5 – Arborist) • Tristan Fields (Position 6 – Landscape Architect) • Maeve Gillis (Position 10 – Get Engaged) • Melanie Ocasio (Position 11 – Environmental Justice) • Andrea Starbird (Position 12 – Public Health) • Lia Hall (Position 13 – Community/Neighborhood)

#### **Commissioner Absent**

**David Baker** (Position 8 – Development)

#### **Facilitators**

**Drue Epping** (Position 5 - Chair) and UFC staff

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

#### **Public attendees**

June BlueSpruce, Kevin Brown, Tina Cohen, Susan Fedore, David Gloger, Nick H, Bridget M, David Moehring, Sandy Schettler, Steve Zemke

#### **DRAFT Minutes**

September 10, 2025, 3:00 – 5:00 p.m.

Via Webex meeting (in-person option available on request)

If joining with a computer, please go to <a href="www.webex.com">www.webex.com</a> and click on "join a meeting" and then enter the meeting number 2503 580 2233. When prompted enter the meeting password 1234. Please make sure to use a browser other than Explorer which is no longer supported and causes trouble with access.

If calling in please dial (206) 207-1700, enter the meeting number: 2503 580 2233 and password: 1234 (mute and unmute your phone with \*6)

- 1. The meeting was called to order at 3:00 p.m. and the Chair conducted the roll call.
- 2. The Chair facilitated Public Comment and provided a guideline for engaging in this period that was previously introduced in August 2025.

**Steve Z:** Request for the UFC staff to post all drafts encourage public comment as they have in the past. Steve noted support for Amendments 93 and 102 regarding the tree protection area.

**Sandy S:** Noted that for three years the UFC meeting recordings were posted within a few hours after the meetings. Noted that posting this quickly is important for public engagement, respect, and to hand off to community members who cannot attend and to journalists.

**David M (see Chat):** Referred to an article sent by David M. related to SDOT. Noted that the workplan includes other high priority low canopy communities that are mapped by the City of Seattle. Echoed council amendments and hopes the UFC will support amendments 93.

**David G:** Referenced David M's comment in Chat (see Chat). Noted that there is an impression that the Tree Protection Ordinance is protecting trees. What kind of protection? What is this doing to the Urban Canopy? Urged the UFC to support 93 and 102.

**June BS:** Referenced Amendment 93 and 102. Referred to 93 as being important to frontline communities. Discussed clearcutting of Tier 2 trees and hopes that 102 will resolve a past personal experience.

# 3. Approval of the August 2025 meeting notes

An edit was made on the notes to add the words "letter recommendation." There was a correction to a public comment to change the word "plant" to "plantable."

**Vote:** Aaron moved, Andrea seconded, and the UFC unanimously approved the August 2025 minutes with the two corrections noted.

## 4. UFC Sub-Committee Reports

- a. There was a reminder about upcoming opportunities for public comment related to the Comprehensive Plan. The UFC should visit the City of Seattle website for details about the upcoming meetings, here: <u>Seattle's Comprehensive Plan 2025 - Council |</u> seattle.gov
- b. The UFC Chair welcomed Maeve Gillis who is the new Get Engaged Commissioner. Gillis shared some information about her interests in joining the UFC.
- c. A subgroup working on the Vision, Mission, Values and Meeting Agreements were briefly introduced to the UFC. The draft was modeled partially from the Green New Deal Oversight Board, and the drafts are intended to be live documents. Members of the UFC expressed an interest in providing a Land Acknowledgement at the beginning of meetings and mentioned the <u>UFC 2023 Work Plan related to this work</u>, (Section: 3.3 Race and Social Justice Initiative)

d. . OSE staff who support the UFC can assist in reviewing drafts and may offer feedback to subgroups.

### 5. UFC Decision: Council Amendments

**Summary:** The UFC would like to be more fully engaged as an advisory body to Council. To effectively contribute communications to Council, the UFC hopes to be engaged earlier in the review processes of proposed Council amendments, specifically in this case to the City's Comprehensive Plan.

The UFC considered proposed changes to SMC 25.11. Additionally, the UFC supported adding language regarding amendment 26 and 28. The UFC may add language into the draft letter if they have more time to review upcoming changes in the future.

**Vote:** After the discussion, Lia moved, Andrea seconded, and the UFC adopted the Urban Forestry Commission's Recommendations related to Seattle City Council's Tree-related Policy Amendments with the additions discussed.

6. **Draft Workplan summary:** The Draft Workplan was an outcome of the August 2025 UFC Retreat, and organized by Project or Program Briefings, Land Use Planning, Budget Processes, Engagement, and the UFC's Orientation Briefing Series. For large bodies of work the UFC will need to be prepared to engage in subgroups. In October, there will be a short check-in related to the Draft Workplan, and in November the UFC will fully revisit this draft.

#### UFC comments:

- a. A UFC member mentioned the usability of previous workplan formatting.
- b. The Chair mentioned the importance of upcoming Phase II Legislation as a primary body of work for the UFC.
- c. A UFC member noted that there was an EDI workgroup previously and asked if there were interested members who may want to revisit this work alongside the workplan.

#### 7. Public comment

- a. **Steve Z** offered some advice for reaching out to Council and suggested setting up a tree committee. Steve urged the UFC to read the Tree Canopy Assessment.
- b. **Susan F** noted that absence of statements related to climate change or State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) noting specific citations (See also, Chat) and noted that climate change statements are important for reflecting "a sustainable future and our collective survival."
- 8. The meeting adjourned at 5:00 p.m.

# **Meeting Chat**

David M's public comment today's article from Robert McClure

https://www.investigatewest.org/developers-tree-cutting-pace-surges-under-contested-seattle-tree-protection-ordinance/ **Developers' tree-cutting pace surges under contested** 

### Seattle tree protection ordinance

Mayor Harrell promised law would get Seattle "back on track," but new street-tree planting data raises doubts

### David M Unverified 09/10/2025, 3:13 PM

article states "The city has never achieved its long-held goal of covering 30% of the city with tree canopy by 2037, and in fact at last check was "slowly losing ground," a 2021 study found, with greater losses in more diverse and poorer neighborhoods.

A big part of the city's approach to making up for trees lost on private lands being redeveloped is to plant trees on publicly owned land, such as parks and rights of way such as land beside roads.

But that vision was seriously called into question when the Seattle Department of Transportation early this summer released reports showing how hard it will be to actually reach the city's tree-canopy goal by planting so-called "street trees."

Transportation department reports on census tracts in four Seattle neighborhoods found that — even if trees were planted in every possible streetside spot — the tree canopy would fall well short of the 30% goal.

The worst case was Sodo, one of the city's industrial districts, with a current 9% canopy that could be boosted just to 10%. Roxhill could achieve 23.7%, South Park 16.7% and Capitol Hill/Olive Way 20.3%.

And those numbers actually greatly overstate what would actually be possible today, the transportation department reports say. That's because those numbers anticipate a significant street-side removal of pavement, underground utilities and similarly expensive and time-consuming efforts. Without that, the numbers fall further.

For example, of the 881 potential tree-planting spots identified in South Park, only 40% could be planted today. Available today are 21% in Sodo, 17% in Capitol Hill/Olive Way, and 58% in Roxhill." UFC to encourage visit from SDOT. Thank you.

### UFC Team 09/10/2025, 3:24 PM

Seattle's Comprehensive Plan 2025 - Council | seattle.gov

### Tina Cohen Unverified 09/10/2025, 3:48 PM

Please clarify: the commissioners don't want to take a stand on the amendments? Who better to do so?

## Dave Gloger Unverified 09/10/2025, 3:58 PM

The UFC asked for more time for the Tree Ordinance and it was denied.

### Melanie Ocasio - UFC #11 Unverified 09/10/2025, 4:15 PM

Would it be more beneficial to focus on maybe 5 amendments instead to allow more in depth detail and understanding for the subcommittee if the extension isn't provided? And the rest of the amendments provide a loose support for given a brief overview?

### UFC Team 09/10/2025, 4:20 PM

Just checking in that we are at time and that Commissioner Aaron's hand is raised Lia Hall #13 Unverified 09/10/2025, 4:25 PM

## 26 Chair Hollingsworth

Provide policy direction for sustainable public and private open space, tree, and vegetation management

#### **28** Councilmember Strauss

Amend Climate and Environment Element to highlight trees, bees, salmon, orca, and herons Alicia Kellogg (she/her) Unverified 09/10/2025, 4:52 PM

I don't think there's anything missing per se, but I'd love to look into more events and engagement opportunities.

## David M Unverified 09/10/2025, 4:55 PM

UFC Commissioner to Ask Staff: "How is code drafted moving Seattle to achieve the 30% canopy cover goal identified in the Comprehensive Plan?" (Will Tree Points equate to 30% Former Neighborhood residential code SMC 23.88)

# Tristan she/her #6 Unverified 09/10/2025, 4:58 PM

Great suggestions, Steve.

### Lia Hall #13 Unverified 09/10/2025, 5:00 PM

Thank you, Susan. Appreciate your comments.

# Susan Fedore Unverified 09/10/2025, 5:01 PM

How climate change and deforestation interact in the transformation of the Amazon rainforest | Nature Communications