

SEATTLE URBAN FORESTRY COMMISSION

Tom Early, Chair • Steve Zemke, Vice-Chair
Weston Brinkley • Leif Fixen • Reid Haefer • Craig Johnson
Joanna Nelson de Flores • Sarah Rehder • Andrew Zellers

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

July 5, 2017

Meeting Notes

Seattle Municipal Tower, Room 2750 (27th floor)
700 5th Avenue, Seattle

Attending

Commissioners

Tom Early – chair
Steve Zemke – vice-chair
Leif Fixen
Craig Johnson
Sarah Rehder
Andrew Zellers

Staff

Patty Bakker - Parks
Jon Jainga – Parks
Sandra Pinto de Bader - OSE
Michael Yadrick - Parks

Public

None

Absent- Excused

Weston Brinkley
Reid Haefer
Joanna Nelson de Flores

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

Tom called the meeting to order.

The Commission acknowledged that Commissioner Donna Kostka passed away. The Commission will be sending a card to her husband. Sandra will find out when the memorial service will take place.

Public comment

None

Adoption of June 7 and Jun 14 meeting notes

ACTION: A motion to approve the June 7 meeting notes as amended was made, seconded, and approved.

ACTION: A motion to approve the June 14 meeting notes as amended was made, seconded, and approved.

Thinning GSP sites project

Michael Yadrick is a Plant Ecologist at Parks. He talked about the efforts to do thinning and gap enhancement in close to 25 acres of Puget Park.

The Green Seattle Partnership is active in more than 100 Seattle parks. There are over 800 acres of public land in the Duwamish Greenbelts, which constitute the largest remaining contiguous forest within the City. Over the past years, Parks has had conversations with many stakeholders including:

Northwest Natural Resource Group
GSP field committee
GSP Management Team
Parks Proview
Nature Consortium
Urban Forestry Commission
South Seattle College
Duwamish Alive!
Duwamish Tribe
West Duwamish Trails
Seattle Audubon
Mountains to Sound Greenway
Seattle Nature Alliance
Plant Amnesty
Community Orchard of WS
Broadview Planning

Parks recently sent notifications to:

West Seattle Blog
Tankwise
Lafare North America
Chemithon
Alaska Marine Lines
Holcim US
Sustainable West Seattle
Seattle Parks Foundation

The most desirable trees are the long-lived conifers due to the large number of environmental services they provide. Parks is looking for a more balanced share of conifers and deciduous trees.

The project's preferred alternative approach is:

- Understory treatment (UT), 30% thin, gap creation/enhancement. UT + girdle, inject or cut native trees and replant.

GSP will not be pursuing the following alternatives at this time:

- UT only
- 30% thin and understory treatment
- Commercially thin alder and maple, gap creating/enhancement, understory treatment.

The trees that are selectively thinned will remain on site. Last year they did some thinning of red alder in Discovery Park to give planted conifers a chance to thrive. Parks' tree crew is collecting comprehensive data including tree failure information. They've found that Bigleaf Maple and Red Alder are the species that fail more often.

The Duwamish Vegetation Management Plan has several goals:

- Conserve wildlife habitat
- Maintain buffering and aesthetic value
- Mitigate urban pollution

- Provide natural drainage
- Protect soil and water quality
- Protect public safety

Parks' staff is clearly marking trees to be removed by the contractor.

UFC question/comment: Are you posting signs so people understand that these are restoration areas and the nature of the work?

Answer: we did and receive some comments. There were lessons learned and now we are doing more outreach to the community.

The project is avoiding thinning on slopes 70% and greater to avoid unnecessary damage.

Reasons why they are leaving wood on the ground include:

- Provide habitat for small mammals
- Protection from physical environment
- Protection from predators
- Food sources
- Lookout structures
- Display structures
- Travel routes

UFC question/comment: what wildlife are you thinking this will support?

Answer: coyote, deer, possum, mice, birds, etc.

For this project, Parks is safeguarding standing conifers. The project will be planting drought tolerant species. The site will not be watered.

GSP has been planting 15,000 – 20,000 trees per year.

They are going to have a public meeting on July 8 at the South Seattle College to get input from the community and incorporate it to the project.

UFC question/comment: I'm in agreement with the need to create the conditions to get the conifers to thrive. Current canopy cover results show 28% conifers and 72% coniferous. Are you thinking of reversing that?

Answer: We would like to get to a 50-50 ratio of conifers and deciduous trees. The site currently is a monoculture, which is not good because, among other things, disease could potentially wipe out whole areas of the green belt. We are creating a controlled disturbance to help the natural areas recover.

UFC question/comment: how many areas is Parks going to be working on in the green belt?

Answer: We are thinking about three areas with ¼ acre gaps.

UFC question/comment: have you developed some benchmarks to monitor the results?

Answer: We are doing long-term monitoring plots. One plot is known as the Meduzia Gap. We are also doing inventory work. But we don't measure each tree's size or how it changes year-to-year.

UFC question/comment: will you add close monitoring to these four sites?

Answer: we will likely monitor mortality and overall growth. This is not a cut and paste prescription for all Seattle parks, but several natural areas could benefit from something like this.

MHA EIS recommendation

Steve shared a document with his input on the EIS. Tom clarified that we have on the table a draft letter put together by Craig, with Steve’s input, and an email with answers from OPCD staff based on their review of the current draft letter.

Commissioners discussed the revised letter put together by Craig. Tom asked if the UFC finds an issue with the methodology or the results, or both.

Some ideas discussed include:

- The methodology doesn’t make sense because the City doesn’t really have a handle of how development in current zoning is impacting canopy cover, then how can they opine in terms of what the impact will be on new zoning?

- It seems subjective to say that the impact is not significant. Compared to what?

- The UFC questions the conclusion because it’s not based on any objective standard. Might want to include an idea of what 0.5% is equal to by mentioning City parks that are close in size to the impact.

- Coming up with a no significant determination on alternatives 2 and 3 doesn’t make sense at this point.

- Because of the up-zone there will be increased value on the land and this will encourage redevelopment.

Craig and Tom will incorporate revisions and send Sandra a new version for her to distribute. The Commission will review and vote on this next week.

Work Plan items discussion

- **Policy principles of a tree code update**
- **2016 canopy cover assessment review. How should our current data inform future urban forest policy decision?**

Moved to next week

Public comment

None

New Business

None

Adjourn

Public input:

None