



**SEATTLE URBAN FORESTRY COMMISSION**

**Becca Neumann** (Position 4 – Hydrologist), Co-chair

**Joshua Morris** (Position 7 – NGO), Co-Chair

**Hao Liang** (Position 6 – Landscape Architect – ISA), Co-Chair

**Alicia Kellogg** (Position 2 – Urban Ecologist) • **David Baker** (Position 8 – Development)

**Nathan Collins** (Position 9 – Financial Analyst) • **Logan Woodyard** (Position 10 – Get Engaged)

**Jessica Jones** (Position 12 – Public Health) • **Lia Hall** (Position 13 – Community/Neighborhood)

*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*

**Draft meeting notes**

May 8, 2024, 3:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Via Webex call and in-person at the  
Seattle Municipal Tower, Room 1872 (18<sup>th</sup> floor)  
700 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Seattle

(206) 207-1700

Meeting number: 2496 897 4978

Meeting password: 1234

**Attending**

Commissioners

Josh Morris – Co-Chair

Hao Liang, Co-Chair

Alicia Kellogg

Nathan Collins

Logan Woodyard

Jessica Jones

Lia Hall

Absent- Excused

Becca Neumann – Co-Chair

David Baker

Staff

Patti Bakker – OSE

Guests

Public

Steve Zemke

Sandy Shettler

Toby Thaler

**NOTE: Meeting notes are not exhaustive. For more details, listen to the digital recording of the meeting at:**  
<https://www.seattle.gov/urbanforestrycommission/meetingdocuments>

**Call to order:** Hao called the meeting to order and offered a land acknowledgement.

**Public comment:**

Sandy Shettler expressed disappointment with how the UFC's letter of recommendations on the Comprehensive Plan was handled, and with the inability for the public to access the chat function in this meeting, and the number of vacant positions on the UFC.

Steve Zemke also expressed concern with not allowing public access to the chat function in UFC meetings the vacant UFC positions.

Toby Thaler agreed with the previous commenters.

**Chair, Committees, and Coordinator report:**

Patti provided some background on the process of submitting the UFC's letter of recommendations on the Comprehensive Plan and the Draft EIS, noting that there was some difficulty caused by the process of finalizing the UFC's feedback at the last meeting. This required some additional due diligence by OSE and the process took longer because of that.

Josh noted his concerns about the process for submitting UFC's letter of recommendations on the Comprehensive Plan. He also expressed concerns about the vacant UFC positions, noting that it reduces the breadth of experience and perspectives on the UFC and reduces UFC capacity, causing difficulty in reaching a quorum for meetings needed to move UFC work forward. He also expressed concerns with OSE guidance to postpone discussion of the UFC budget recommendations, and with the decision to disable the chat function for members of the public.

**Adoption of April 10 and April 24 meeting notes**

**Action: a motion to adopt the April 10 meeting notes as written/amended was made, seconded and approved.**

**Action: a motion to adopt the April 24 meeting notes as written/amended was made, seconded and approved.**

**Low-pollution Neighborhoods program – Ian Macek, SDOT**

Ian noted that SDOT is just getting started with this work and are conducting conversations with community groups and Boards and Commissions as they start to form what low-pollution neighborhoods can mean for Seattle. Ian explained what is meant by low-pollution neighborhoods, and explained SDOT's approach to doing this work. He outlined the timeline for how the work will be implemented.

Questions and comments from Commissioners included:

- In this analysis phase, are they gathering information on public health such as rates of asthma?
- Re: the what they've learned summary, was the timing for that Q1 this year? When and how will that be distributed?
- Is the neighborhood the right level/scale to work at? Pollution moves and effects larger areas than neighborhoods.
- How does this plan/work fit into the C40 plan for Seattle and other cities? Is the work they've done going to be incorporated into this work?
- Trees have a lot of potential for mitigating impacts of pollution. If there are opportunities to increase pedestrian-only streets, that would be beneficial.
- There is demand for gardening area in the city. Spaces in the ROW could help provide that.
- How do the SR-99 projects integrate into this work?

**Presentation debrief**

Items to include in follow-up include highlighting how UFC goals align with the goals of the low-pollutions neighborhood program, and including findings of canopy cover assessment to emphasize the need for increased tree planting. Logan volunteered to draft a follow-up letter.

### **Subgroup reports**

#### **- Tree Protection Ordinance**

The group discussed the possibility of the UFC have one meeting per quarter that is in person, and wanted to know if other Commissioners are interested in that. All Commissioners present expressed interest in doing this.

### **Initial budget recommendations for 2025-2026 biennium**

Josh reiterated the feedback received from the City Budget Office that May is the preferred timing for budget recommendations from Boards and Commissions. He described the work that he and Nathan did as the budget subgroup to gather information and develop initial recommendations. Josh walked through the draft recommendations and Patti noted some suggested edits that were added to increase consistency and clarity. Commissioners discussed and edited the draft recommendations.

**Action: a motion to adopt the initial budget recommendations for the City's 2025-2026 biennial budget as amended was made, seconded and approved.**

**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>**

### **Public comment:**

Steve Zemke noted that there was a two-week extension on the public comment period for the draft One Seattle Plan. Regarding the low-pollution neighborhoods work, he recommends that the effort be called "achieving low-pollution neighborhoods", since they aren't necessarily there yet but that's what the goal is. Regarding the budget deliberations, he noted that there was no draft published online. He suggested the UFC consider amending the Bylaws to allow the chat function to be available to all throughout the meeting.

Michael Oxman discussed the Tree Equity session that happened yesterday. He noted that the founder of Tacoma Tree Foundation will be giving a webinar next week through the ISA's Pacific Northwest Chapter.

Sandy Shettler supported the suggestion that the UFC consider changes to the Bylaws around how meetings are run. She urged the UFC to ask with a unified voice for the vacant positions to be filled.

Barbara expressed concern with the inability to access the chat during the meeting.

Toby encouraged the UFC to consider where Seattle is now, expressing the opinion that it is progressive but not liberal in terms of long-range planning, development and dealing the climate.

**Adjourn:** The meeting was adjourned at 4:58 PM.

### **Meeting chat:**

from Martha Baskin to everyone: 3:11 PM

Very concerned about the public process for the UFC in order to augment what it does in protecting urban trees. And about the commission's apparent refusal to publish a letter by Josh Morris. In addition it's is very disturbing that vacant commissioner positions.

from Joshua Morris to everyone: 3:18 PM

Sandy Shettler

3:15 PM

OF COURSE she is saying that!! They spent a lot of time making sure they had a good excuse!

from Joshua Morris to everyone: 3:21 PM

Steve Zemke

3:21 PM

Is there any reason why draft minutes can not be posted on agenda prior to meeting. This was done in the past for many years.

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from Joshua Morris to everyone: 3:46 PM

Steve Zemke

3:31 PM

Urge Commissioners consider bylaw changes to allow chat for public. Commissioners, staff, and presenters are participants in the meeting and can talk to each other any time they want. People in chat are not talking in the meeting or interrupting the meeting in any way. They are only able to submit written comments and information that may help the commissioners in their deliberations. It is a low key way to involve the public without disrupting the meeting and can provide information that commissioners may not have been aware of..

from Joshua Morris to everyone: 3:46 PM

Sandy Shettler

3:45 PM

Glad for Josh's points. UW's Kathy Wolf will be releasing a meta-analysis of the benefits of trees in transportation plans, which go beyond pollution reduction to decreasing accidents, increasing pedestrian activity. See her previous research at this link, and stay tuned for new release soon:

<https://depts.washington.edu/hhwb/>

[depts.washington.edu](https://depts.washington.edu)[depts.washington.edu](https://depts.washington.edu)

Green Cities: Good Health

Research summaries about urban greening for human health and well-being, to promote livable, sustainable cities

from Joshua Morris to everyone: 3:49 PM

Sandy Shettler

3:48 PM

Agree with Steve Zemke. A brief review of comments from recent meeting chats show that contributions from public often include input from other City employees, arborists and scientists. I hope commissioners consider Lauren's suggestion to amend the bylaws.

from Lia Hall to everyone: 3:52 PM

Sorry I couldn't respond! My phone is charging and I'm supervising my son

from Joshua Morris to everyone: 3:53 PM

Toby Thaler

3:50 PM

I was in wrong window. Note:

3:52

UFC bylaws say "The UFC will strive to provide a continued remote participation/call in option for the public and Commissioners."

from Joshua Morris to everyone: 3:57 PM

UFC bylaws indicate that UFC is subject to OPMA. I suggest an inquiry to Law Dept to confirm this. The MRSC OPMA page includes: <https://mrsc.org/explore-topics/public-meetings/opma/open-public-meetings-act-faqs#committees-advisory-boards>

Committees and Advisory Boards

When is an advisory board "acting on behalf" of the governing body (and therefore subject to the OPMA)?

An advisory board is "acting on behalf" of the governing body, when it exercises actual or de facto decision-making authority for a governing body. This happens when the board is formally given decision-making authority or when its governing body, routinely or without discussion, merely rubberstamps the committee's recommendations.

The Washington State Supreme Court looked at this issue in Citizens Alliance v. San Juan County (2015) when it ruled that committees that serve a purely advisory function are not subject to the OPMA. For more details about the case, see MRSC's blog post, State Supreme Court Says Advisory

from Joshua Morris to everyone: 3:58 PM

Steve Zemke

3:49 PM

Seems project might be better labeled "Achieving Low Pollution Neighborhoods" It seemed to be confusing just to say "Low Pollution Neighborhoods"

from Alicia Kellogg she/her to everyone: 3:58 PM

Hi all - I need to take a call, I'll be back shortly.

from Hao Liang to everyone: 4:08 PM

I'm back

from Joshua Morris to everyone: 4:10 PM

The current enforcement of the new planting survivability is "take a photo in case you are ever asked."

New

4:10

I.e. there is no other enforcement built into the system. Also agree on the Notice of Tree Work--we are finding errors in these every day, and no one is looking at them.

from Joshua Morris to everyone: 4:12 PM

It would be good to check how many users have actually accessed the searchable map. Thank you for bringing that up.

from Joshua Morris to everyone: 4:23 PM

Sandy Shettler

4:23 PM

Thank you Hao--can you elaborate on your suggestion about bonds? Do you know of other cities which have those? I know Bothell does.

from Joshua Morris to everyone: 4:31 PM

Sandy Shettler

4:30 PM

I agree with Lia. This has been brought up at a number of community meetings given SDCI's poor enforcement. It also encourages active care during construction--such as watering during the hot season--that can make the difference in the tree surviving construction impacts.

from Hao Liang to everyone: 4:32 PM

Sandy, here is an example. <https://lexingtonnational.com/blog/preserving-miamis-trees-understanding-the-tree-protection-bond/>

from Joshua Morris to everyone: 4:34 PM

Again on bonds--a few hundred dollars can work according to developers I've spoken with. Also, it's nearly free to the City. Bothell uses a third party to manage the bond funds, which is insured and bonded themselves.

4:33

Thank you Hao for the link to the Miami tree bond article!

from Joshua Morris to everyone: 4:35 PM

Steve Zemke

4:35 PM

Tree inspectors should be certified arborists with necessary background technical and experience. Should not just be a land use inspector

from Joshua Morris to everyone: 4:36 PM

Sandy Shettler

4:36 PM

According to the article Hao linked, Miami is also using a third party for their bonds. Good to have a solution that doesn't cost the city anything which incentivizes tree protection.

from Joshua Morris to everyone: 4:38 PM

Barbara

4:38 PM

Tree issues is helpfully broad and if it is labeled simply as "canopy", it gives the city a restrictive box they can check- keep the language so that it is open.

from Joshua Morris to everyone: 4:42 PM

Steve Zemke

4:41 PM

experienced in tree health and survivability.

from Michael Oxman to everyone: 4:53 PM

Howdy Lauren, and members of the Seattle Urban Forestry Commission,

Thanks for your comments at yesterdays urban forest collaboration meeting in Tacoma.

Video: [https://youtu.be/f4-TiQv\\_N5I](https://youtu.be/f4-TiQv_N5I)

and Discussion: Michael Oxman - Pathways to Powerful Partnerships Learning Lab... | Facebook

During the meeting, you asked why such effective partnerships that Tacoma city government has with non-profits do not also exist in Seattle.

I thought of several reasons right off the bat, such as: 'Perception that preserving trees will hamper economic growth from construction'. Refusal to admit this has resulted in footdragging since the 2009 tree ordinance was deemed an 'Interim Tree Ordinance'.

I didn't want to interrupt the flow of the agenda. Here's a few more reasons:

1) Unequal access to city officials by urban forestry activists.

How developers helped shape Seattle's controversial tree protection ordinance - InvestigateWest (inww.org)

2) There are vacancies on the Seattle

from Michael Oxman to everyone: 4:54 PM

2) There are vacancies on the Seattle Urban Forestry Commission, out of 13 member slots. This vacancy rate makes it difficult to generate a quorum for action on the Tree Ordinance, Tree Service Provider legislation, and Comprehensive Plan comments, for example. Developers have exploited the lack of cooperation between the Mayors office and the City Council's appointment process to halt appointments and reappointments of very qualified applicants for over a year. Membership and Roster | seattle.gov

3) Failure to act on the Natural Capital Assessment SLI perpetuates the myth that trees have zero asset value. This is in spite of a new Directors Rule that invented a non-standard method of tree valuation that forms the basis for both fines and for permit fees for trees that are removed & maintained.

Seattle Should Count Its Ecological Assets - The Urbanist

4) The tree fund where these fines & fees are supposed to be set aside in a pool of money dedicated to forest management is una

from Michael Oxman to everyone: 4:55 PM

unaccounted for in the city budget. The City Attorney has stated SDOT fines for tree violations in the right-of-way must go into the General Fund. This is a pattern of lack of transparency that has resulted in Council asking for quarterly reports and budget provisos from SDCI and Parks in their dealing with trees.  
A Review of Seattle Urban Forestry Expenditures, 2021-2024

5) Canopy Cover Analysis is not a scientific plan because it does not corroborate satellite images with ground-truthing measurements taken at eye level. The study belies the need for a tree inventory database to understand tree species, size, condition, location and value, before proper maintenance can occur.

ADOPTEDCanopyAssessmentRecommendations050422.pdf (seattle.gov)

from Michael Oxman to everyone: 4:56 PM

6) Office of Sustainability and Environment's 'Chief Arborist' duties described in the Statement of Legislative intent SLI MO-001-A-002-2022 - SLI MO-001-A-002-2022 (legistar.com) were envisioned by the Urban Forestry Commission to be a way to oversee & align policy by all 9 departments with authority to condemn a tree. Right before the staff person was hired, the responsibility for oversight of the entire urban forestry program was retracted, and confined to dealing with correcting equity issues in underserved neighborhoods.  
ADOPTEDChiefArboristSLIExtensionRequest061522.pdf (seattle.gov)

You mentioned at the Tacoma meeting that we haven't engaged in discussion since you were hired. This is because of the limitation of the duties in your job description that prevent consideration of my concerns, as an arborist, for needed qualitative analysis of the physical urban forest biosphere. I would be willing to give feedback on OSE's equity policies, but haven't been asked.

from Michael Oxman to everyone: 4:56 PM

The founder of Tacoma Tree Foundation, Sarah Low, is giving a webinar next week on fostering better partnerships. It is to be presented by the Pacific Northwest Chapter, International Society of Arboriculture. Pacific Northwest ISA (pnwisa.org)

Thanks again for your participation in Tacoma. It would be great to see any report generated from your observances.

Arboreally yours,

Michael Oxman

ISA Certified Arborist #PN-0756A

(206) 949-8733

from Michael Oxman to everyone: 4:56 PM

Only a few lines of chat allowed

**Public input (additional comments received):**