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**URBAN FORESTRY COMMISSION**  
Meeting Minutes  
February 20, 2014  
Lovejoy Room, City Hall

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**Commission Members present:** Kris Day, Michael McCloskey, Ricardo Moreno, Secretary Catherine Mushel, Stephen Peacock, Joe Poracsky, Chair Meryl Redisch, and Dianna Shervey

**City Staff present:** City Attorney Harry Auerbach; Jennifer Karpis, Bureau of Environmental Services (BES); City Forester Jenn Cairo, City Nature Manager Deborah Lev, Angie DiSalvo, Jeremy Grotbo, and recorder Anne Kroma, Parks & Recreation (PP&R)

**Guests present:** Patrick Donovan, PGE; Mark Bello, UFC Policy Committee; Ruth Williams, The Davey Tree Expert Company.

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**Call to Order and Public Comments:** Chair Meryl Redisch called the February 2014 Urban Forestry Commission (UFC) meeting to order at 8:17 am without a quorum present. She determined there was no one signed in to make public comments. The Chair requested postponement of the minutes until the other expected UFC members arrived.

**The Urban Forestry Report - City Forester Jenn Cairo**

City Forester Jenn Cairo gave an update on the current budget cycle, which is being characterized as a stabilization year. For the first time in several years PP&R is not being asked to submit a budget with deep and painful cuts. Parks Director Mike Abbaté, the Parks Board, and Commissioner Fritz have been working to set goals and priorities, including making improvements to some dangerous and unsafe work sites, some which (such as East Delta Park and Mt Tabor) also do not conform to ADA requirements. There is current work being done on ADA transition plans for all Parks properties. It was also announced that some seasonal workers, like the Rangers, will become permanent employees with benefits.

City Forester Cairo expressed her appreciation to everyone who showed up for the Title 11 Implementation Report to Council on December 19th. While some of its funding will be included in the Fiscal Year 2014-15 Budget, full funding for Title 11 Implementation is now scheduled for January 1, 2015. City Forester Cairo has been meeting with Parks

Commissioner Amanda Fritz and other City Commissioners to hear their concerns and strategy suggestions.

A staffing update included the news that Kelly Koetsier has been hired as a new Arborist II and Ned Sodja is back from retirement for a few weeks to help with training new permanent and temporary tree inspection staff. The UFC will be informed when open recruitment for inspectors starts and will be asked to disseminate the information. City Forester Cairo is working with Human Resources on a skills assessment as part of the hiring process.

Forester Cairo reported the new street tree lists rolled out to mostly positive feedback and thanked the UFC for their review and comments. Planting specifications are also undergoing an update and may be circulated for comment. Responding to questions, Forester Cairo related these will standardize planting hole size as twice the width of the root ball and will call for root barriers in planting strips less than four feet wide.

**Review of January UFC Minutes:** With all members of the UFC in attendance, Chair Meryl Redisch requested a quick review of the minutes. Members made a few minor changes.

Joe Poracsky moved that the January 2014 UFC minutes be approved, as corrected. The motion was seconded by Kris Day and approved unanimously.

## **Committee Reports**

### **Policy Committee – Kris Day**

Chair Kris Day reported that the committee had not met since prior to the presentation of the Report to Council regarding the implementation delay of Title 11. Kris thanked those that attended and especially, those that spoke on behalf of the new tree code.

A general discussion followed about continuing the work on talking points and the need to be consistent in our communication with allies, like Friends Groups. Although the public has been very involved since the beginning of the code change process, showing support now through the end of the budget cycle could be very important. City Council will vote for adoption of the proposed budget in June. Some funding will need to be in that upcoming budget with the new tree code to taking effect January 1, 2015. There are concerns about additional delays resulting in the new code being scrapped.

UFC Chair Meryl Redisch and others thanked Kris and the Policy Committee for their work on comments for the Comprehensive Plan. The Parks Board will be submitting their own letter, and generally supports the comments provided in the UFC's Policy Committee's letter.

### **Nominations/Recruitment Committee – Joe Poracsky**

Committee Chair Joe Poracsky reported on the progress in interviewing applicants for the UFC vacancies. Joe expressed his thanks to Anne Kroma for coordinating the paperwork and timing of several interview sessions. He reminded the group that there will be five slots to fill since two members are term-limiting off the Commission very soon

The recruitment and appointment process will be documented as part of the By-Laws so that future selections follow the same protocol. After the last scheduled interviews the Committee will meet to agree on a recommendation to Commissioner Fritz, who will be making her recommendation on appointments to the Mayor.

Secretary Catherine Mushel (participating on this interview panel) expressed her thoughts on finding balance and diversity among UFC members and suggests the description on the website be expanded. Kris Day remarked that current code requires a landscape architect be on the UFC to represent design and development. UFC Chair Meryl Redisch commented that having someone with a science background, especially in biology could be helpful. Catherine Mushel felt that although not required, having a UFC member representing the arts would add to the diversity of the Commission.

Nominations Committee Chair Joe Poracsky explained that in this instance the interview panel sat down with the applications to map out applicant strengths and how each might fit into the Commission. The committee did not advertise for any specialty, i.e. landscape architect or community activist. Kris Day was recognized to suggest that the website have a more comprehensive narrative regarding the makeup of the Commission. Generally, the discussion pointed to commissioners' experience that even when a certain specification is felt to be necessary for the commission to be representative, in fact, the reason for advancing a candidate to Council may turn out to be less relevant than expected as commission members work together over time and other strengths emerge. Chair Meryl Redisch reiterated the need for good communication with new members to help orient them within the commission and committee structure.

### **Heritage Trees - Michael McCloskey**

Committee Chair Michael McCloskey updated the Commission on being approached by an author, Paul Gerard, regarding a new book on Heritage Trees. The Heritage Tree Committee will probably schedule the next field tour in May to allow the author to join them. The reach of the committee is spreading; Michael spoke on Heritage Trees last year at a Villa Garden Club meeting.

Michael McCloskey provided a document in response to an assignment from the UFC retreat last March. The document, Evaluation of Current City Programs and Their Effectiveness in Preserving Larger Trees and Opportunities for New and Better Approaches, was sent electronically and hard copy was provided in the meeting packets. UFC Chair Meryl Redisch requested that everyone read the report and be ready for a discussion at the next meeting in March. She noted that there is no mention of Heritage Trees in the Comprehensive Plan. It was suggested that an addendum to the Comprehensive Plan letter could be prepared and sent.

UFC Chair Meryl Redisch expressed her thanks for Michael McCloskey's follow-through in providing the document. She also stated that with Michael's second full term completed, it is hoped that he will agree to stay on as Heritage Tree Committee Chair after leaving the UF Commission. Michael agreed to serve in this capacity for a limited time only.

### **Arbor Month Status – Autumn Montegna and the E&O Committee**

Education & Outreach Committee Chair Catherine Mushel informed the UFC that in Autumn's absence, she would be able to give the Arbor Month status report.

Plans for Arbor Month are progressing well. The Committee now regards each contact or proposal not just as it relates to Arbor Month, but also within their long-term plans and goals. For example, Autumn is working with Ed Jensen from OSU about leading a tree walk at Leach Botanical Garden. If it cannot be arranged in time for April, efforts with Janice Jenkins (Education Coordinator of Leach) will continue to bring urban forestry education to that wonderful site.

Neighborhood Coalition offices were contacted to encourage applications for the Bill Naito Community Tree Awards. Nominations will also be solicited at the Neighborhood Tree Steward (NTS) Reception scheduled for February 26<sup>th</sup> at the Killingsworth Lucky Lab. The Arbor Day Festival is being promoted as a possible NTS gathering with the aim of encouraging even more tree events hosted by stewards throughout the month of April and the year.

Work on the Arbor Month website, poster, and activities continue with process notes and contact lists being expanded. Catherine explained that concentrating on a theme and having one full month of events gives the E&O Committee a way to leverage their message: bureau and non-profit partners, as well as individual participants can look around in this concentrated period of time and see an array of possibilities for solidifying their connections with one another and furthering the stewardship of the urban forest—this year's theme.

### **Compliance report and activities discussion – Angie DiSalvo, Botanic Specialist, Urban Forestry Division, City Nature, Portland Parks and Recreation**

Angie DiSalvo gave a PowerPoint presentation. She explained that the compliance review was done in preparation for Title 11, to determine compliance rates, and to see if planting standards are being met. The information reviewed came from all 2011 UF permits requiring planting, as well as reports run during the winter of 2013 providing a sample of different permit types. These permit addresses received field inspections (not something there is funding to do regularly) to determine baseline measurements. The inspections included verifying removal, planting, species and caliper size in both Development and Non-Development permits.

Angie reported that the UF office receives very few (one to two dozen) complaints each year regarding illegal tree removals. Joe Poracsky shared his experience about calling in a tree cutting complaint and was concerned about not receiving a response to his report.

The presentation included a slide showing the permit process and the 2013 statistics for street tree removals. There has been some concern about the non-refundable application fee, but only 5% of the applications were denied, suggesting the fee is connected most often to a desired action. Inspections show that 93% of the permits resulted in street tree removal and 90% of those did replant. 12% of the removal permits did not require street tree replanting, often due to restrictions related to transportation or utility rules.

Private tree removals under 20.42 Tree Cutting Ordinance, or TCO permits require the application, a mitigation plan, and a fee. The approval decision is posted after the inspection and gives public notification before the removal permit is issued. In the sample, 9% of these applications were denied, 51% were approved with planting required, and 34% approved with no planting required. 32% of the denied or cancelled permits still resulted in removals.

There was no enforcement follow-up on any of the situations revealed by this review, indicating a need for continuing the discussion about funding for tree inspections and compliance work.

Angie continued her report with information about tree permits within the development process. New commercial or residential building permits require a street tree review, inspection and site plan. Remodel projects over the \$25,000 valuation threshold will trigger a tree review and site plan. Since the development permit is issued by the Bureau of Development Services, it is their inspector who finalizes the permit. Whether specified trees are preserved or the planting plan is followed is not routinely verified by BDS inspectors.

Questions from the UFC included whether this permit data included such information as the number of natives planted or the survival rate of trees.

Angie continued by stating that the staff set a goal of 90% compliance across all permit types. The solution remains voluntary compliance, since any enforcement process would be limited and expensive. When a complaint is received, a violation letter is sent to the property owner. To go beyond sending a letter and enforcing civil penalties through the Code Hearings Officer process requires \$1,250 plus staff time. Although a lien is placed on the property through the Nuisance Abatement process, Urban Forestry rarely recovers the expense until the property is sold. Title 11 offers more administrative tools, including violation reviews and enforcement penalties, but funding issues remain largely the same.

Catherine Mushel was recognized and championed the SPOC (Single Point of Contact) to help owners understand the tree permit process, but felt challenges to understanding the value of trees will require education resulting in a culture of preservation. Absentee owners and a real estate market that encourages “flipping” will continue to make tree preservation challenging. Jenn Cairo pointed out that it is looking at the bigger picture that resulted in the idea of watershed health instead of just the health of each stream or river.

Angie DiSalvo will send the presentation to be forwarded to the UFC and asked for comments in return.

## **Old/New Business**

UFC Chair Meryl Redisch announced that this is the last official month in the terms of both Dianna Shervey and Michael McCloskey. They will return for next month's meeting to wrap things up and be recognized for their service to the Commission.

Kris Day mentioned the retreat held last year in March, and asked if there are plans for the next one. Nothing is currently scheduled, and Ricardo Moreno felt it would be more constructive to wait until new members are brought onto the Commission to have a retreat.

Kris Day asked for the UFC to review and comment on the update to the UFAP (Urban Forest Action Plan) that Angie DiSalvo will forward. John Warner previously represented the UFC in the update process but was not replaced when he completed his last term.

Joe Poracsky requested that a future agenda item discuss forming a new Committee to deal with Park trees. PP&R has absolute control over these trees and Joe feels a committee could help in identifying tree deficiencies on Parks properties. Michael McCloskey suggested native forests like the Terwilliger Parkway or BES natural areas also be looked at. Catherine Mushel also felt city-street landscapes could also come under that new committee's purview.

The regular business meeting adjourned at 10:32 am.