

URBAN FORESTRY COMMISSION



PORTLAND PARKS & RECREATION

Healthy Parks, Healthy Portland



• Nick Fish, Commissioner • Mike Abbaté, Director

URBAN FORESTRY COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes

July 19, 2012

Lovejoy Room, City Hall

- Commission Members present:** Brian Krieg, Michael McCloskey, Ricardo Moreno, Secretary Catherine Mushel, Stephen Peacock, Chair Joe Poracsky, vice Chair Meryl Redisch, Dianna Shervey and John Warner.
- Commission Members absent:** Dick Pugh
- City Staff present:** City Attorney Harry Auerbach; Lola Gailey, Portland Office of Transportation (PBOT); Title 11 Coordinator Mieke Keenan, Bureau of Development Services (BDS); Jennifer Karps, Bureau of Environmental Services (BES); City Forester Jenn Cairo, Larry Maginnis, Angie DiSalvo, and Anne Kroma, Parks & Recreation (PP&R).
- Guests present:** Scott Fogarty, Friends of Trees; Ed Washington.
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Call to Order and Public Comments: Chair Joseph Poracsky called the July Urban Forestry Commission (UFC) meeting to order at 7:41 am with a description of the commission and its purpose. It was determined that there were no public comments.

Review and approval of May and June UFC Minutes

Meryl Redisch moved to approve the May 2012 minutes with a provided paragraph written by the UFC Secretary Catherine Mushel to express Michael McCloskey's concerns discussed in June about technical changes to the Title 11 amendments. Catherine Mushel seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously.

Michael McCloskey moved to approve the June 2012 minutes as written. Ricardo Moreno seconded the motion and those minutes were approved.

The Urban Forestry Report - Jenn Cairo, Urban Forester

Jenn reported on how the budget changes resulted in new Urban Forestry team members and new locations for others. Keli Nation has moved to another bureau and Kelly Marie Griffin will now be the main intake person for Urban Forestry. Karl Dawson and Autumn Montegna are now located at the offices at East Delta Park, along with seasonal workers Elm Monitor Danielle Fuchs, and Urban Forestry Intern Christina Schull.

The current hiring freeze (in effect until possibly September or November) is projected to save the City of Portland \$2 million by not filling vacancies until the freeze is lifted. This decision means that three of the twelve arborist positions will not be staffed. This continues to be a difficult time of transition and reorganization.

Improvements to the permit process include written procedures, a dedicated phone line, and communicating reasonable expectations for return calls to the public. Inspectors are now helping answer some of the 70 calls that the office receives a day.

Larry Maginnis provided a poster to each UFC member featuring the events of the International Tree Climbing Championship (August 11 and 12) and Arbor Fair (August 11) to be held in Laurelhurst Park. This incredibly exciting opportunity is in conjunction with the International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) annual conference and gives Portland a chance to show off our urban forest to an international tree audience. The Arbor Fair gives the public (kids and adults) a chance for a safe and supervised tree climb as well as bucket truck rides. Laurelhurst will be spiffed up by volunteers to look its best for the out of town arboriculturally aware crowd. There are activities including Ascending the Giants (a guided canopy climb at Audubon) and Tour de Trees (a fundraising bicycle ride to benefit research). Stephen Peacock reported that one of his employees, Robert Bundy, will be representing the Pacific Northwest at the competition and just won first place in Vancouver BC. Larry will also be hosting a tour of the Terwilliger View and other urban forest challenges.

Jenn Cairo briefed the UFC on a report of tree vandalism at Rose City Golf Course. Two walnut trees that have been frequently damaged in the past were sprayed with an herbicide. The incident was confirmed with the complainant and reported to Parks Golf Course staff. Parks Urban Forestry staff would give general support to the golf course staff in establishing a value for the trees and provide other technical support.

This kind of destruction can bring charges ranging from a simple misdemeanor to a felony depending on the value of the tree. Sentences can be up to 5 years and a \$100,000 fine. The UFC discussed publicizing cases or offering rewards to request help from the public.

City Attorney Harry Auerbach explained the following regarding this situation:

- Identifying a suspect is the first step but often very difficult
- If done, charges can be one of one of three degrees of criminal mischief up to a Class C felony
- Civil penalties can be assessed under timber trespass laws and the fine is three times the value of the tree. This has been used in the past and does send a clear message.

- The Portland Police Crime Stoppers program uses cash rewards to gain information from the public about local crimes.
- Parks Bureau media contacts may be able to help in outreach for a problem like this.

Online Pruning Permits – Angie DiSalvo

Title 11 Coordinator Mieke Keenan introduced the subject with an overview. The new code has a provision that allows for self issued pruning permits, similar to other online issued City permits. Criteria are listed and the applicant must agree that they meet all of them and will do the permitted work correctly. The permit is emailed to the applicant without any site inspection, something currently done for every pruning permit.

Mieke also pointed out that a large change starting July 2013 is having jurisdiction over more than just small number of private trees. A lot of education currently takes place during the inspection process. There are \$30K in funds budgeted to have tree permits issued automatically in the TRACs software system, work that is currently done by manual input. It is hoped that all the bugs can be worked out between now and Title 11 full implementation.

Angie delineated the current process (with 2 week turnaround on 1000 permits a year) as:

- Applicant calls or emails for permit
- Inspection is scheduled and done
- The applicant is contacted by phone if there are questions or concerns
- The permit is issued and mailed or emailed to the applicant

With an increased awareness of the need for pruning permits has come increased volume and longer inspection wait times. This then means less consultations (and education) but all inspection results are documented.

Angie reassured the UFC that applicants (homeowners and hired arborists) will always have the option of requesting an inspection as part of the self issued permits and remains as a process in a regular tree permit.

The next steps are:

- Filing the City's pruning standards (based on ISA and ANSI standards)
- Determining eligibility for online permits
- Launching the new web page with online permit application
- Complete testing (July and August)
- Program start (October)
- Inspection monitoring (random or targeted, on 10 to 20%, for 6 months to a year)

The online permit agreement is a check box, like license agreement check boxes, and the permit cannot be submitted if this is not agreed to.

The testing during July and August involves four local tree care companies that volunteered to try out the system and are excited about the program. It can be difficult for these companies to schedule work when they aren't sure when the tree inspection will take place, when the permit will arrive, and when the contracted work can begin.

Catherine Mushel values the role of education in the inspection process. She referenced someone at a neighborhood meeting who suggested hiring overweight teenagers to do tree pruning, as if it is unskilled work or exercise. She also has concerns that street and sidewalk pruning may unbalance trees that get low limbs pruned but no crown pruning.

Meryl Redisch wondered if there could be an additional step of asking homeowners if they've ever done this work before. Those that indicate they are new to tree pruning could be included in spot check inspections and encouraged to use the links to available resources.

Michael McCloskey expressed his appreciation for the work going into determining documenting the new permit process. He felt the discussion today responded to requests for change that came up in the course of discussing the amendments package. This permit process will speed up service while still supplying answers for homeowners that need advice. Michael decided not to distribute a memo on the matter or offer a revised amendment.

The Chair recognized Ed Washington in the gallery as a former UFC Chair and a current Heritage Tree Committee member.

September Bus Tour Planning - Jenn Cairo

Jenn Cairo explained that tour planning included staff familiar with the work who could suggest sites that show the challenges on the ground. Joe Poracsky had hoped for an inspector driven tour illustrating common or controversial issues. Examples could include appeal cases, street tree removals, private trees, signs and billboards, tree topping, root pruning, hazardous situations, and Parks tree planning process.

Further discussion included the possibility of looking at other dates, a different start time, and leaving from Urban Forestry at Delta Park where there will be more parking.

Other suggestions included having PBOT people join that could explain sidewalk process and issues and also having BDS people explain their jurisdiction and process.

Committee and Partnership Reports

Policy Committee – Brian Krieg

No report.

Education & Outreach Committee – Meryl Redisch

Meryl reported further work on Arbor Week plans that will involve other City agencies and the Saturday Farmers Market for that Saturday hours in April 2013. They are contributing educational content for the web page and envision outreach from it. There is only a small portion of the by-laws work remaining

Nominations Committee – Dianna Shervey

The committee is in a holding pattern awaiting direction from Commissioner Fish.

Appeals Committee – John Warner

John reported that he and Catherine Mushel met with Angie DiSalvo and Jenn Cairo to go over final drafts of appeal forms. There is a request that forms for both 20.40 and 20.42 appeals be consistent in formatting, if not on the same document. A new version of the forms will be mailed to Committee members.

Heritage Tree Committee – Michael McCloskey

Michael reported that the Committee inspected nominations at eight sites on a June 28 tour. The Committee approved a European Beech and a Coast Redwood for recommendation. Visibility of the lowest portion of one tree from the street was commented on. The Committee did not recommend the four giant Sequoias on NE Holladay Street for Heritage Trees, but they will be Trees of Merit. The Committee is planning on an August presentation to the full Commission and going before City Council in the fall.

BES, Jennifer Karps

Jennifer provided a promised document showing the final totals for the planting season. BES (with Friends of Trees) planted close to 8,000 trees this season. Highlights include a planting along an I-5 sound wall which introduced evergreen oaks. The summer canvassers for next season have just started. An in-house project of mapping commercial and industrial zoned planting spaces is ongoing.

Jennifer encouraged attendance at any of the activities for the ISA convention in August, especially a field trip she is leading to show multi use pathway plantings, street trees in Woodstock, and care for older trees in Ladd's Addition, among other things.

Jennifer will give her UERC conference presentation on young tree monitoring to Metro.

The original Green Street tree list was developed by Joe Hintz. The lists are under revision and we are looking at trees that can deal with drought and flooding and will work well as street trees.

PBOT, Lola Gaily

Lola brought up the root barrier subject from last month and explained that although used in different areas and at different times, there has been no documentation to study the findings and make recommendations. PBOT would like to see root barriers used, especially on Grey to Green project streets.

Old / New Business:

Brian Krieg mentioned the opportunity to comment on the Governor's Energy draft policy has a deadline of July 30. There are new needs via retrofitting and conservation measures. Trees do cool buildings.

Scott Fogarty was recognized by the Chair and appreciated Brian's message. He has been wading through the huge state document and looking at carbon and other issues.

Jennifer Cairo thanked Joe and Meryl for a quick and wonderful response to the Oregonian editorial on trees. Commissioner Fish is pursuing requests that it be printed.

Brian Krieg announced that after six years on the Commission, he sees his business requiring him to step down from the UFC. His last meeting will be the September meeting and he will be finishing up the by-laws work. Brian was thanked for his service to the Commission.

The meeting adjourned at 9:30 am.