

URBAN FORESTRY COMMISSION



PORTLAND PARKS & RECREATION
Healthy Parks, Healthy Portland



• Nick Fish, Commissioner • Mike Abbaté, Director

URBAN FORESTRY COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes

December 20, 2012

Lovejoy Room, City Hall

Commission Members present:	Michael McCloskey, Ricardo Moreno, Secretary Catherine Mushel, Joe Poracsky, Chair Meryl Redisch, Dianna Shervey and John Warner
Commission Members absent:	Stephen Peacock and Dick Pugh
City Staff present:	City Attorney Harry Auerbach; Jennifer Karpis, Bureau of Environmental Services (BES); City Forester Jenn Cairo, City Nature Manager Deborah Lev and Anne Kroma, Parks & Recreation (PP&R)
Guests present:	Michael Hayes, Patrick Donovan of Portland General Electric (PGE)

Call to Order and Public Comments: Newly installed Chair Meryl Redisch verified a quorum and called the Urban Forestry Commission (UFC) meeting to order at 7:35 am.

Chair Meryl Redisch recognized Michael Hayes for general public comments.

Michael has been involved in urban forestry issues and activities in his neighborhood through SMILE, Sellwood-Moreland Improvement League. He contributed a list of observations and recommendations:

- Neighborhood street tree inventories, which currently do not count trees on undeveloped and unpaved streets, should include them in the future.
- A special report should be prepared describing this resource.
- Policy should encourage conservation of existing plant material on all streets.
- "Planting within the undeveloped public right-of-way should be encouraged, including tree canopy development, community gardening, and the planting of ornamental and environmentally suitable plant material."
- This could make those streets more accessible and beautiful, while working toward the goal of a park-like environment throughout the City.
- Consideration be given to his willingness to work with any group or committee on this matter.

Harry Auerbach clarified that City Code requires the adjacent homeowner to be responsible for trees in the ROW and City regulations also cover unimproved streets. Some streets may have been platted and dedicated, but not officially opened and do not have curbs or sidewalks. The City does not accept maintenance oversight until PBOT (Portland Bureau of Transportation) accepts the street and ROW into the system. The property owner remains responsible and activity with any street tree, even on an unimproved street, requires a permit.

Michael Hayes previously invited the UFC to join a neighborhood work party in an area along Springwater Trail. He extended an invitation to the next work party scheduled for January 20th beginning at 10 am. It is being sponsored by SNAC, the SMILE Natural Amenities Committee, with support from PP&R staff. The stewardship activity will be focused on the parcel on the south side of Springwater Corridor between SE 11th and 13th Avenues and includes some unimproved ROW on SE Ochoco Street.

Referring to a prior discussion of planned Dutch elm disease abatement this winter, Michael Hayes asked for help in removing some dead and dying trees blocking an unpaved ROW. The neighborhood has been expending a lot of effort to improve the natural amenities and requests assistance from the City of Portland.

Review and approval of November UFC Minutes

There were several minor changes and corrections requested in the minutes, in addition to those provided in advance of the meeting. Secretary Catherine Mushel will confirm the revisions are all included as requested.

Joe Poracsky moved that the November 2012 minutes be approved with the changes described. Catherine Mushel seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously.

The Urban Forestry Report - Jenn Cairo, City Forester

Tree Code Update:

- The Mayor's office has requested no new expenditures.
- Plans to have the additional staff, including the SPOC (Single Point of Contact), hired and trained by July 1, 2013 will need to be delayed.
- Tree Code portions that do not require funds may be implemented.
- Stakeholder concerns about protection during development are at the forefront.
- Jenn will meet with BDS (Bureau of Development Services) staff to review permit fees.
- TRACS software development is going well with increased report capacity. Mieke Keenan, Angie DiSalvo, Mike Hayakawa and Jenn will continue to meet on this.
- Tree Code public outreach is on hold. Materials will continue to be developed, but enforcement and protocols must be determined before the code is communicated officially to the public.
- 823-TREE, currently assigned to BES, will become the SPOC phone number

Tree emergencies:

- Urban Forestry Arborists are responding to a lot of weather related tree calls through direct contact and the maintenance emergency response system.
- Work with Michelle Juon, Watershed Re-vegetation Program Manager at BES, continues to see where collaboration between both bureaus' staff can happen.
- Jenn would also like to talk to other tree resources to complement work being done to ensure 'the most bang for the buck' for everyone.

Root Barrier update:

- Jenn has been working with the BES Grey to Green staff and with Friends of Trees (FOT) to implement root barrier requirements for new development permits.
- Concerns of cost and duplication of effort are being reviewed in this pilot effort.
- Originally intended for all planting strips; there may be size or species considerations.
- Jenn is planning a demonstration for the UFC, possibly in mid-January.
- Root barriers are not required in sidewalk cutouts (although BES does do some).
- Rules for Capital Project developments are different.
- Barriers must be installed prior to planting. If tried after the sidewalk is posted, they could damage the tree and will probably not guide the roots in the desired direction.
- PBOT is willing to confer and work with homeowners to find acceptable alternatives to the standard process of root pruning and cemented sidewalk repair. The upfront root barrier cost may be a good value when compared to repeated permit, inspection and cement pouring costs. Other methods like ramping, pavers or cutting may also be cost effective if measured against reoccurring maintenance by certified contractors.
- Heritage Tree status on a street tree makes the City more involved and responsible.
- Jenn will explore funding possibilities through the mitigation trust or some kind of stipend program to help defray arboricultural costs for low income homeowners.
- Meryl Redisch asked that any environmental effects of the plastic barriers be considered in monitoring protocols.

UF and FOT Partnership for a Pilot Pruning Project (page 2 of UF Report):

- Volunteers worked with certified arborists to prune young street trees in Concordia.
- This proactive maintenance encourages stable and correct form in the early years of growth and helps to result in balanced crowns.
- 234 two –to-four year old trees were pruned, with neighbors allowed to opt out.
- Luke Miller provided a refresher training and the inspections done a few days later showed no drastically wrong pruning.
- Funding is being sought to expand this FOT model for pruning street trees citywide.
- Many homeowners would not have the proper tools (such as bypass shears) to do the job correctly. UF does loan out equipment for work on street trees.

Jenn Cairo announced that the Breakfast in the Barn event will not be happening this year. It has become a very large endeavor requiring a lot of donated staff time and money. While an enjoyable opportunity to socialize with staff and thank tree community partners, it's become a little overwhelming to pull off. Other possible event ideas will be considered in the future.

Committee and Partnership Reports

Heritage Tree Committee – Michael McCloskey

Michael reported on a well-attended indoor meeting held November 28th. The group tried for a third time to reach consensus on the process of delisting Heritage Trees. They would like a general rule or overarching policy on delisting, so that it doesn't become a matter of second guessing or revisiting every heritage Tree (HT) designation.

The current policy is to decide on a case-by-case basis after staff recommendation and a field visit. The old code (currently in effect) requires a unanimous vote of the full Commission and the new code will require six of eleven UFC members to vote in favor of delisting. In field tours over the last year, only two of six trees considered for delisting were in such bad shape that there was little argument about changing their status.

The question was raised at the committee meeting about whether trees that are already protected as part of a collection, such as those in Hoyt Arboretum, should also receive Heritage Tree status. Half of the HT Committee felt they could be included if there were multiple grounds for the listing; the others felt that it was inappropriate. There has been no agreement on a guiding policy. The committee will continue to consider Heritage Tree status for each individual tree or grove in Hoyt Arboretum.

Education & Outreach Committee – Meryl Redisch

Education & Outreach (E&O) Committee Chair Meryl reported on the last meeting:

- Arbor Month celebration schedule has been updated (with thanks to Jennifer Karps, Autumn Montegna, Kris Day and Bryan Burch) and has an event on almost half of the days. The goal of a tree activity every day of Arbor Month is still being pursued.
- UFC Secretary Catherine Mushel and UF staff are working on the required Annual Report, which includes documenting the achievements of the last fiscal year.
- The five to six minute FOT video captures the emotional connection to the forest at a macro level. Even if not be ready for viewing on Arbor Day, it will be utilized a lot.

Appeals Committee – John Warner

John pointed out the requested appeal paperwork, making up Appendix B, is included in this month's UFC packet. He expressed his thanks to Anne Kroma for her continued administrative effort over the last four years to complete the By Laws. He felt this appendix, created by Urban Forestry staff and the UFC Appeals Committee, gives the Appeals Board a working process while still allowing future committee chairs to continue to refine it. UF inspection staff also uses the appeal process and forms.

BES Grey to Green - Jennifer Karps

Two of the five scheduled planting projects for the season are complete. Street tree planting in the Eastside Industrial District continues from last year, with about a hundred concrete well cuts made for approximately 181 trees. The rest of the approximately 2000 street trees added to the canopy this year from this program are in residential areas, some unimproved.

2013 Budget - Deborah Lev

Deb reported the budget for the next fiscal year (FY) beginning July 1, 2013 will include another year of cuts. After FY13-14, budgets are expected to flatten out. Contributing factors:

- Library District tax compression (the property tax cap squishes down other funding).
- Department of Justice (DOJ) settlement with the Police Bureau.
- A downturn or stagnation in business taxes and other revenue.

There may be as much as \$25 million in general fund allocation cuts across the City. In previous years the cuts were not spread evenly across the board, and Police and Fire bureaus were not required to reduce by the same percentage. That resulted in as high as 10% budget cuts to some bureaus, including Parks & Recreation.

Deb described the change in the budget process and late start to this cycle. Bureaus were waiting for direction from new Mayor Charlie Hales. They are now being asked to submit modified zero-based budgets focusing on 90% of funding levels to retain core services. The other 10% would be considered by BACs (Budget Advisory Committees) as recommended add-backs in the final Council budget. This is the opposite of past budget planning when bureaus were given a percentage to cut and looked for the least onerous or most easily reinstated cuts to programs. After so many years of reductions, there is not much left that is not considered core program or necessary services.

The UFC is charged in City code with advising PP&R on the budget pertaining to Urban Forestry. In the past that responsibility was fulfilled by having a UFC member (recently assigned to the Vice chair) sitting on the Parks BAC. This year the Parks Board and labor representatives will make up the Parks BAC. Because UFC Chair Meryl Redisch has just been appointed as an ex-officio member of the Parks Board, she will be informed and able to help keep the UFC notified throughout the process. Some of last year's early cuts were added back when the Parks BAC was informed about the details and necessity of forestry work.

Even with a compressed budget timeline, the process will be difficult for City staff being cut and remaining staff expected to shoulder more work. The layoff and bumping process crosses seniority at bureau and city levels and sometimes stretches over a while as it plays out. Rate-base funded bureaus are being asked to cut so that rates will not need to increase.

The budget schedule includes three January BAC meetings. The first will happen before the January UFC meeting and the UFC agenda will allocate enough time to fully cover the subject. Requested bureau budgets are due to the Mayor on February 4th, at which time he will transfer all bureaus to his portfolio until the completed budget is adopted on May 4th. There should be several opportunities for the public to comment on the FY13-14 Budget. Dates and testimony methods will be forwarded to the UFC as soon as announced.

Catherine Mushel asked if fundraising by Friends groups is included in budgeted dollars. Jenn Cairo gave the example of lottery funds used for State parks while regular park funding was decreased by the same amount in the next state budget. Facilities with a Friends Group (a private nonprofit) or a partner providing dedicated funding may weather the financial hard times better than programs without strong advocacy. It may be a case of 'the squeaky wheel' in terms of vocal and visual support, or that these cultural icons, like the Japanese Garden,

are fairly self sufficient. This holiday time may have been a missed opportunity to encourage end of calendar year fundraising in a coordinated effort among Friends and partners.

A staff memo from Director Abbaté stated the goal of maintaining equity and access while continuing to accomplish the steps delineated in strategic plans and ensuring public safety.

Joe Poracsky (past Chair) said that the Parks Board meeting he and Catherine Mushel (Secretary) in July was the first one he knew of UFC members attending. Subsequent to that meeting, he worked with outgoing Parks Board Chair Julie Bigelow on making sure the Parks Board and the UFC are working together, which resulted in an UFC unanimous vote confirming Meryl and future UFC Chairs as an ex-officio member of the Parks Board. Catherine reiterated that in that July meeting the discussion of long-range City plans for sustainability or livability never mentioned the words “tree” or “urban forest.”

It is expected that an ordinance will be brought before Council to delay the remaining implementation of Title 11 until 2014. It may be decided to put everything off or implement the remaining new regulations that do not require additional staffing and/or funding. Concerns include a lack of enforcement in the current code, the need for additional compliance staff and customer service confusion until the SPOC is in place.

FOLLOW UP:

Chair Meryl Redisch will provide a letter of support regarding UF staff needs in the budget. Budget public comment timeline will be shared so that the UFC can be prepared to testify.

Commissioner Terms - Joe Poracsky

Joe provided the UFC Rotation Schedule based on the term limits in the new code. He directed attention to the notes at the bottom of the chart.

Further discussion:

- The Nominations Committee should be actively recruiting year round to ensure that there is group of interested nominees to consider at the designated times each year.
- With a consistent length of term, a regular interview schedule, and standard appointment dates, only those vacancies due to unfinished terms should change the routine appointment process.
- Meryl suggested each Commissioner consider providing a nomination when they plan to leave. She felt everyone aspires to replace themselves with someone better.
- Joe will be showing a PowerPoint recruitment presentation to a neighborhood association meeting in January or February. Jenn Cairo volunteered to work on this term team and it was suggested that Kris Day be encouraged to join.
- Harry Auerbach suggested that the current Report to Council clarify the term for each person named in it. Term dates are not easily found in Council Archives and were not consistent for full or partial terms. If someone was appointed to finish another's term, that member would then be eligible for two full four-year terms.

John Warner moved to adopt the rotation schedule provided, as modified, and include tracking term information from now on as a duty of the UFC Secretary. Michael McCloskey seconded the motion and it passed with a vote of 5 to 2.

Secretary Catherine Mushel has been working on the required UFC Annual Report and expressed concern that with many changes in direct reporting and inherent turnover in limited term positions, there could be institutional knowledge not being captured. She was reassured that it is planned that Mieke Keenan will remain in her current pivotal position for another year.

UFC Committee changes are needed as result of officer changes, commission retirements, and the desire to increase public involvement through committee appointments. An updated list will be provided regularly as new members express interest and other interested public are invited to join.

Retreat Planning - Meryl Redisch

Meryl explained that time in January and February will be mostly consumed by the budget process so the retreat is being planned for March 21st instead of the regular business meeting. Plans so far:

- The theme will be related to accomplishments of the UFMP (Urban Forestry Management Plan) and whether the remaining goals are still needed or relevant. If used in the context of long-term commitments, it may reinforce funding requests.
- Meryl and Jenn are working with Elizabeth Kennedy Wong to get a City facilitator.
- It will probably happen at Audubon Society, most likely for a half day.
- Everyone should bring their list of issues, such as the conflict between canopy and solar access, and straw man votes can be taken to determine the issues to be discussed.

Old / New Business:

Dianna Shervey introduced Patrick Donovan, PGE's new forester for Portland and surrounding area. He started in October and has done utility work as an arborist and has a forestry education.

Catherine Mushel agreed to accept the responsibility as Chair of the E& O Committee.

John Warner wrote a letter of support for a grant application. There is a current one being sought for \$75K for street tree inventory.

The Washington Park parking ordinance passed City Council and Harry is working with the non-profit manage group that is being formed. Todd Lofgren met with some UFC members, showed them plans and said that the UFC will be informed in a timely way as the Washington Park Master Plan is being developed so that they can review impacts on trees.

Chair Meryl Redisch wished everyone happy holidays.
The business meeting adjourned at 10:00 am.