
URBAN FORESTRY COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes

December 19, 2013

Lovejoy Room, City Hall

- Commission Members present:** Michael McCloskey, Secretary Catherine Mushel, Stephen Peacock, Joe Poracsky, and Chair Meryl Redisch
- Commission Members absent:** Kris Day, Ricardo Moreno, and Dianna Shervey
- City Staff present:** City Attorney Harry Auerbach; Lola Gailey, Portland Bureau of Transportation (PBOT); Jenifer Karps, Bureau of Environmental Services (BES); City Forester Jenn Cairo, Autumn Montegna, UF Permit Supervisor Casey Jogerst, Tree Inspector Lou Phemister, and recorder Anne Kroma, Parks & Recreation (PP&R)
- Guests present:** Parks Bureau Director Mike Abbaté; Susie Peterson, Friends of Trees; Bryan Burch; Michael Hayes, Sara Ennis Friends of Trees.
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Call to Order and Public Comments: Chair Meryl Redisch called the December 2013 Urban Forestry Commission (UFC) meeting to order at 8:15 am and reminded the Commission that due to a lack of a quorum, there would be no votes taken on agenda items until the next meeting.

Review November UFC Minutes: Chair Meryl Redisch requested those UFC members present review the November 2013 draft minutes and provide any changes or corrections. Recorder Anne Kroma will provide a revised version at the next meeting to be reviewed and approved for the public record.

Joe Poracsky suggested that Policy Committee decisions should be vetted with the entire Commission.

The UFC Chair suggested the best way to introduce new ideas to the Commission would be under the Old/New Business agenda item.

The Urban Forestry Report - City Forester Jenn Cairo

City Forester Jenn Cairo reminded the UF Commission about the presentation of a Report to Council regarding Title 11 Implementation scheduled for that afternoon, December 19th at 3 pm. Parks Bureau Director Mike Abbaté, Bureau of Development Services Director Paul Scarlett and BES Director Dean Marriott will jointly submit the Report to Council. Roberta Jortner, Mieke Keenan, and Jenn Cairo are scheduled testify as staff on behalf of the report. This complies with the request made at the time of the last ordinance to delay implementation. Chair Meryl Redisch will also testify in person and comments can be submitted electronically.

The new budget process has begun and looks to continue core services at the same levels. Chair Meryl Redisch is a member of the Parks BAC (Budget Advisory Committee) and will continue to update the Commission until the FY14-15 budget's release and adoption.

Danielle Bohannan, known to the UFC by her maiden name of Fuchs, has accepted the position of Botanical Specialist with the Forestry focus. Previously a seasonal worker, Danielle has helped with street tree inventory, the annual and canopy reports. She will continue in those areas, help with intake, and in documenting policies and procedures.

Urban Forestry is partnering with non-profit Verde to offer a Spanish language pruning workshop in this winter. Parks is working to make bureau information more inclusive by translating documents into even more languages.

Jenn Cairo explained delays in scheduling an appreciation event for the Urban Forestry Commission. The UFC is made up of volunteers who are charged with doing the City's work through the tree permit appeal process. Commission members donate a lot of their time and advocate for trees and parks. The date and time of the occasion will be announced as soon as a decision is made, and the plan is to have it coincide with a UF Commission meeting.

UFC Chair Meryl Redisch encouraged anyone in the room to write a letter to the editor in response to the Tribune editorial on repealing the new tree code. Both the positive article (dated December 12, 2013) and the editorial (dated December 13, 2013) are included as hard copy. When asked if the tree inspectors have been getting feedback on the new code, City Forester Jenn Cairo reminded the Commission that outreach will not be done until the implementation date is confirmed. As the face-to-face contact, tree inspectors have some concerns about it but are trained in using skills to diffuse confrontations.

Stephen Peacock acknowledged that many of the complaints result from being told what can be done on private property. Michael McCloskey related his recent experience speaking at a neighborhood meeting in which people expressed concerns about the new regulations covering large trees on single family undividable lots. The implementation delay means many points will need to be "re-sold" to the public and the communication plan will be vital.

It was suggested that the Policy Committee may be interested in working on preparing UFC members with a workshop on communicating about this issue.

Tree canopy benefits can be explained to the public in a similar way to how water issues now have a larger point of view. People can understand that upstream actions or a pollution source can impact water quality somewhere else. The actions of an individual tree owner can have an impact beyond the property line.

Committee and Partnership Reports

Policy Committee - Meryl Redisch

Policy Committee Chair Kris Day is vacationing in Hawaii so Meryl Redisch reported on their meeting about submission of comments regarding the Comprehensive Plan. The Policy Committee has been working on a draft to submit for the end of January deadline. Meryl Redisch testified to the ease of using the Comp Plan map phone app and encouraged its use.

Nomination and Recruitment Committee - Joe Poracsky

Committee Chair Joe Poracsky reported the group is looking for ways to share the recruitment PowerPoint presentation at a neighborhood level.

Education & Outreach (E&O) Committee

E&O Committee Chair Catherine Mushel will report on committee work later in the meeting.

Urban Tree Canopy Program - Jennifer Karps

Jennifer Karps reported that BES planting is well under way. They have been able to offer free native and/or evergreen street trees in low-canopied outer southeast neighborhoods that have rare large planting opportunities without overhead wires. There will also be plantings on commercial corridors like North Lombard, and in Goose Hollow, and for a multi-family pilot project. Canvassers will be asked to note trees that may be Heritage Tree possibilities in the areas they are visiting. BES planted a total of 2161 trees last year, with 1488 projected for this year. Friends of Trees plantings are on track to reach about 2500 street trees this year. AmeriCorps member and BES employee Sara Ennis was introduced. Besides working with the rest of the E&O committee, Sara has created a Parklane Park (SE 155th and Main Street) tree map.

E&O Committee Chair Catherine Mushel mentioned the need for tree brochures in other languages in addition to the six languages currently offered. When knocking on Portland homes in annexed areas, often the children in the house do the translating for their parents.

Budget Advisory Committee (BAC) - Meryl Redisch

UFC Chair Meryl Redisch has been attending Parks Board meetings and been involved with this year's Parks budget process. Meryl reported the tone and atmosphere of these budget meetings is much brighter. It is not the previous difficult cutting process which sometimes pitted beloved programs against each other for funding.

The Chair recognized Parks Bureau Director Mike Abbaté who added that the Mayor characterized this budget as a stabilization year. After five cycles of cuts, there really are no more efficiencies to be found. Unallocated money found within this budget through previous

cuts and new revenues will be requested for one-time and ongoing programs. Parks Commissioner Amanda Fritz is fully supporting funding for Title 11 implementation. The UFC is invited to the public meeting on the Parks bureau budget January 8th.

There have been no cuts requested to last year's urban forestry funding, but testimony on behalf of specific programs is appreciated. Neighborhood Tree Steward and E&O Committee member Bryan Burch was recognized and stated that he found it easy to promote trees when he focused on educating children, who will be the ones to continue the work.

Mike Abbaté followed up on that thought by describing the add package for funding the Grunt (Greenspaces Restoration and Urban Naturalist Team) and Jr. Grunt programs. These are precursors to the Youth Conservation Crew and have received grants. Meryl suggested looking to Parks Friends Groups that work with children's activities to see if there is funding.

Heritage Tree Committee - Michael McCloskey

Committee Chair Michael McCloskey continued the discussion on the European beech designation that has been discussed at length by the committee and the commission. The complaints heard by Heritage Tree (HT) Committee against designation are the usual tree complaints: clogged gutters, cracks in driveway, nuts or seeds disburser, and risk of storm damage. Again, if the tree is granted Heritage Tree status, it was suggested that issuing a pruning permit and working with that neighbor to prune the tree's overhanging branches may mitigate concerns.

The tree is very visible from the street and one of the few of its kind with green leaves. The neighbor with verbal objections was invited to attend the committee meeting, but did not show up or send written comments. This neighbor has not done any branch pruning on his side of the tree for the past thirty five years. It was felt that due process was followed and the UFC will vote on a recommendation in January.

UFC By-Laws - Anne Kroma

Anne Kroma, City Nature Admin and UFC Recorder, updated the Commission on the remaining work needed to complete the UFC By-Laws. The Education & Outreach Committee will complete their part. Both the Policy Committee and the Recruitment/Nominations Committee will document their procedures. The By-Laws also require updating annually, something that is needed for the Appeals Committee appendix.

Old/New Business

UFC Chair Meryl Redisch mentioned completion of the letter written in support of a grant application for EcoTrust.

Forester Jenn Cairo announced that Ned Sodja in retiring in January and he will be missed. Ned declined to have any celebration and staff will be down an inspector until he is replaced.

Wrap-up: Arbor Month discussion - Catherine Mushel

UFC Secretary and Education & Outreach Committee Chair Catherine Mushel continued the discussion started previously regarding the Arbor celebration. She commented about how difficult it is to understand the City's definition of equity and apply that to the membership of the committee and to the work of the committee.

The E& O Committee is continuing work with Ann Downing, Naito award recipient, to involve her and other ESL (English as a Second Language) teachers. Possibilities also include having the arbor poster printed in other languages, photo contests, poetry slams and other ways to involve artists.

NTS (Neighborhood Tree Stewards) attended some of this year's events, but it is hoped that there would be less focus on day time and the Portland Building. It is hoped that more events will become an annual activity, the way that the Magnolia Walk draws people back over and over. Subcommittees of the E&O Committee will be working on things like the Learning Landscapes and developing curriculum for schools. They envision an arbor kit that could be sent to teachers and principals.

The regular business meeting adjourned at 9:55 am.

Appeal Committee:

An appeal was scheduled for the address of 2337 N Williams Avenue. The appellant was sent letters (certified and regular mail) regarding the time, date and location of the appeal. The letter indicated if no one was in attendance (appellant or a representative) the decision of the inspector would be final.

The City Forester, Tree Inspector, the Appeal Committee and Recorder waited the time allotted on the agenda. The appellant did not show and the appeal was dismissed.