
URBAN FORESTRY COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes
February 15, 2018
City Hall, Lovejoy Room

Commission Members present: Chair Vivek Shandas, Vice Chair Barbara Hollenbeck, Secretary Catherine Mushel, Meryl Redisch, Damon Schrosk, Thuy Tu, Gregg Everhart, Daniel Newberry

Commission Members Absent: Brian French

Urban Forestry staff present: Jenn Cairo, City Forester; Brian Landoe, Asst. Program Specialist
City staff present: Tony Garcia, City Attorney's Office;

Guests present: Bruce Nelson, Megan Van De Mark, Anjeanette Brown

Public Comments

- Jennifer Karps, Bureau of Environmental Services (BES), provided the Urban Forestry Commission (UFC) with an overview of the Treebate Program
 - Treebate is an incentive program which encourages property owners to plant yard trees on residential properties.
 - These trees help to both capture storm water and increase the urban canopy
 - In exchange for planting the tree, rate payers receive a one-time credit on their monthly bill.
 - The program was initiated in 2001 and 1,562 customers have participated resulting 3,026 trees planted.
 - In March 2018, BES will be asking City Council to permanently authorize the Treebate program.
 - Daniel: What is the amount of the credit?
 - Jennifer: It depends on the size of the tree planted. The maximum for a small form tree is \$15, and the max is \$50 for a large form tree.

Urban Forestry Report – Jenn Cairo, City Forester

- The City Budget Office (CBO) is currently reviewing all of the city's proposed budget packages.
 - Expectation is the CBO will release budget package scores in March
- The Street Tree Task Force is still in a holding pattern as we work to identify someone who can be the facilitator. OMF is working on how they will be able to staff the group.
- Streets 2035, also known as the Portland Bureau of Transportation (PBOT) right-of-way tool Kit. PBOT has issued the Request for Proposal (RFP) and have received numerous responses. They expect the project to take three years. PBOT has committed to having multiple advisory groups, including the UFC.
- Jenn highlighted the Tree Planting Programs information sheet included in the UFC packet which details the various planting programs in the city.
- UFC staffing updates:

- Arborist III recruitment is ongoing. Employees in this classification perform more technical, off the ground tree work. A. Skill demonstration will be held in Laurelhurst Park next Thursday and Friday from about 8:30 to 2:00.
 - Urban Forestry is very pleased with the robust applicant pool, including many people of color who are typically underrepresented in the industry.
- Dan Gleason, previously a Development Tree Inspector, is now a Botanic Specialist I in the Education & Science group. He is filling Nik Desai's position left vacant after Nik accepted a Botanic Specialist II role.
- Urban Forestry (UF) recently trained 18 volunteers to be school planting leaders for the Learning Landscapes program. This is indicative of a shift in a lot of UF outreach programs towards a train the trainer model.
 - Demand has been very high for these programs and this approach allows UF to reach more people.
- UF has seen an uptick in complaints about root conflicts with sidewalks. This is because PBOT has shifted the area of town where they are citing property owners for sidewalk damage.
 - Barbara: Is there information out there for alternatives to slab sidewalks?
 - We're limited by PBOT's standards which have not been updated to provide additional solutions. Boise, Idaho is an example of a city which has adopted flexible sidewalk options.
 - Damon: Has UF given sidewalk inspectors the tools to offer them alternatives
 - We don't have alternatives because of PBOT specifications. Hopefully Streets 2035 will provide some alternatives.
 - Damon: we could look at training PBOT sidewalk inspectors on alternatives to just removing the trees
- Jenn presented Meryl with book and card to thank her for her years of service to the Urban Forestry Commission.
 - Meryl has been an indispensable advocate for the city, having served as UFC Chair, Policy Committee Chair, among other roles.
 - Meryl: Never taken this sort of deep dive into policy before, but encourages everyone to stick with it. There is a lot of support around you to help navigate the complexities.

Policy Committee Report

- The Policy Committee plans to review the Street Tree Task Force RFP when it is available.
- The UFC will also need to identify a member to serve on the Street Tree Task Force
 - Jenn estimated the time commitment to be 4-6 hours per month
- The Policy committee discussed the Residential Infill Project at their last meeting. The committee put together a comment letter which encourages the plan to provide developers with flexible options in order to preserve large trees.
 - Roberta: What if a developer saves the tree, but new homeowners decide to remove it down the line to install a patio or some other alteration which removes available space for trees? Will
- The committee also drafted a letter to be sent to Commissioner Fritz regarding the waiver of a mitigation fee for the removal Cottonwood tree in SW Portland. The fee was waived by Bureau of Development Services (BDS) based on financial hardship considerations.
 - Catherine: The last paragraph of the letter should be shortened and the last sentence should be softened.
 - Tony: Title 11 says that, in a disagreement about arborist reports, City Forester supersedes.
 - Jenn: this is correct. BDS planners come to UF inspectors for consultation when to review private arborist reports.
 - Barbara: There should be a space between a total waiver of the fee and the full fee
 - Damon: A hardship waiver should consider current financial situation, but also the financial situation after the profit from the proposed development.
 - Meryl: and what are the policies for determining financial hardship?

- Barbara motion to approve the letter. Damon seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.
- The UFC reviewed a statement which will be included with the upcoming release of the Code Reconciliation Project.
 - Barbara made a motion to approve the statement. Meryl seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.
- Jenn introduced the three new members of the Urban Forestry Commission: Anjeanette Brown, Megan Van De Mark, and Lorena Nascimento (not present). The new members will be appointed by City Council soon and will begin their terms at the March meeting.

Discussion on the UFC Meeting Time and Location

- The UFC discussed how the time and location of the monthly meeting can be a barrier to participation for many community members.
- Vivek proposed one solution supported by UF staff, which would be to hold the monthly meeting from 9:30am to noon, with quarterly and bi-annual meetings at rotating locations across the city.
- Jenn: UF would work with Portland Parks & Recreation's (PP&R's) community outreach and engagement staff to identify meeting locations and conduct outreach efforts.
- Daniel: if we move the meeting to a different time and location, we should post several months in advance. Supports holding the meeting in different locations to expand engagement, particularly on east side.
- Tony: Recommends working with the Office of Neighborhood Involvement to identify community partners.
- Gregg: Advised that the UFC should keep the day of the month consistent. The proposed later start time makes a lot of sense, particularly for appeals.
- Barbara: Served on state commissions and they typically rotate usually once or twice a year. Maybe have one in the spring and one in the fall. Could be helpful to have the neighborhood coalition host us.
- Daniel: Is video hosting on Facebook Live an option?
 - Tony: Lots of public access considerations. Need to vet whatever plan is developed.
- Megan: Ensuring the meeting locations are accessible by public transit should be a priority.
- Barbara: Concerned about making 9:30 because of the traffic coming from Vancouver. Could do 10am.
- Daniel: Later in the day creates issues of missing more work hours.
 - Thuy: I have the same issue.
- Catherine: Supports the later start time, particularly to accommodate great involvement.
- Anjeanette: My kids start school at 8:30 and ends at 2:30. Would really appreciate the later start time.
- Megan: Availability is dependent on the time of year based on work responsibility.
- UFC will continue discussion in order to reach consensus on a workable meeting schedule.

Discussion of UFC Priorities

- Vivek talked through the key UFC priorities, which include Title 11 duties, as well as upcoming projects like the Street Tree Task Force, Streets 2035, and the Citywide Tree Planting Strategy
- Meryl: It will be important to keep an eye on the updated Urban Forest Management Plan (UFMP) and the UFC's role in that project.
- Vivek: The priorities listed above will be instrumental to developing the UFMP in 2019.
- Catherine: These plans are very design and planting centered. The UFC needs to have a long-term focus for the urban forest.
 - Jenn: The Forest Management plan is currently being added to Parks planning project in Fiscal Year (FY) 20 and will help to provide long-term planning.
 - Jenn: regarding long term implications, Streets 2035 is looking at what streets look like over the long term. Similarly, the Street Tree Task Force is focusing on the long-term maintenance needs of street trees.

- Damon: Catherine, are you talking about developing messaging strategy
 - o Catherine: Yes, and talking about changing the culture.
- Meryl: Agreed, and important to note that changing culture is difficult and takes a very long time.

Committee Structure

- Vivek opened a conversation around the UFC’s committee structure and the process for the UFC appointing or approving of committee membership.
- Since the UFC delegates parts of its responsibilities to the committees, there should be a formalized committee membership process
- The committees also need to be sure they are taking notes at each meeting
 - o Daniel: The policy committee has been taking notes, and Meryl regularly sends them out
 - o Gregg: Since the Heritage Tree Committee makes recommendations, she writes minutes of each meeting.
- Vivek tasked the committees with evaluating their membership structures and to report back

Title 11 Amendment – Emily Sandy, Bureau of Development Services

- The proposed Title 11 amendment was approved by City Council on February 14th,
- Currently, Title 11 tree preservation rules are triggered when ground disturbance is associated with development, regardless of where trees exist on the site. This effectively allows two thirds of regulated trees to be removed in a development situation, even if the proposed development would not impact the trees.
- This amendment was proposed by Commissioner Fritz, and it requires that the ground disturbance must impact root protection zones in order for tree removal to be allowed. The amendment creates a nexus between the proposed development and the triggering of tree preservation requirements.
- The expectation is fewer trees will be removed in development as a result of this amendment.
- Removing trees outside of development will require non-development permit from Urban Forestry.
- City Council is permitted to bypass normal amendment process by declaring an emergency. This amendment passed first reading last Wednesday, and passed second reading yesterday. Will become effective 30 days from second reading.
- Damon: why is UFC just hearing about this now?
 - o Pooja: A situation arose last fall which highlighted the need for this amendment. The amendment brings the policy framework in line with the original intention of Title 11. Also creates an appeals process. From Commissioner Fritz’s perspective, there was an immediate need to align the policy with the intention.
- Damon: This should have been brought to the commission’s attention immediately. It sounds like a positive change, but still have not had enough time to review fully.
 - o Pooja: In hindsight, the UFC probably should have been informed. Commissioner’s staff can coordinate better with UF staff.
 - o Gregg: Agrees. And believes Title 11 requires UFC input.
 - Emily: That’s correct, but if an emergency is declared, there is a procedural allowance for the UFC to not be involved.
 - o Jenn: The Commissioner’s Office (CO) was leading on this and did a lot of work to bring other Commissioners’ offices on board.

Meeting Adjourned 10:15 AM