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**URBAN FORESTRY COMMISSION**

Meeting Minutes

May 17, 2018

City Hall, Lovejoy Room

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**Commission Members present:** Chair Vivek Shandas, Vice Chair Barbara Hollenbeck, Secretary Catherine Mushel, Damon Schrosk, Gregg Everhart, Brian French, Anjeanette Brown, Megan Van de Mark, Lorena Nascimento, Thuy Tu, Daniel Newberry

**Commission Members absent:** None

**Urban Forestry staff present:** Jenn Cairo, City Forester; Brian Landoe, Budget & Program Analyst; Jeff Ramsey, Botanic Specialist II

**City staff present:** Tony Garcia, City Attorney's Office

**Guests present:**

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**Public Comments**

- Martin Hanni, General Manager, NW Shade Trees, addressed the Commission on why it is difficult to secure tree stock.
- The recession in 2008 led to fewer trees being planted during that time. Even though the economy has recovered during the past several years, the supply line remains limited because seven to nine years of growth is required to reach street tree size.
- NW Shade Trees generally sells trees at 2 inches and larger. At 2 inches a tree has been in the nursery for three or four years. This gives the nursery enough time to grow canopy and meet city requirements, while also ensuring that the tree will survive. By lowering the standard to allow smaller caliper trees to be planted as street trees, someone else other than the nursery will need to take care of the tree after it has been planted, including structural pruning.
- Questions?
  - Daniel: Suggestions on how we can get to a point when we have a better supply?
    - It's slowly happening. All the nurseries are increasing production.
      - Daniel: My organization (Johnson Creek Watershed Council) plants about 20,000 but we're planting bare root and smaller.
    - It takes discipline to grow large trees, and there is need to avoid selling them before they get to that size.
  - Vivek: What do you notice about the market? Is it more local or national?
    - NW Shade Trees sells up to British Columbia and down to Denver. We bought trees from the Midwest for the first time just to meet demand
  - Vivek: Any way that the UFC can help in this?
    - The biggest challenge is ensuring that we have good communication so we have the right stock available when it's time to plant.
  - Anjeanette: Do you have recommendations about planting smaller trees?
    - One tree genus, oaks, would be a mistake to plant at a small caliper. They have their own way of growing and require pruning lower branches to bring the canopy up for clearance, and several times pruning of shoots competing to be the central leader to

establish good form. This sequence of pruning is easy to do in the nursery, but more difficult once an oak is permanently planted.

- Jenn: Can you talk about how many touches a tree needs to get to 2” caliper?
  - In our nursery, in the first year, three prunings, the next year, at least one or two more prunings. It takes tremendous effort to grow good stock. After the third year, the tree will have developed a nice canopy.

### **City Forester Report – Jenn Cairo, City Forester**

- The City’s FY 19 budget has been approved and both UF packages are included.
- The Street Tree Task Force was also funded. City Council requested that the final report include some sort of phase-in, rather than the city adopting all responsibility for street tree maintenance at once.
  - The next step is getting the RFP finalized for consultants.
- Mike Abbate’ stepped down as Parks & Recreation Director. Kia Selley has been appointed interim director while a nationwide search is being conducted over the next six months. Kia is a previous division manager for assets and development. Commissioner Fritz has asked for an inclusive process with community and staff involvement.
- Mayor Wheeler will announce bureau assignments over the next couple of weeks.
- Seasonal staff. will be working on the park tree inventory.
- Brian F. asked about the new positions included in the FY 19 budget.
  - Jenn explained the nine new staff positions include three Tree Inspectors, one Tree Tech, four Arborists, and a Senior Administrative Specialist.
- Vivek underscored the importance of the Street Tree Task Force funding. This is a significant accomplishment which the UFC played a major role in securing.

### **Canopy Report - Jeff Ramsey, Botanic Specialist II**

- Jeff Ramsey presented a report on Portland’s tree canopy and canopy potential. Both reports are available online: <https://www.portlandoregon.gov/parks/76948>
- In 2007 and 2014, Metro provided improved data which gives UF a more completed picture of canopy coverage:
  - 2007: 29.4%
  - 2014: 29.9%
  - Unfortunately, every time we update canopy, the method is slightly different.
  - This makes it difficult to accurately assess changes in canopy over time.
  - Daniel: how large does a tree have to be before it can be measured as canopy?
    - Prior to 2014, the method for measuring canopy could not determine the height of the tree, so some non-trees would be misinterpreted.
    - Beginning in 2014, height could be measured with a cut off of six feet.
- Urban Forestry is now using a new and improved protocol for measuring tree canopy. 4,000 points across the city are identified and UF staff look at each point to determine if a tree is present.
  - The same points are used with every update, which takes place every five years.
  - Vivek: how do you stratify the 4,000 points?
    - Jeff: 1,000 points for each zoning class – residential, industrial, commercial, open space.
    - Jenn: our canopy goals are zoning related as well.
  - Real value here is to give UF a definitive number to track future progress against.
- New canopy findings based on the improved protocol:
  - 2000: 27.3%
  - 2005: 28.0%
  - 2010: 29.9%
  - 2015: 30.7%
- Tree canopy is growing in all zones, but highest canopy is in open space and residential
- In the last 15 years, Portland’s canopy has grown by about 3,000 acres, which is nearly equivalent to the size of Forest Park

- Vivek: We can assume about 50 trees per acre.
- The Tree Canopy Potential report identifies opportunities for tree planting across the city.
- In determining canopy potential, the analysis excludes land covered by the following:
  - Water
  - Buildings
  - Streets
  - Existing canopy
  - Portland International Airport
- Damon: Are parking lots included?
  - Yes, since planting is required in parking lots per code
- Brian F: I want to point out that the photo included on the cover of the report shows a 2.5” planting strip.
  - Jeff: In terms of planting space in this example, the front yard has more opportunity, but the point is well taken.
- Previous canopy goals set by the City were not based on potential canopy space, but rather how to keep pace with other cities.
- The potential canopy coverage in Portland is 52%, after reductions based on reasonable use of open space for trees.
  - This is the equivalent of 1.3 million additional trees
  - Potential canopy is highest in residential lots, lowest in commercial zones
  - Planting in just 15% of potential space would meet citywide canopy goal of 33%
- Brian F: Do you include ODOT property in this analysis?
  - Jeff: Yes.
- Catherine: While I’m impressed by these numbers, when considering RIP and land use changes I have a hard time believing this data. Concerned about how land use and future development will impact the canopy.
- Gregg: Can we exclude space within 10 feet of a building, and spanning property lines? Those trees would be vulnerable to removal. Accounting for this, will mean less space for canopy.
  - Jeff: It’s important to note we’re talking about the coverage of the tree, so that a tree even 20 feet away from the building may be shading that space within 10 feet of the building.
- 80% of potential space for tree canopy is still present after accounting for projected development activity (based on Buildable Lands Inventory).
- This data will be informative as UF updates the Urban Forest Management Plan.

**Policy Committee Update – Daniel Newberry, Policy Committee Chair**

- The UFC’s efforts were successful in advocating for funding for the Street Tree Task Force.
- The UFC also submitted its comment letter on the Residential Infill Project. Daniel also submitted testimony at the Planning and Sustainability Commission Hearing.
  - Several other members of the Policy Committee also testified.
  - Commissioners tend to notice when similar comments are said by multiple people and groups. It’s helpful to coordinate efforts when presenting the UFC’s comments.
- This is the second of three drafts, but at this point the changes likely won’t be major between now and in the final draft.
- An issue the Policy Committee is concerned about is limits on impervious surfaces, as this is not addressed in the plan.
- There was a lot of concern about equity and how these changes will impact home affordability. Trees were generally not a focus of the hearing.
- Better Housing by Design is a current priority as well with the new draft due out soon.

- Brian L: The Proposed Draft came out a few days ago and comments are due June 12.
- We will reach out to Bill Cunningham to discuss how the UFC can submit comments given that the next UFC meeting falls after the comment deadline.

### **FY19 Fee Schedule Update – Brian Landoe, Budget & Program Analyst**

- Brian L. presented the 2019 UF Fee updates to the UFC.
- Urban Forestry development fees only partially cover the cost of performing Urban Forestry’s regulatory function as directed in Title 11.
- The new fee schedule increases cost recovery on development fees from 44% currently to 85%.
- The revenue from the fee increases will fund UF’s budget packages, which add nine additional staff to expedite development permitting and increase service levels.
  - A 2017 City Auditor’s report on Title 11 implementation stated UF has insufficient staffing and recommended increasing financial support through fee increases.
  - The City Budget Office has recommended this package.
- Urban Forestry is also proposing a new \$35 Tree Root Inspection fee. This fee will partially cover the cost of Tree Inspectors issuing permits to cut the roots of street trees adjacent to sidewalk projects. The fee initially will be implemented in voluntary sidewalk projects and sidewalk projects associated with development situations.
  - Later, after process development is completed, it will be implemented where the sidewalk project was initiated by a Portland Bureau of Transportation sidewalk violation posting.
- Catherine: How would you explain to someone that we are going to track permits and follow that process on the front end and we are not going to check compliance on the back end? How would you explain that to the public? It creates a messaging problem that we don’t ensure the conditions of the permit are met.
  - Brian L: Urban Forestry currently is limited by the resources we have. We would love to have a full compliance team which inspection every permit in every situation. We do have a compliance study that we will bring to the UFC in the next few months. However, at this time, UF does not have the staff to conduct compliance checks.
    - Jenn: We should tell members of the public that there are insufficient funds for a compliance program.
    - Members of the public can report compliance issues to 823-TREE and those are inspected by UF staff.
- Damon: How does UF’s response relate to other bureaus and how they fund compliance checks? And does UF have any plans to roll out increased compliance checks?
  - Brian L.: Casey Jogerst, UF’s Permitting & Regulations Manager, and I met with the head of Bureau of Development Services’ compliance unit a few months ago on this very issue. BDS’ is funded primarily by permit revenue, with a small portion supported by general fund.
    - Jenn: In the meantime, we have invested resources towards compliance, including a compliance study, direct mailings to permittees, etc. There are other ways to staff compliance and we are investigating them. Other bureaus do have compliance work groups, UF has just never been funded that way.
  - Damon: Would it make sense then to include the cost of compliance into how we calculate full cost recovery?
    - Jenn: Excellent point, and we’re still determining if that is how we will fund compliance. Other groups use general fund for their compliance efforts, so there are a few ways to approach this. In terms of UF’s fees, the political expectation has been that we keep costs low and increase fees gradually.

*Meeting adjourned at 11:45 AM*