

TO: Neighborhood Tree Team members and Portland tree advocates  
FROM: Bruce Nelson, Cully Tree Team 23 November 2023  
RE: Portland Urban Forestry Commission Meeting November 16, 2023:  
Summary and Comments

**NOTE: This document is not an official document of the Urban Forestry Commission. I am a private citizen who is an unpaid volunteer member of the Urban Forestry Commission. I write this document as a private citizen.**

**Conflict of Interest Policy** –

**“Members of City advisory bodies are public officials, based on State law ORS 244.020(15), and as such are required to disclose conflicts of interest. Under the Oregon Revised Statute 244.020(3), an appointee has a conflict of interest when participating in an official action which could or would result in a financial benefit or avoidance of detriment to the public official, a relative of the public official, or a business with which either is associated.”**

These meetings occur on a monthly basis, on the third Thursday of the month. Official minutes of the meetings are available at the website for the Urban Forestry Commission (UFC), once they are approved by the Commissioners (usually 1-3 months after the meeting). You can see and listen to You-tube recordings of the meetings. Go to the link at the UFC website

<https://www.portland.gov/trees/ufc> or to the You Tube site

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL1ToXf0RSV44U3FpC0nwIUqtFOmFulxMY>

The decisions made at these meetings may affect volunteer tree advocacy and influence Portland Parks and Recreation - Urban Forestry (PP&R UF) processes and actions. If you do not wish to receive this summary & commentary on monthly meetings, let me know.

*Italicized text indicates my own point of view and/or items not necessarily expressed during the meeting.* **Red bold text is used for my required statement that this is not an official or adopted statement from the Urban Forestry Commission, as well as the conflict-of-interest policy for the City of Portland.** **Bold black text is used for subject headings, and occasionally either to identify who is saying what or for emphasis.**

The monthly UFC meeting was held Thursday 16 November 2023, 9:30 am – 11:30 am. It was held as a joint Zoom and in-person meeting at the Portland Building, 1120 SW 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue, at a meeting room on the second floor.

**UFC Members Present** Adrienne Feldstein co-chair; Roberta Jortner co-chair; Casey Clapp, J.R. Lilly, Melinda McMillan, Bruce Nelson, Leah Plack, Megan Van de Mark.

**UFC Commissioners Absent** Derily Bechthold, Ivory Iheanacho, Justin Misner

**PP&R UF Staff Present** Jenn Cairo, City Forester (PP&R UF); Belinda Judelman, Planning & Policy Analyst (PP&R UF); Brian Landoe, Analyst III (PP&R UF); Nik Desai, Project Manager for Portland Street Tree Inventory (PP&R UF); Biz Miller, Project Lead Portland Street Tree Inventory (PP&R UF)

**Other City Staff:** Todd Lofgren, Deputy Director (PP&R); Bob Del Gizzi, Financial Planning and Analyst Manager (PP&R)

**9:30 a.m. Public Comments:** Bob Sallinger, Urban Conservation Director at Willamette Riverkeeper, testified about his concerns with the recently adopted measure of the Portland City Council on city government reorganization to occur in 2024. In spite of strong sentiment expressed by members of the environmental community, the adopted bureau reorganization does not include any named natural resources service area or bureau or division. The reorganization, proposed by Commissioner Ryan and adopted by City Council on a 4-1 vote, sets up 6 service areas, placing PP&R in the Vibrant Communities service area. Other important infrastructure bureaus, like Portland Bureau of Transportation (PBOT) and Portland Bureau of Environmental Services (BES), are all within the Public Works service area. Mr. Sallinger does not think this is a well thought out plan. It does not spell out the financing procedure for the 6 separate service areas. It does specify moving BES tree-related programs to PP&R/UF. And it does not specify that money will go from BES to PP&R for these transferred tree-related programs.

Currently PP&R has a huge issue with unmet asset management needs (*\$600 million and climbing*) so Mr. Sallinger has concerns about the ability of PP&R to handle added services to its current obligations.

In his opinion PP&R currently does an inadequate job of managing natural areas, so it doesn't make sense to give it even more responsibilities, as the adopted

measure does. He argues there needs to be a long-term sustainable plan for the care of natural resources within Portland.

In response to a question from UFC member Megan Van de Mark, Mr. Sallinger stated he hoped that UFC would

1. advocate for establishing a funding plan for natural resources management;
2. work to ensure that current natural resource management funding is not reduced;
3. push for a thorough assessment of BES's roles in natural resources management and whether or not it is appropriate for PP&R to take these on;
4. support the creation of a natural resources bureau that would bring together the wide range of natural resources programs currently located in different bureaus (BES, PP&R, other?).

**9:40 a.m. City Reorganization Update** - Jenn Cairo, City Forester (PP&R); Todd Lofgren, Deputy Director (PP&R)

City Forester Cairo reminded UFC members that on November 1, 2023 City Council approved a city reorganization structure presented by Michael Jordan, Chief Administrative Officer, with a few amendments from the City Commissioners. <https://www.portland.gov/transition/news/2023/11/2/portland-city-council-approves-organizational-structure-new-form>

The approved proposal has 6 different “service areas.” The Vibrant Communities service area includes Portland Parks and Recreation; Portland Children’s Levy; Arts; and Citywide Operational Natural Areas and Tree Management. This will take effect July 1, 2024.

According to Michael Jordan, talks continue between staff at PP&R, Portland Water Bureau, BES, and PBOT about coordinating natural resources management.

Deputy Director Lofgren is hopeful that this new organizational structure will help break down the silo mentality between City bureaus and the Portland City Commissioners who currently oversee them. With all of the bureaus coming under the control of the new City Administrator, better coordination will occur.

UFC member Van de Mark was concerned that trees were not part of the operations of the Public Works service area. This seems like a continuation of the status quo that too often leads to PP&R/UF policies being considered later in new developments, after other bureau needs are

addressed.

Deputy Director Lofgren responded that PP&R always talks about trees as important infrastructure and that this is communicated to other bureaus and elected officials.

UFC co-chair Jortner had heard there is some discussion of having one deputy overseeing both the Public Works service area and the Vibrant Communities service area.

Deputy Director Lofgren has not heard of this proposal.

Deputy Director Lofgren added that City Council added one new position, that of Chief Sustainability Officer. This position will play an important role in the City's actions on climate action, natural resource management, and other areas of concern.

Discussions are ongoing within City bureaus and within Michael Jordan's office about the reorganization. City bureaus will need to consider budget adjustments for the upcoming fiscal year (July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025).

**10:00 a.m. City Forester's Report, Jenn Cairo, City Forester (PP&R UF)**

1. Regarding the Urban Forest Management Plan Update project, there is still recruiting going on for members of the Community Advisory Committee. East Portland residents and youth are especially sought for representation on this committee. The Technical Advisory Committee (staff from different City bureaus that interact with trees as part of their operations) will be meeting soon.
2. The letter from UFC to the Mayor and City Council sharing concerns about the proposals being floated by Governor Kotek's Housing Production Advisory Council (HPAC) was sent. No response has been received.
3. Regarding the Oregon Department of Transportation's (ODOT) improvements on SE Powell Boulevard, Portland's Urban Forestry has no power in this development. It could advise but since this is Oregon state property, ODOT did not need to follow Portland's Tree Code. City Forester Cairo believes that PP&R UF did assist in saving some of the trees that ODOT was considering removing.
4. As a follow-up to discussions at October's UFC meeting that briefly addressed the fact that the City does not consider trees a capital asset for which City bond revenues can be used, Parks' Sarah Huggins is exploring this situation. Questions arose at the past meeting as to why this accounting procedure is in place. Can it be changed?

5. PP&R UF is doing its winter public relations push to encourage Portlanders to get work done on their trees before winter weather arrives, especially safety issues that need to be addressed prior to ice, snow and winds. PP&R UF is part of the City’s 24-hour Emergency Response team. UF staff does many tasks to prepare for these winter challenges. A transition is going on, so that the phone number 311 can be used for all Tree Emergency situations. However, if you call 503. 823.TREE and it is a storm-related tree emergency, your call will be transferred to the 311 line.
6. Casey Jogerst, Manager, Regulation and Permitting, PP&R UF, has recently been appointed to the National Urban and Community Forestry Advisory Council <https://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/urban-forests/ucf/nucfac>

**10:15 a.m. Urban Forestry 2024-2025 Budget** Jenn Cairo, City Forester (PP&R UF); Bob Del Gizzi, Financial Planning and Analyst Manager (PP&R)

Manager Del Gizzi reviewed the budgeting process at PP&R for fiscal year 2024/25 (July 1, 2024 through June 30, 2025) and the adopted PP&R adopted budget for 2023/24 (\$227.4 million). He also showed the different sources of Parks budget dollars. Urban Forestry budget represents about 10.6% of PP&R’s budget.

**FY 2023/2024 Adopted Budget by Fund**

General Fund	\$103.6 million	45.6%
2020 Local Parks Option Levy Fund	\$47.9 million	21.1%
Parks Capital Improvement Fund	\$38.0 million	16.7%
Golf Fund	\$14.3 million	6.3%
Grants Fund	\$13.4 million	5.9%
Trust Funds	\$7.9 million	3.5%
PR Fund	\$2.2 million	0.9%

**FY 2023/24 Adopted Budget by Category**

General Fund Discretionary	\$84.5 million	37.2%
Charges for Services	\$55.9 million	24.6%
Intergovernmental	\$20.1 million	8.8%

Taxes (Parks Levy 2020)	\$47.9 million	21.1%
Miscellaneous	\$9.4 million	4.1%
License & Permits	\$4.6 million	2.0%
Interagency Revenue	\$4.2 million	1.8%
Bonds	\$0.9 million ?	0.4% ?

City Forester Cairo presented a diagram showing the current UF staff. UF is divided into 4 different areas: Permitting and Regulations (36 positions of which 8 are vacant); Forestry Operations (33 positions of which 5 are vacant); Science, Outreach & Planning (28 positions of which 11 are vacant); and Analysis/Support (4 staff positions of which 2 are vacant). The City Forester oversees all operations. The managers of the different areas are Casey Jogerst (Permitting and Regulations), Paul Anderson (Forestry Operations), Angie DiSalvo (Science, Outreach & Planning), and Brian Landoe (Analysis/Support).

Urban Forestry’s revenue comes from multiple sources, similar to that of Parks and Recreation. Urban Forestry, for Fiscal Year 2023/2024 received \$19,164,217:

General Fund	\$6,615,211	
Parks Local Option Levy	\$5,122,800	
Interagency Revenue	\$3,124,403	(BES, PBOT, other)
Fee Revenue	\$2,374,000	
Tree Planting/Preservation Fund	\$1,579,325	
Urban Forestry Fund	\$348,478	

For FY 2023/2024 UF budgeted (\$18,128,997):

Tree Care Operations	\$6,592,830
Permitting & Regulation	\$5,842,130
Tree Planting	\$3,858,533
Science & Policy	\$670,106
Stewardship & Education	\$605,398
Administration & Planning	\$560,000

It is instructive to understand the specific funding sources for the different areas of Urban Forestry.

Tree Care Operations	85.3% from General Funds/Parks Levy
Permitting and Regulation:	56% General Fund/ Parks Levy, 46% fees
Tree Planting	51.3% Interagency (PCEF?), 40.9% Tree Planting/Preservation Fund, 7.8% General Fund/Parks Levy
Science & Policy	52% Tree Planting/Preservation Fund, 48% General Fund/Parks Levy

## Stewardship and Education 100% General Fund/Parks Levy

The Tree Planting and Preservation Fund will start decreasing its carry-over amount as it is anticipated that revenues will go down for a few years while expenses will be going up for the next few years. City Forester Cairo projects that at least for the next 8 years it is in good shape.

The new budget packages of UF for Fiscal Year 2024/25 that are currently in the PP&R budget that will be proposed include:

- a. Continued funding of the Arborist Trainee Program;
- b. PCEF Equitable Tree Canopy

There will likely be a decrease in development activity in Portland, which will reduce permitting fees paid to PP&R UF. It is unknown what will be the results in terms of revenue and expenses that result from the effort underway by the City to have a single permitting authority office. It is also unknown what will be the budgetary and staff consequences of the recent decision by the City Council to put natural areas and tree programs within the City under the authority of PP&R.

The City Forester shared that she had requested funds for a communications person but that request was not favored by Portland Parks and Recreation for inclusion in the budget request for FY 24/25.

*Compared to budgetary information shared with UFC over the past 5 years, information presented at this meeting was much more detailed. Since the passage of the Parks Local Option Levy in 2020, the staff at UF has doubled. In going back through my records, the budget for PP&R UF in FY 19 was \$5,764,023. Compare that to the FY 23/24 budget for PP&R UF of something over \$18 million. New revenue sources will be available to PP&R U, in addition to those cited above, – more PCEF funding (annually into the future for some unknown time), FEMA funding (one time grant), and Investment Recovery Act (IRA) grant (one time project). The roughly \$8 million annually that goes to UF from Parks Levy fund, will cease December 31, 2021, unless a new Parks Local Option Levy passes that includes the same level of funding for PP&R/ UF.*

*With this large influx of funds and large staff increase at Portland's Urban Forestry, many different tree/forest-related activities will take place that wouldn't have otherwise. I believe the challenge is going to be how well these UF activities are carried out, how the public perceives the work of PP&F/UF, and how much*

*pressure can be put on local elected officials to include trees as a means to address the climate changes faced by residents.*

Co-chair Feldstein wondered if PCEF funds could be used for UF to hire a communications person to provide more and better information to the public about what Urban Forestry is doing.

Co-chair Jortner saw no new resources in the budget package listed for natural resource management. She wondered about the budget process that would allow PP&R/UF to take on more responsibility for natural resources management.

Deputy Director Lofgren sees this as part of the work of the transition team as it irons out the details for the restructuring of City bureaus into 6 service areas. It is hoped there will be greater efficiency due to increased cooperation between bureaus, which may free up funds that could be used. He expects dollars and staff would move to a new service area if the program is moved.

UFC member Van de Mark would really like to have more information on the status of the Sustainable Future program. What is the status of trying to address the need for the City to take on street tree maintenance? Many people cite expenses incurred as their major reason for not wanting a street tree.

City Forester Cairo reminded UFC members that a PP&R/UF street tree maintenance program (planting, pruning, removal) was estimated to cost roughly \$20 million annually in the study done by the Davey Resource Group a few years ago. Currently that money is not available.

UFC member Clapp thought there was miscommunication in general about natural resource management. He finds it troubling that even though the PP&R/UF budget has increased greatly, Portland's tree canopy is apparently going down. He does appreciate that there are more botanic specialists and more people working in Permitting and Regulation. How is the budget of PP&R/UF accomplishing the goals set forth by Portland's Forest Management plan?

City Forester Cairo believes that the addition of staff to ensure code compliance will make a difference in the future. The additional funding that is resulting in maintenance pruning of park trees will also greatly improve the health and longevity of trees in parks.



**11:00 a.m. Street Tree Inventory Update** Nik Desai, Project Manager (PP&R UF); Biz Miller, Project Lead (PP&R UF)

PP&R UF is conducting a tree survey of all street trees to update the results from the survey done 2010 – 2016. Data from updated surveys can:

1. assist PP&R UF in developing the new Urban Forest Management Plan,
2. allow PP&R UF to see trends occurring over the last 5-10 years,
3. identify new/old challenges and successes,
4. inform tree planting,
5. coordinate tree pest and pathogen responses,
6. estimate services needed for and services being received from street trees.

PP&R UF refers to Street Tree Inventory 1.0 as what was done in 2010-2016, primarily by volunteers with data collected on paper. This inventory gave us baseline data for 218,602 Portland street trees.

PP&R UF's current study is referred to as Street Tree Inventory 2.0. It's being done primarily by PP&R UF paid staff, including members of the Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) from 2022 -2024. Collection will be entered directly into field maps via tablets. This will provide an update of Street Tree Inventory 1.0

*There have been earlier street tree surveys done in Portland, one by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) in the 1930s. Others have been done since then but none were as complete as the 2010-2016 and 2022-2024 inventories.*

Data collected in 2022-2024 is similar to that collected in 2010-2016. It includes tree identification, tree condition, site width, site type, presence or absence of overhead wires, and diameter at standard height (*"diameter at breast height" = dbh but I am guessing this has been revised because 4.5' from ground level is not at everyone's breast height*),

In 2022, 14 neighborhoods containing 64,000 street trees were surveyed. In 2023, 29 neighborhoods containing 87,186 trees. In 2024 the plan is to survey 52 neighborhoods and collect data on 117,000 street trees.

Nik's team includes 10 data collectors, project lead (Biz Miller), project manager (Nik Desai), a GIS technician, and a Science and Policy Coordinator (*Jeff Ramsey*).

Early data is showing an overall increase in street trees of +23.3% but it varies greatly from neighborhood to neighborhood. *In this latest inventory, better*

*technology and more accurate GIS mapping of the boundary between right-of-way space and private-property space could result in different data for neighborhoods with many unimproved streets. This is because on unimproved streets, volunteers conducting the 2010-2016 inventory found it challenging to distinguish between private property trees and ROW trees; residents living on streets with no curbs or sidewalks often build private fences and other things on property frontage that does not belong to them but is, in fact, public right of way space. It's therefore possible that along unimproved streets, some of the 2010-2016 street trees on what appeared to be private property were not counted, while in the current inventory, they are counted, even though they existed before and are not newly planted. This could skew the results.*

Other early findings: The number of maple street trees seems to be steady while the number of dogwoods is increasing.

Manager Desai shared that the updated data will be available at:

<https://www.portland.gov/trees/get-involved/treeinventory>

*When I checked on 11.23.23, the data collected from the Cully neighborhood in 2023 was not yet posted.* The updated project page and web map is scheduled to be available in January 2024. A planned Tree Summit for February 2024 will likely occur to share inventory data. Nik's team will be hiring seasonal inventory staff in winter/spring 2024. Data collection in 2024 will begin in May and conclude in October.

### **11:25 a.m. UFC Liaison to PP&R Budget Advisory Committee**

After some discussion, a motion was passed that Megan Van de Mark and Leah Plack will work together to represent UFC at the PP&R Budget Advisory Committee.

### **Next Urban Forestry Commission Meeting:**

The next UFC meeting will be 9:30 am – 11:30 am, December 21, 2023. It is likely that this will be a hybrid meeting with both in-person (Portland Building, second floor meeting room) and Zoom for attendance and participation. Check the link below prior to the meeting for the agenda, meeting materials, and how you can gain Zoom access to this meeting.

<https://www.portland.gov/trees/ufc/ufc>