

TO: Neighborhood Tree Team members and Portland tree advocates
FROM: Bruce Nelson, Cully Tree Team 10 February 2022
RE: Portland Urban Forestry Commission Meeting January 20, 2022:
Summary and Comments

NOTE: This document is not an official document of the Urban Forestry Commission. I am a private citizen who is a 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 usually 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 a You-tube recording of the meetings for 2021 and 2022. Go to the link at the UFC website <https://www.portland.gov/trees/ufc> or at You Tube:

The decisions made at these meetings may affect volunteer tree advocacy and may influence Urban Forestry division processes and actions. I am sending you timely commentary on these monthly meetings. If you do not wish to receive this, 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, lead presenters for a specific agenda item and occasionally either to identify who is saying what or for emphasis.**

The monthly Urban Forestry Commission (UFC) meeting was held Thursday, January 20, 2022, 9:30 a.m. – 11:35 a.m. as a Zoom meeting due to COVID-19 demands.

UFC Commissioners Present - Vivek Shandas (chair), Anjeanette Brown, Gregg Everhart, Adrienne Feldstein, Barbara Hollenbeck, Bruce Nelson, Daniel Newberry, Leah Plack, Damon Schrosk, Megan Van de Mark

UFC Commissioners Absent - Lorena Nascimento

Urban Forestry (UF) Staff Present – Jenn Cairo (City Forester, Portland Parks and Recreation, Urban Forestry division); Brian Landoe (Analyst 1, Portland Parks and Recreation, Urban Forestry division); Rick Faber (Permitting and Regulation Coordinator, Portland Parks and Recreation, Urban Forestry Division)

City Attorney's Office – no one present

Public Testimony - No public testimony was made.

Minutes Review - None were presented.

Potential Agenda Items for 2022- [Vivek Shandas \(UFC Chair\)](#)

Vivek asked UFC members for suggestions on agenda items they would like the Commission to address in 2022.

1. Damon would like to hear from the Bureau of Environmental Services tree program about what they are doing and planning on doing related to trees in Portland.
2. Bruce would like to hear from community members about how they think we can best remedy the tree canopy reduction that is happening in Portland now.
3. Barbara thinks UFC needs to look closely at how it could have more effective meetings. Perhaps some items could be done outside of meetings as preparation. Is there some sort of organizational change that could assist UFC in getting more time for significant matters?
4. Adrienne would like to know exactly how the public can have input on canopy reduction. She also would like more information on large-tree removal on private property.
5. Megan would like for UFC to be more proactive, especially in regards to trees in development situations.

6. Daniel suggested regular periodic discussions on how to get more trees in the right-of-way (ROW) public space, especially in low-income, low-canopy neighborhoods. He wondered if somehow the Portland Clean Energy Fund could help with street tree planting and maintenance.

City Forester's Report - Jenn Cairo (City Forester, Portland Parks and Recreation, Urban Forestry division)

1. To date, there have not been any significant winter storms-related tree emergencies. With another 2+ months left for potential winter storm damage, Jenn reminded UFC members that Urban Forestry (UF) maintains a list of reputable tree care companies that the public can rely on for tree work in case of emergencies. This is part of the Tree Care Providers program.
2. UF is continuing its internal discussion around street tree maintenance, which would include planting and pruning. The key challenge is how to obtain the necessary funds. The estimate is that it would cost around \$17 million annually for street tree maintenance.

This particular topic will take a great deal of discussion and work on the part of Urban Forestry staff and other Parks and Recreation management staff, should they decide to actively push for city takeover of street tree maintenance. There needs to be the political will on the part of City Council members to support such a large change in the scope of work for Urban Forestry. I believe that this will only happen through a significant effort on the part of the public to recognize the importance of the public asset we call street trees and to support a fair funding mechanism so that this work on the planting, pruning, and removal of street trees is funded through city revenues. A report done by the Davey Resource Group in late 2019 estimated the costs of yearly street tree maintenance (planting, pruning and removal) at \$8,847,476 if pruning is done on a 10-year cycle (every street tree pruned once every 10 years) or at \$12,357,310 if a 5-year cycle (every street tree pruned once every 5 years). In either case there would be an estimated \$3.3 million in administrative costs annually incurred by Urban Forestry. This estimate assumed that Urban Forestry would contract out much of this work to private contractors.

This could be done through property taxes in the form of a local levy, formation of a special district, or a frontage fee. My understanding of the stipulations on General Obligation bonds is that they may only be used for capital improvements, including very large maintenance items. Street tree maintenance does not come under this category under current interpretations of the law. I am not sure where

the \$17 million estimate shared by Jenn Cairo comes from. Nor am I sure if it is for a 10-year pruning cycle or a 5-year pruning cycle.

Using the Davey Resource Group document only, the amounts needed are roughly \$12.2 million annually for the 10-year pruning cycle/street tree maintenance program and 15.7 million for the 5-year pruning cycle/street tree maintenance program. Extrapolating from information presented on options that led to the development of the Portland Parks and Recreation levy adopted by taxpayers in 2020, the annual charge per property owner (assessed property value of \$350,000) would range from \$67 - \$105, depending on the funding option used. However, this does not address sidewalk repair that may be necessary. I am trying to get numbers on that but do not have them. I believe it will be difficult to get taxpayer support for a city takeover of street tree maintenance unless the City also assumes responsibility for its city-owned sidewalks. In a recent conversation with a former resident of the San Francisco area, I learned that the amount being set aside for sidewalk maintenance was about the same as what's being allocated for street tree maintenance. I am trying to develop some more accurate estimates for Portland but do not have any useful information yet.

3. Urban Forestry is continuing its discussions with Portland Bureau of Transportation personnel involved in developing the final Pedestrian Design Guide update. Jenn appreciates the extensive UF staff time that is going into efforts to make this document more tree-friendly.
4. Lorena Nascimento has regrettably resigned from the Urban Forestry Commission due to increasing paid work responsibilities as a full-time instructor at Portland Community College. Lorena has appreciated her time in serving Portland through her work on UFC and with other related volunteer efforts.
5. Urban Forestry will be spending a great deal of time and effort on implementing changes needed through the passage of the Parks levy. Hiring and arranging work space for new staff and purchasing supplies will take time. Nick and Brian will continue their work on Title 11 minor and technical changes for submission to City Council in late spring/early summer.
6. Parks levy mandates are guiding Urban Forestry. Jenn specifically mentioned:
 - a. Developing a proactive park tree maintenance program, which has not existed previously;
 - b. Improving UF's regulatory resources to expedite delivery of services like permit requests and follow-ups on code compliance issues;

- c. Improving community stewardship and partnerships, focusing on expanding the urban forest services provided to underserved, low-income, low-canopy communities.
- d. Creating and advocating for positive policies that improve our urban forest.

In previous meetings more details were provided. They are below in green.

The Parks levy service outcomes projected by PP&R relevant to Urban Forestry, include

- a. Enhance and preserve parks... and other important natural resources.**
- b. Enhance park maintenance to keep parks safe clean and safe.**
- c. Protect water quality and wildlife habitat, control erosion, remove invasive species.**
- d. Clean litter and hazardous waste in parks and natural areas... improve preventative and traditional maintenance.**
- e. Plant new trees in communities where canopy coverage is low.**
- f. Protect Portland's 1.2 million park trees.**
- g. Modernize data systems to improve internal efficiency.**
- h. Remove cost as a barrier for households living with low incomes who wish to use park services.**
- i. Prioritize services for communities of color and households experiencing poverty, including equity-centered engagement and outreach.**
- j. Provide park and recreation services to diverse populations.**

Jenn Cairo and Brian Landoe shared more specific information on aspects of UF operations that would be assisted by the levy funds.

- 1. Park Tree Care and Emergency Response – develop a 10-year proactive maintenance cycle for developed city parks, increase tree planting capacity, increase safety and reliability of citywide emergency response by:

 - a. Near doubling tree maintenance staff capacity;**
 - b. Establish Park Tree maintenance schedule;**
 - c. Provide more support for public Heritage trees;**
 - d. Increase work in planting and establishment.****

2. **Tree Planting Expansion – follow guidelines of Growing a More Equitable Forest and strive to expand community engagement, especially within the BIPOC community; plant at least 3,200 street, public, and private property trees each year (starting in 2022/2023) by:**
 - a. **Increasing planting staff to 5 FTE (*not stated what current staffing is*);**
 - b. **Having the capacity to use new planting funds;**
 - c. **Hiring a dedicated community engagement staff person rather than a staff person who serves all PP&R programs.**

3. **Title 11 Regulatory Improvement – decrease permit issuance time, increase customer support. and begin designing a compliance program by:**
 - a. **Adding 5 new staff positions;**
 - b. **Reducing reliance on fee revenue;**
 - c. **Developing a sound foundation so there will be the organizational structure to increase staff as development activity increases.**

4. **Engagement, Science and Policy – update the Portland Urban Forest Management specifications and policies and work on substantive Title 11 amendments; increase the capacity for partnership-building and forest science by:**
 - a. **Hiring dedicated policy and planning staff;**
 - b. **Developing new leads for community stewardship, planting, and forest science;**
 - c. **Using more asset management support.**

7. **Eleven new UF staff positions have been filled recently. Additional positions will be opened. Interested individuals should sign up here to learn about these openings: <https://www.portland.gov/bhr/career-center>**

In response to a question from Megan, Jenn stated that she did not believe that UF is in a position to take on street tree maintenance. This is a decision that needs to be made by elected officials.

**Proposed Heritage Tree Nominations to Forward to City Council
Gregg Everhart (Chair of Heritage Tree Committee and UFC member)**

Gregg reminded UFC members that the normal process for ultimate designation of a tree as a Portland Heritage Tree is:

- a) A list of tree candidates is assembled by committee members, with conversations with the public.
- b) UF staff visit trees to eliminate unsuitable candidates. Committee members then visit the remaining trees as a group, and discuss and vote.
- c) The Heritage Tree Committee brings its tree list to the UFC for its consideration. The UFC then nominates trees for City Council to approve as new Portland Heritage trees.

Factors that play a role in determining if a tree is a suitable candidate heritage status: a) tree structure, b) suitable growing site, c) relative size of tree, d) age of tree, e) historical interest, f) horticultural interest, and g) cultural interest. Efforts are made to find suitable trees in geographic areas of Portland that have no or very few designated Portland Heritage Trees. Trees are sought from public and private spaces. Most recently UF staff members Frank Kraweyzk and Daniel Gleason have most commonly visited trees, except in 2021. UF staff person Gina Dake and chair Gregg Everhart performed the initial screening of trees in 2021.

Due to safety concerns related to COVID-19, the process was greatly modified in 2021. No in-person outreach was done to citizens to try to interest them in having their tree considered for Heritage Tree status. Frank and Dan were unable to do the initial tree screenings due to changes in workload. The committee was unable to meet face-to-face. No new potential trees were considered but rather trees from the 2020 list were used. Not all members of the committee were able to visit on their own all candidate trees. The decision-making process was that only committee members who had actually seen a specific tree and had no conflict of interest with that tree could vote on forwarding it to the UFC.

Discussions by the Heritage Tree Committee occurred via Zoom in 2021 after the suggested trees had been seen. If a tree was rated favorably by 2/3 of the Committee members eligible to vote, the tree was sent to the UFC for consideration. In 2021, 50 trees at 45 different sites were considered; the Heritage Tree Committee is sending 9 trees to the UFC for consideration.

In 2021 several Heritage trees were removed due to severe tree decline or failure. These included a native dogwood, *Cornus nuttallii* #76; a pin oak, *Quercus palustris* #191; an Oregon white oak, *Quercus garryana* #200; a bigleaf maple, *Acer macrophyllum* #295; and a lacebark pine, *Pinus bungeana* #331.

Due to emergency situations, some of these trees needed to be removed as soon as possible (Title 11.20.060).

Among the trees that are being recommended for Portland Heritage Tree designation are:

- a) two rarely planted broadleaf evergreen *Cinnamomum japonicum*, Japanese cinnamon trees, which are street trees at 3223 NE 16th Avenue;
- b) a large right-of-way, highly visible *Pseudotsuga menziesii*, Douglas-fir at 5518 SE 139th Avenue;
- c) a large private *Abies grandis*, grand fir, at 7100 SW Brier Place;
- d) a large two-trunked private *Thuja plicata*, western red-cedar, which survived careful placement of an accessory building unit in close proximity, at 7077 SW 32nd Avenue;
- e) a large public *Cerciciphyllum japonicum*, katsura tree, at the 4th hole in the Frisbee course at Pier Park;
- f) two large private *Cedrus deodara*, deodar cedar, at 617 NE Prescott Street;
- g) a private, 100" dbh, 142' tall *Sequoiadendron giganteum*, giant sequoia, at 3114 NW Thurman Street.

Heritage Tree Committee members for 2021 have been Gregg Everhart (Chair), Brian French, Damon Schrosk, Jennifer Baxter, Ginger Edwards, John Mills, Stephen Peacock, Daniel Gleason (PP&R/Urban Forestry), Frank Krawczyk (PP&R/Urban Forestry), Martin Nicholson (PP&R/Hoyt Arboretum), Nik Desai (PP&R/Urban Forestry), David Hedbery, Thea Weiss Hays, Gina Dake (PP&R/formerly with Urban Forestry). All committee members agreed to serve in 2022, with the exception of Gina Dake, who has transferred to another position within Parks and no longer works as a UF staff person. Nik Desai replaces Gina Dake as the key UF staff working on the Portland Heritage Tree program.

Daniel Newberry wondered if groves of trees were eligible for Portland Heritage Tree status, as sometimes these are wonderful sites for owls. Gregg thought this is possible and that indeed there is at least one instance already.

Megan wondered if QR codes could be put on plaques so more information might be available to the public seeing a Portland Heritage Tree. Gregg thought it was a good idea but that it is not realistic for the committee to take on this additional task. She thought that once Hoyt Arboretum undertakes QR codes in its signage this approach may be more feasible for Portland Heritage Trees. Gregg also said it might be good if the UFC's Education and Outreach Committee, dormant since

Catherine Mushel term-limited off of UFC, is revived. It seems like taking on these QR signs could be one activity of a newly activated Education and Outreach Committee.

Bruce had concerns about private property trees gaining Portland Heritage Tree status, referencing the recent UFC decision that prevented the removal of an apple tree that had Heritage Tree status. This tree had lost 50 percent of its mass, but the majority of the UFC deemed it not hazardous. Gregg said she works hard with private property owners so they clearly understand the restrictions placed on what they can do with a tree on their private property once it gains heritage status.

A motion was made and passed to forward to City Council to delist some of the previously mentioned dead/down Portland Heritage trees and to approve designation for the nine trees discussed earlier as Portland Heritage Trees.

Gregg brought to UFC several matters pertaining to the Heritage Tree Program that she believes need to be addressed by UFC in the future:

- a) How visible to the public should a tree be for consideration of Portland Heritage Tree status? This comes into play when some trees are in the back portion of a private property.
- b) Should younger trees be considered for Heritage Tree status as a means to protect them from future harm?
- c) Should worthy trees within 10' of a structure be considered for Heritage Tree status? Currently a property owner can remove without cause any tree within 10' feet of a structure. *This would need legal clarification.*
- d) Since Heritage Tree status is one of the only ways to protect a tree under Title 11, should the committee be more engaged with purposely helping to preserve trees by working to get them Portland Heritage Tree status?
- e) Heritage Tree committee bylaws need to be officially written and approved.
- f) It would be great to have a willing UFC member actively participate in the Heritage Tree Committee. The only UFC members on the committee currently (Gregg Everhart and Damon Schrosk), will complete their terms of service as UFC members at the end of February 2022.

Daniel wondered if it is possible for UFC members to remain until their replacements have been approved by City Council. Jenn will check with the city attorney's office on this.

2020 Urban Forestry Commission Annual Report Vivek Shandas (UFC Chair)

The 2020 UFC Annual Report was presented. UFC members agreed to send any editing suggestions to Brian. The report was accepted by UFC, with whatever minor edits go to Brian.

Vivek raised the idea of having a get-together of all current UFC commissioners and soon-to-be-appointed UFC members to talk about UFC as a whole, UFC directions, and potential UFC priorities. It was agreed that UFC members should send Vivek any ideas they have on this.

Pedestrian Design Guide Comments, Daniel Newberry (Chair of UFC Policy Committee)

The Policy Committee would like to see some follow-up to Portland Bureau of Transportation Director Christopher Warner's response to an earlier letter from UFC that expressed concerns about the Pedestrian Design Guide update draft. It seems inadequate for the Pedestrian Design Guide to specify a 4' wide furnishing zone minimum and 6' wide sidewalk minimum. This 4' width furnishing zone eliminates the planting of any large-form trees in the public space. If this planting strip is to provide substantial climate benefits for the city, then more space is needed to allow for the planting of larger form trees. Only then would this public asset truly become a linear arboretum helping to address climate concerns expressed in various city documents.

Daniel and Vivek have recently met with a staff person from City Commissioner Hardesty's office who seemed supportive of the idea of advocating for space for a few large form trees on every block (*in the right of way?*).

Jenn requested that in the future any scheduled meetings with City Commissioners or their staff be done with UF's prior knowledge. It might prove useful to have UF staff present at any meetings so accurate information is presented. Jenn stated that UF is in constant communication with the various City bureaus and City Commissioners' staff.

Damon suggested that UFC direct its energy to PBOT by specifying tree needs and let PBOT figure out how to meet those needs.

Megan thought it was very important that climate resiliency be part of this discussion and included in comments to PBOT. Daniel posed the concern that with big trees declining for a number of reasons including age, climate change,

development, and people's individual fears/concerns, it is getting harder and harder to get large trees planted. Vivek added that externalizing the cost for street trees to the adjacent property owner also leads to property owner resistance to planting street trees.

Jenn reminded UFC members that these concerns are best brought to members of City Council. She also reminded UFC members that UF has requested that PBOT change the wording in the Pedestrian Design Guide to only require a minimum of a 4' wide sidewalk, rather than 6'. To date there has been no response.

UFC expressed support for Daniel drafting a letter to PBOT Director Warner expressing our concerns, then giving it to Vivek for final review and to finally have it sent to Director Warner with copies to other relevant PBOT personnel and Portland City Commissioners.

Next Urban Forestry Commission Meeting: 9:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m., Thursday February 17, 2022, as a Zoom meeting. Check the link below for the agenda, meeting materials, and how you can gain access to this Zoom meeting, <https://www.portland.gov/trees/ufc/events/2021/6/17/urban-forestry-commission-meeting>