

TO: Neighborhood Tree Team members and Portland tree advocates  
FROM: Bruce Nelson, Cully Tree Team March 30, 2024  
RE: Portland Urban Forestry Commission Meeting March 21, 2024:  
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*

*You Tube site for this particular meeting is not available at the time of this writing.*

*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 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, March 21, 2024, 9:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. It was held as a hybrid meeting with live presence at Portland Municipal Services Building Room 216.

**UFC Members Present** Leah Plack (meeting facilitator), Casey Clapp, Ivory Iheanacho, J.R. Lilly, Melinda McMillan, Justin Misner, Bruce Nelson, and Megan Van de Mark

**UFC Commissioners Absent** Derily Bechthold, Adrienne Feldstein (chair)

**PP&R UF Staff Present** Jenn Cairo, City Forester (PP&R UF); Brian Landoe, Analyst III (PP&R UF); Casey Jogerst, Permitting and Regulations Manager (PP&R UF); Blake Carlile, City Forester Administrative Aide (PP&R UF); Sam Wolf, Botanic Specialist II (PP&R UF); Cory Knoblauch, Tree Inspector (PP&R UF)

### **9:30 a.m. Public Comments**

George Marshall, an engineer living in southwest (?) Portland, testified that he believed it was not possible for arborists to know what trees are going to fall in a storm. He has experienced tree failure at his residence and seen many examples. He had his trees evaluated by an arborist and was told they were safe. Yet there was tree failure in the January 2024 storm. He wants homeowners to be able to remove any trees that the homeowner thinks are dangerous. He is not opposed to replanting but thinks it would be necessary to replant with smaller form trees that do not pose a risk. He wants code changes to allow for this. He wondered how “you” (Urban Forestry staff and UFC members) can sleep at night knowing these unsafe trees are being allowed to stand. Mr. Marshall stated he will do what is necessary to protect his family and home.

UFC member Misner had questions about the level of responsibility being taken by the City in these matters.

UFC member Nelson asked about the effect on the urban forest if homeowners were allowed to remove any tree they deemed dangerous.

Mr. Marshall did not think there would be any significant change in the overall urban forest.

UFC member Clapp appreciated hearing the concerns of Mr. Marshall.

### **9:45 a.m. City Forester’s Report** Jenn Cairo, City Forester (PP&R UF)

--UFC member and co-chair Roberta Jortner has resigned from the UFC and UFC policy subcommittee. Her knowledge of the workings of City bureaus and her

invaluable work for UFC over the last two years as well as the many years before that as both a volunteer and City staff person have been a great service to the City and its natural resources. She was instrumental in the writing of Title 11 nearly 10 years ago. She will be missed. Her work is greatly appreciated.

--Recruitment has begun for applicants interested in filling the now-vacant position on the UFC. PP&R UF is working with the Office of Community and Civic Life to reach out to diverse Portland communities for interested applicants to fill the position. It will take at least a few months to fill. *The process is to seek out interested applicants, screen them, interview the best candidates, decide on the best one, have that applicant okayed by the PP&R Director and the City Commissioner in charge of PP&R (currently Dan Ryan), have Portland City Council approve the selection, and then the new UFC member joins the UFC.*

--PP&R UF has participated in several events recently, in cooperation with other Portland organizations:

-Tree Summit on March 2<sup>nd</sup> was greatly helped by participation from Portland Clean Energy Benefits Funds staff as well as partners in the Connecting Canopies coalitions (Blueprint Foundation, Nature Conservancy), along with a keynote address by former UFC chair Ed Washington.

-An upcoming event is the rescheduled Day of Service in honor of Martin Luther King's birthday. This will occur on March 23<sup>rd</sup> at Lents Park and will include tree planting.

--PP&R UF's response to tree damage from the January 2024 storm was rapid, thanks in part to the increased available staff brought on as a result of the voter-passed Parks levy in November 2020. PP&R UF changed work responsibilities for some staff so they could assist in the emergency clean-up. The storm damage within Portland:

-heightened the importance of routine quality tree work that includes identifying dead, dying, and dangerous trees and dealing with them appropriately as a means to reduce tree damage and loss throughout Portland;

-reinforced PP&R UF's decision to fund routine tree maintenance for PP&R park trees as a means to providing a higher level of tree safety in parks;

-required PP&R UF to quickly shift staff to emergency tree tasks during the storm clean-up work;

-allowed PP&R UF to purchase software to allow more rapid response to tree emergencies in the future, thanks to the Mayor's emergency declaration. The software purchased is Plan-it Geo Tree Plotter. <https://planitgeo.com/treeplotter/>

--Progress continues on the Portland Urban Forest Plan update. There will be an open house at McDaniel High School on April 24<sup>th</sup> from 5 pm to 7:30 pm to exchange information with Portlanders. A survey is available for interested parties

to complete here--<https://www.portland.gov/parks/news/2024/3/20/help-portland-plan-future-citys-trees>

The April 18, 2024 UFC meeting will include more information on the Portland Urban Forest Plan update.

--Work is continuing on the development of the Natural Resource Service Area, an effort to consolidate and bring more collaboration among City programs working in the natural resources arena. UFC members Lilly and Iheanacho are serving on this workgroup.

### **10:00 a.m. Facts about the Request to Remove Heritage Trees # 107 and # 273 and Official Public Hearing for that Request for Heritage Tree Removal**

Sam Wolf, Botanic Specialist II, Heritage Tree Program Manager (PP&R UF),  
Cory Knoblaugh, Tree Inspector (PP&R UF)

As a way to potentially save time for other discussions, UFC member Nelson proposed that we go directly to any public testimony on the request to remove Heritage Trees #107 and #273. The reason for this is that the Powerpoint sent to UFC members prior to the meeting documented very well the steep decline for both of these trees and it did not seem necessary to have a discussion or presentation on this. Manager Landoe stated this would be in violation of the requirement of a public hearing and the need within that public hearing to state the basics of the tree removal request.

Manager Wolf presented the details while showing slides on these declining Heritage Trees. There was no public testimony in support or in opposition to their removal. The property owners and UF staff supported removal. UFC voted unanimously to remove them.

### **10:15 a.m. Heritage Tree Program Update, New Heritage Tree Nominations, Report on Emergency Heritage Tree Removals & Requests**

Sam Wolf, Botanic Specialist II, Heritage Tree Program Manager (PP&R UF)

Manager Wolf reported that PP&R UF treated, with the insecticide Mectinite, public right-of-way Heritage Trees #53 (*Fraxinus latifolia*) and #256 (*Fraxinus americana*) for control of emerald ash borer. These are the only two ash trees in Portland that have Heritage Tree status. *Research to date shows good success with treatment for emerald ash borer using the trunk injection of Mectinite. The thinking is that the environmental benefit from preserving large ash trees is well worth the economic cost of treatment. Treatment needs to be made every 3 years.* The dollar costs of these treatments were not available.

In 2023, Manager Wolf was assigned to the Heritage Tree Program (*taking over for Nik Desai, who was assigned other responsibilities after a few years of managing the program. Desai had replaced Gina Dake who transferred to a position in PP&R, separate from PP&R UF*). Manager Wolf stated that PP&R UF staff lead and coordinate the activities relating to the Heritage Tree Program. The work is supported by PP&R UF staff and community volunteers (*Heritage Tree Subcommittee*). This group brings tree suggestions to UFC for Heritage Tree nomination consideration. The group also is engaged in Heritage Tree walks, tabling events, and advocacy on behalf of Heritage Trees.

In 2023, a total of 87 trees were considered for Heritage Tree recognition; 9 trees made the final cut before 5 were brought to UFC for consideration.

1. *Fagus sylvatica* copper beech, public ROW; Montavilla SE 89<sup>th</sup> Ave. and SE Hawthorn Street;
2. *Thuja plicata* Western redcedar, private; Montavilla 34 SE 88<sup>th</sup> Avenue;
3. *Platanus occidentalis* American sycamore, public ROW; Northwest District 2417 NW Raleigh Street;
4. *Liriodendron tulipifera* tulip tree, private: Eastmoreland, 2835 SE Carlton St.;
5. *Quercus garryana* Oregon white oak, private; Sellwood 1144 SE Flavel St.

A motion was made and passed to nominate these 5 trees for the City Council to consider for Heritage Tree recognition.

Manager Wolf shared that under the power given to the City Forester to approve removal of Heritage Trees in Emergency situations (11.20.060.1. Emergencies) the following Heritage trees have been removed:

- Heritage Tree #70 *Salix babylonica* weeping willow, private; Missouri Ave;
- Heritage Tree # 23 *Quercus garryana* Oregon white oak, private; 825 SE Miller Street;
- Heritage Tree #143 *Quercus garryana* Oregon white oak, private; 4825 SW Dosch Park Lane;
- Heritage Tree #90 *Populus canadensis* Carolina poplar, public ROW; 3945 NE Couch St;
- Heritage Tree #181 *Pinus coulteri*, Coulter pine, public ROW; 5306 SE 37<sup>th</sup> Ave.

Manager Wolf noted that Portlander Phyllis Reynolds has been awarded the 2024 Oregon State Heritage Tree Award (Maynard Dawson Award) for her lifetime work on behalf of Heritage Trees in the state. *Ms. Reynolds has played a pivotal role in the establishment and development of the Heritage Tree Program in*

*Portland. Her book Trees of Greater Portland continues to help walkers explore our city while viewing interesting and often large or old specimens of trees. Her work in advocacy of trees in the Portland area continues as a wonderful gift to Portlanders. Earlier winners of this award in the Portland area include Brian French and Catherine Mushel.*

### **10:55 a.m. Discussion and Questions about the Heritage Tree Program**

In a rare occurrence, the scheduled agenda concluded early. Questions and discussion about the Portland Heritage Tree Program arose.

UFC member Nelson had concerns about having additional Heritage Trees on private property, in light of the time spent in 2023 discussing a Heritage Tree on private property that a later owner stated they were unaware had that status.

Manager Wolf said that all of the current private tree nominations include an agreement from the current owners to have the Heritage Tree status put on the deed so it will be apparent to all future parties interested in purchasing the property. This is not the case for the 130+ private trees that are currently Heritage Trees. That will be worked on in the future.

UFC member Iheanacho thought it would be good to have a packet of information that goes to all property owners who express a willingness to have their tree considered for Heritage Tree status.

UFC member Misner wanted there to be some sort of disclosure form for property owners considering getting Heritage Tree recognition.

UFC member Nelson asked if the adjacent property owner is responsible for the maintenance of a Heritage Tree in their ROW.

City Forester Cairo stated that the City is responsible for Heritage Trees in the public ROW.

UFC member Clapp supports the specific Heritage Tree nominations. He thinks it is important to consider geographic locations of the trees. A priority should be placed on nominating trees in low-canopy areas.

UFC member Misner wondered how people join the Heritage Tree subcommittee. The response given was that it has been an informal process.

UFC member Van de Mark thinks that any UFC member can join any UFC subcommittee.

UFC member Nelson noted that there are no current UFC members on the Heritage Tree subcommittee. There are former members of UFC on this subcommittee.

UFC member Misner wishes there were walking tours of Heritage trees available.

UFC member Van de Mark wished it was possible to have some sort of social for UFC members to get together.

Brian Landoe said this is challenging, as public meeting laws are in place. Any

time a quorum of UFC members is in the same location at the same time, it could be considered a public meeting, with state requirements regarding public meetings needing to be met.

*It is likely that there will be a discussion at some point in the future about the operations of the Heritage Tree Program. I hope it will include the following topics:*

*--Clarification about whether the Heritage Tree subcommittee is considered a work group under Urban Forestry or a subcommittee under the Urban Forestry Commission. The former would not necessarily need bylaws nor would it be restricted as to who on the subcommittee could be involved in decision-making. If the Heritage Tree subcommittee is deemed a subcommittee of the Urban Forestry Commission, voting members can only be current members of the Urban Forestry Commission, meetings need to be open to the public and bylaws, in accordance with state and city requirements, need to be adopted and followed.*

*--Specifics need to be developed and followed on the procedure that will be used to be sure that all existing private property Heritage Trees are listed on the property deeds. A timeline to accomplish this task should be set. Currently there are 130+ private Heritage Trees that need this work done.*

*--A packet for interested private property owners who are considering submitting a request to have their tree considered for Heritage Tree status needs to be developed and be readily available online.*

*--It would be appropriate to discuss possible means to support the maintenance of Heritage Trees on private property, especially for those in need of this assistance due to economic challenges.*

*--In light of a commitment to equity goals, a discussion about how the Heritage Tree program can better serve low-income, low-canopy neighborhoods is appropriate.*

*--Evaluation and discussion of the existing Heritage Tree program, taking into account feedback from existing Heritage Tree subcommittee members, is essential as a backdrop for all of these topics.*

## **Next Urban Forestry Commission Meeting**

The next UFC meeting will be 9:30 am – 11:30 am, April 18, 2024. This will be a hybrid meeting, with both in-person (Portland Municipal Services 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>