TO: Neighborhood Tree Team members and Portland tree advocates

FROM: Bruce Nelson, Cully Tree Team May 26, 2021

RE: Portland Urban Forestry Commission Meeting May 20, 2021:

 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.**

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 at:

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL1ToXf0RSV44U3FpC0nwlUqtFOmFuIxMY

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 to identify who is saying what.**

The monthly Urban Forestry Commission (UFC) meeting was held Thursday, May 20, 2021, 9:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. It was held as a Zoom meeting due to COVID-19 demands.

**UFC Commissioners Present** - Vivek Shandas (chair), Anjeanette Brown, Adrianne Feldstein, Barbara Hollenbeck, Bruce Nelson, Daniel Newberry, Damon Schrosk, Megan Van de Mark

**UFC Commissioners Absent** - Gregg Everhart, Lorena Nascimento, Leah Plack

**Urban Forestry (UF) Staff Present** - Jenn Cairo (City Forester, Portland Parks & Recreation, Urban Forestry division) Jenn.Cairo@portlandoregon.gov; Brian Landoe (Analyst 1, Portland Parks and Recreation, Urban Forestry division) brian.landoe@portlandoregon.gov ; Rick Faber (Permitting and Regulation Program Coordinator, Portland Parks and Recreation, Urban Forestry division) richard.faber@portlandoregon.gov

**Deputy City Attorney**- Tony Garcia (Deputy City Attorney, Portland Office of City Attorney)

**Other City Staff -** Adena Long, (Director, Portland Parks and Recreation); Melissa Arnold (Community Engagement Manager, Portland Parks and Recreation)

**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.”**

**9:30 a.m.**  **Public Comment**

Catherine Mushel (former UFC Commissioner) presented testimony on behalf of Trees for Life Oregon [www.treesforlifeoregon.org](http://www.treesforlifeoregon.org) Her testimony was as follows:

 

19 May 2021

RE: mini-parks anchored by large-form trees

Chair Vivek Shandas and Urban Forestry Commission Members

Director Adena Long, Portland Parks and Recreation

Dear Commissioners and Director Long:

I am here on behalf of Trees for Life Oregon, a group dedicated to helping Portland’s large-species trees reach their full potential. These are trees that reach 50 feet or more at maturity and that, left undisturbed, live more than 75 years. Meeting the city’s equity goals means spreading out the wealth of our large-form trees, because living next to such trees is key to human health and well-being.

We are grateful that Parks and Recreation promotes health through the parks themselves and the programming that goes with them. Inherent to healthy parks are healthy, large-form trees. But for many Portlanders, the health and environmental benefits of such trees are out of reach. For them, especially those in East Portland, park trees are too far away from where they live and work to help sustain good health.

As the city grows, as BDS permits more and more multi-family housing along transportation corridors, as PBOT improves active transportation and mass transit routes, as the rights of way become more crowded with utilities--trees, especially big trees--are often crowded out. With big trees losing out in road design and increased building density, residents are going to need more and more physical relief from busy corridor heat islands. More and more Portlanders will need places of respite from the sea of concrete being created along main corridors.

For the respite nature provides, we ask that PP&R distribute another kind of park throughout the city--tree-anchored mini-parks, with each dedicated to holding at least one large-form tree. These mini-parks, spread evenly across the city, would better support Portlanders’ health by being closer to where people liveand work. This would involve creating public spaces for big trees in small parks placed between big buildings in mixed-use zones to break up long corridor stretches that lack big trees. We ask that Parks and Recreation step forward to work with other bureaus and partners to buy parcels even as small as 50 x 100 feet, and dedicate that land to large-form trees.

Creating these tree-anchored mini-parks would result in more public land for the public good--in perpetuity. And sure, making mini-parks centered around large-species trees will cost money. As we’ve communicated to Cynthia Castro in Commissioner Rubio’s office, carrying out the City’s own stated equity and climate preparedness agendas requires spending money on tangible, equitable outcomes. Our proposal, which could begin with a pilot park, would be one of those outcomes by supporting a healthy future for an ever increasing number of people.

Thank you,

Catherine Mushel treesforlifeoregon.org

Damon and Adrianne liked the idea of exploring pocket parks as a means to provide spaces closer to where people live that have large-form trees. Megan appreciated this very creative idea.

Jenn shared that Urban Forestry does not really have the budget to purchase land for pocket parks but Portland Parks and Recreation does have a land acquisition program which could be approached.

Roberta Jortner, a member of the UFC Policy Committee and a retired but former long-time staff member of various Portland City government offices, presented public testimony. She hoped it would have some pertinence to the Healthy Parks, Healthy Portland discussion that was to occur later in the meeting. A close approximation of her testimony follows:

From my perspective, urban forest management and the Urban Forestry Program have historically not been viewed or managed by PPR as a program that is central to PPR's identity as an agency or to its mission, focus, asset management strategies, etc.  My perception is that PPR's focus, like its name, is on local parks and natural areas and on city-managed recreational facilities including community centers and pools.  As a result, Urban Forestry has tended to operate more on the margins of core agency programs.

And while trees are certainly a key element of Portland's parks and natural areas, the urban forest is an extremely important and valuable citywide resource, with something like half the canopy situated on private property.  Until Title 11, PPR’s Urban Forestry program had a limited involvement with trees on private property. And the bureau as a whole does not have much to do with what happens on private property. As we know, the urban forest in its entirety is hugely important to maintaining the human and ecological health of the city. As for the other half of the urban forest, which is located on City property, an important chunk of those trees are planted on public rights-of-way, which are managed largely by PBOT.  While street trees are especially important to human and ecological health, the City does not fully recognize them as a key infrastructure asset to be managed creatively and effectively. Just a few years ago the City Council, with urging from the UFC and community members, directed PPR to take a serious look at options to shift the responsibility for managing street trees to the City.  However, this direction was shifted and subsumed into a bigger, more general analysis of how to fund PPR overall.

I'm not sure what it will take to fully integrate the Urban Forest Management program into the core fabric of Portland Parks and Recreation given the bureau's focus on City-managed assets that contain half of the urban forest. But perhaps the discussion tomorrow might provide a chance for UFC members to raise these and related points with the director. In particular I think PPR needs not only an updated Urban Forest Management Plan, but a comprehensive asset management strategy for the urban forest on city property (including rights of way) that addresses investment, operations and maintenance, succession planning (addressing climate change), etc., and associated funding strategies, along with a clear and explicit recognition of the urban forest as a citywide asset, with explicit strategies for improving and sustaining trees and vegetation on private property. I would also love to see PPR/UF prioritize not only the preservation and planting of trees, but also maintaining plantable space for trees and vegetation and limiting impervious area.

**9:40 a.m.**  **Minutes Review Brian Landoe (Analyst 1, Portland Parks and Recreation, Urban Forestry division)**

The minutes from the March 18, 2021 meeting were reviewed and minor changes were suggested. The minutes were then approved with suggested changes.

**9:45 a.m. City Forester Report Jenn Cairo (City Forester, Portland Parks and Recreation, Urban Forestry division**

1. Jenn welcomed Adrianne Feldstein for her first official meeting as a member of the Urban Forestry Commission.
2. As incoming UFC members, Adrianne Feldstein and Leah Plack have received training from Urban Forestry staff regarding the role of UFC, along with background information on the Urban Forestry division; training from Deputy City Attorney Tony Garcia on the legal obligations of citizen Commission members; and they will receive Diversity, Equity and Inclusion training from City staff in the future.
3. Portland Parks and Recreation Director Long will join today’s meeting soon to involve UFC in the early stages of the Healthy Parks, Healthy Portland initiative.
4. On May 19th the City Council accepted the Trust Fund Report from Urban Forestry while also adopting the Urban Forestry services fee fund update. All of these had been discussed at earlier UFC meetings. *Urban Forestry did modify its original Trust Fund Report that was presented to UFC, based on comments from UFC. The report that went to City Council spelled out the projected maintenance costs for young trees over several years, even though that money was not spent in the fiscal year addressed in the report.*

On May 26th, City Council will hear a report from Urban Forestry that was developed with assistance from Bureau of Development Services and the Bureau of Planning and Sustainability. The report states the scope of proposed work and timelines for revision of the Portland Urban Forest Management Plan; for technical short-term Title 11 code changes; and for long-term Title 11 changes in line with the to-be-developed new Urban Forest Management Plan.

*City Council accepted the report as presented on Wednesday, May 26th and commended the good work that was put into it. Several City Commissioners specifically mentioned the need to address the existing inequities of the urban canopy.*

1. There are no updates to report on the Streets 2035 project nor on the Street Tree Maintenance Report.  *The first draft of the Street Tree Maintenance Report was presented to UFC on December 11, 2019. The report was contracted out to Davey Resource Group in Portland. The final report has yet to be shared with the Urban Forestry Commission. It is unclear if the contracted report is completed or still being worked on.*
2. There are ongoing high-level management discussions between Portland Parks & Recreation and Portland Water Bureau personnel regarding tree location in the right-of-way when water conveyance pipes are present. Currently Urban Forestry division standards are different than Portland Water Bureau’s standards.
3. Due to the passage of the Parks levy in November 2020, Urban Forestry is seeking applicants for multiple positions. As job openings occur they will show up in the link below:

<https://www.governmentjobs.com/careers/portlandor>

If you want to receive electronic notice about certain types of job listings through the City of Portland, go to the link below and follow instructions.

<https://www.governmentjobs.com/careers/portlandor/jobInterestCards/categories>

**10:05 Healthy Parks, Healthy Portland Projects – an Early Participation**

**Adena Long (Director, Portland Parks & Recreation); Melissa Arnold (Community Engagement Manager, Portland Parks & Recreation); Kathryn Jarrell and Stephanie Gloia (consultants, Future Work Design)**

Portland Parks and Recreation is in the early stages of developing a plan that will help guide its future direction. The local consulting firm Future Work Design is assisting in the gathering of critical information needed for the development of this plan. During 2021 and perhaps part of 2022, information will be gathered that is considered necessary to develop a long-term vision for Portland Parks and Recreation.

Numerous PP&R documents have been developed including Parks Vision 2020, 2017-2020 Strategic Plan, Five-Year Racial Equity Plan, 2004 Urban Forest Management Plan, Asset Management Plans, Sustainable Futures, 2017 Parks Community Needs Study, and 2019 Community Insight Survey, to name a few. All provide valuable information that will be used as part of the HEALTHY PARKS, HEALTHY PORTLAND framework.

At this point PP&R feels the need to a) build organizational culture; b) ensure racial equity, diversity, and inclusion; c) create and expand programs; d) create mission, vision, values and strategic objectives; d) create performance indicators and targets; e) align work plans; f) monitor and evaluate progress; g) share results; and h) support community partnerships. The effort to describe where PP&R is today, to identify gaps in understanding unmet community and staff needs, and to collaboratively strive to meet those needs--this is what is being called the HEALTHY PARKS, HEALTHY PORTLAND FRAMEWORK.

Efforts are underway to begin this process of listening, learning, developing, and evaluating.

PP&R has decided that it is critical that voices of the underserved and underrepresented communities of Portland be heard as part of this process. To paraphrase, PP&R hopes to empower community by centering voices of the unheard and to be antiracist in a very deliberative process that will build trust in communities of Portland who carry a legacy of mistrust based on past actions of PP&R. The identified underserved communities include black people, indigenous people, people of color, immigrants and refugees, youth, older adults, people living with disability, and people living with low income.

It is hoped that with both community and PP&R staff input in a co-designed draft document, a sound Healthy Parks, Healthy Portland framework will be developed over the next 6-12 months.

At this point the consultant Kathryn Jarrell led UFC through a series of questions to respond to as a means of gathering information pertinent to the Healthy Parks, Healthy Portland project. A question would be posed and then UFC Commissioners were asked to respond by going to a website where the responses were quickly gathered and displayed. These same questions will be taken to many different groups, as a means of gathering critical information.

*I did not write down the specific questions asked in the survey. Between my discomfort with the technology used and my frustration with the survey questions’ lack of mention of trees. Many of the UFC members did respond to the survey questions asked.*

Once the survey was completed, Director Long thanked UFC for its input. Vivek expressed hope that Director Long would be back before UFC soon to share findings and to help keep UFC informed of relevant actions within PP&R.

*Some UFC Commissioners were not happy with the way the survey questions were worded, with a lack of any relevance to trees. These opinions were expressed in a variety of ways.*

*For perspective, it is important to remember that Urban Forestry represents a very small portion of the annual budget of Portland Parks and Recreation. The budget for Portland Parks and Recreation for fiscal Year July 1, 2020-June 30, 2021 was $334 million. Of that amount, only $6 million was for the Urban Forestry division. Using those numbers, Urban Forestry represents 1.8 % of PP&R’s budget.*

**11:05 UFC Bylaws Discussion Brian Landoe (Analyst 1, Portland Parks and Recreation, Urban Forestry division)**

UFC voted to adopt the revised bylaws that had been worked on over the past year. UFC members were comfortable with the provisions made about committees. It was also deemed acceptable to refer to the UFC as originating in 2015, since that is the year that Title 11 was implemented. *The formation of the Urban Forestry Commission was adopted in Resolution 159494 by the Portland City Council on March 12, 1987. My search of information, though incomplete, has found the names of at least 55 different individuals who have served on the Urban Forestry Commission since 1990, with the vast majority serving prior to the implementation of Title 11 in 2015. The predecessor of the Urban Forestry Commission is the Street Tree Advisory Committee. I have not been able to do any research on that group yet.*

“The Elected-in-Charge must sign off on original bylaws and any amendments to the bylaws.” *Once City Commissioner Carmen Rubio approves the bylaws they will become effective.*

**Next Urban Forestry Commission Meeting:**  The next meeting will be 9:30 a.m. – noon, Thursday, June 17, as a Zoom meeting. Check the link below in early May for the meeting agenda, materials, and how you can gain access to the meeting,

<https://www.portland.gov/trees/ufc/events/2021/6/17/urban-forestry-commission-meeting>