

TO: Neighborhood Tree Team members and tree advocates  
FROM: Bruce Nelson, Cully Tree Team July 26, 2020  
RE: Portland Urban Forestry Commission Meeting July 16, 2020:  
Summary and Comments

**NOTE: This document is not an official document of the Urban Forestry Commission. I am a private citizen who happens to be a member of the Urban Forestry Commission. I write it as a private citizen.**

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, once they are approved by the Commissioners (usually 1-3 months after the meeting). <https://www.portlandoregon.gov/parks/60405>

The decisions made at these meetings often affect the volunteer tree advocacy work we are doing. I will send 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.*

The monthly Urban Forestry Commission meeting was held Thursday, July 16, 2020, 9:30 am – noon, as an online Zoom meeting due to COVID 19 demands.

**Urban Forestry Commissioners Present** - Vivek Shandas (Chair), Gregg Everhart, Barbara Hollenbeck, Lorena Nascimento, Bruce Nelson, Daniel Newberry, Damon Schrosk, Megan Van de Mark

**Urban Forestry Commissioners Absent** - Anjeanette Brown. Brian French

**Urban Forestry Staff Present** - Jenn Cairo (City Forester, Portland Parks & Recreation), Brian Landoe (Analyst 1, Portland Parks and Recreation)

**Deputy City Attorney-** Tony Garcia

**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.”

**Visitor Presenters** – Tate White (Project Manager, Portland Parks and Recreation); Adena Long (Director, Portland Parks and Recreation); Sarah Huggins (Systems Development Charge Manager, Portland Parks and Recreation)

**9:30 am – 9:40 am Public Comments** -- Doug Klotz wanted UFC Commissioners to be aware of a heat map study that Vivek Shandas was involved in for 2017, looking at urban temperatures at different times of the day and night in different cities. One of the surprising findings was that often core downtown areas do not show the expected high temperatures that you would expect with all of that building mass. You actually see higher temperatures in other parts of the city in the afternoon. Vivek explained that this is due to the shading created by the buildings. But the extra mass of the buildings in downtown corridors led to higher temperatures after dark as the building masses release their heat.

<https://www.oregonlive.com/news/erry-2018/08/92d2d4b48a8641/hot-or-not-research-maps-hotte.html>

Wendy Rahm, chair of the Downtown Neighborhood Association (DNA), commented on the South Park Blocks Master Plan. She did not think there should be any evergreen trees as part of the Master Plan as none were in the original plan. She pointed out that much more carbon sequestration is done by deciduous trees than evergreen trees. DNA is concerned about the high number of trees that will be cut as part of this Master Plan. DNA submitted around July 1, 2020 the paperwork for application of the South Park blocks to be put on the National Register of Historic Places. This submission was supported by Portland Parks and Recreation (PP&R). DNA would appreciate a presentation on the tree plan for the park.

**9:40 – 9:50 a.m. City Forester Report Jenn Cairo – City Forester**

Jenn gave brief updates on seven different items, after thanking the Commissioners for their time and efforts on behalf of the Urban Forestry Commission.

- a) City Council adopted the Climate Emergency Action Declaration June 30, at a special public hearing. It includes reference to the benefits of trees, advocating for both tree planting and tree protection.

*The resolution adopted by the City Council makes reference to trees in a very limited way. In the WHEREAS list, which includes 24 different sections, trees occur in only two of these: (“W. WHEREAS, changes to the length of the summer season have a direct and immediate impact on trees by causing stress to species like Western Red Cedar, which*

*undermines the ability of Portland’s tree canopy to provide critical habitat, urban cooling, and other green infrastructure services”; and “X. WHEREAS, protecting , restoring, and managing our urban natural resources – including rivers, streams, wetlands, flood areas, trees, and unique habitats – mitigates risks, sequesters carbon, and builds resilience to the impacts of climate change, provides benefits to human physical and mental health, protects private property and public infrastructure, and supports the intrinsic value of natural ecosystems and biodiversity.”).*

*In the DECLARATION list, only one section specifically mentions trees. “20. BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Bureau of Planning and Sustainability is directed to work collaboratively with the Bureau of Development Services, Bureau of Environmental Services and Portland Parks and Recreation to update regulations that protect and enhance tree canopy to reduce heat island impacts on public health, particularly in East Portland.”*

*One other DECLARATION, by referring to “green infrastructure” could be interpreted to include trees. “ 21. BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Bureau of Environmental Services, the Bureau of Planning and Sustainability, Portland Parks and Recreation, and Portland Bureau of Transportation are directed to collaborate on the creation of a citywide integrated and prioritized green infrastructure action plan to: 1) help achieve the goal of a healthy connected city for all; 2) maximize the benefits of green infrastructure investments in reducing carbon emissions and preparing for climate change impacts; and 3) build on, connect and enhance the existing network of green infrastructure initiatives being led by community, non-profits, businesses, and other governments.”*

- b) Portland Parks and Recreation (PP&R) and the Bureau of Environmental Services (BES) group that is looking at tree planting services done by city agencies will be scheduling meetings with external stakeholders over the next 2 months. Vivek Shandas will chair these meetings. *No mention was made of exactly what external stakeholders will be included in these meetings.*
- c) The Bureau of Transportation Streets 2035 group has taken no reportable action.

- d) The Bureau of Development Services (BDS) has prepared its findings regarding the City Council directive to a) look at Title 11 Tree Code changes pertaining to exemptions from preservation and density regulations for specific zones and b) amend regulations for tree preservation, including evaluating a reduction of the critical tree size threshold for inch-for-inch mitigation from 36” to 20”. An online workshop is available to learn about BDS findings and to comment. <https://online-voice.net/portlandtreecode>

Information on the development of the Tree Code Amendments is on the City’s website: <https://www.portlandoregon.gov/bds/80501>

- e) PP&R’s Sustainable Futures group work is coming along. See the later item in the agenda for the latest on this project.
- f) Urban Forestry’s budget, like many City agencies, will need to be revised, due to financial challenges to the city’s revenue streams over the past few months. In September, Urban Forestry will be presenting updated budgetary needs as part of the normal Fall Budget Management Planning (Fall BUMP). Feedback to UF by UFC Commissioners on the UF budget is appreciated. *It is hard to give feedback when very little budgetary information regarding expenses and revenues is presented to UFC Commissioners.*
- g) In day-to-day operations of Urban Forestry over the past month, cost reduction steps have been taken, including lay-offs of temporary staff, leaving unfilled any currently vacant staff positions, furloughs for all permanent staff (scheduled for 1 day per week), and putting off purchases of materials unless critically needed. With the requirement of furlough days, certain less urgent projects have been slowed down. Within the past few weeks there has been a significant increase in tree permitting work. UF got permission to bring back some temporary workers to assist in this workload.

In response to a question from Daniel, Jenn shared that the search for applicants for the vacant Urban Forestry Commissioner position continues. The application date has been extended to August 31, 2020. To date there are 2 applicants and a few others that might be forthcoming. Jenn and Brian are continuing outreach in the community to see if more applicants can be found from under-represented populations of Portland. Interested individuals should contact Brian Landoe at [brian.landoe@portlandoregon.gov](mailto:brian.landoe@portlandoregon.gov) .

Gregg asked what projects have been slowed down due to the imposition of mandatory furlough days. Jenn responded that feedback from UF on the Pedestrian Guidelines Update is slowed. Jenn also will be spending less time on any Forestry Planning work (*Forest Action Plan/Forest Management Plan?*) and the Street 2035 project. Larger Title 11 revisions work is also on hold until more staff time is available. Jenn remains hopeful that a new full-time planner position will be budgeted for within Urban Forestry.

**9:50 – 10:30 am Sustainable Future and FY21 Budget Update Adena Long (Director Portland Parks and Recreation), Sarah Huggins (Systems Development Charge Manager, Portland Parks and Recreation), Jenn Cairo (City Forester, Portland Parks and Recreation)**

*Portland Parks and Recreation (PP&R) is in financial trouble. The causes of this trouble are multiple, including dependence on city general budget dollars that over the years have been insufficient, increasing labor costs, inadequate planning for maintenance of PP&R facility upkeep, state laws that limit use of bond funding, and most recently COVID 19- induced shutdown of revenue-creating activities. There are likely other causes that I am unaware of or lack sufficient understanding to truthfully state.*

*PP&R is attempting to address current operations budgetary shortages with funds that will be generated if voters approve the 5-year Operations Levy in November. Adena Long (PP&R director) talked about this in a session with OPB in May 2020 <https://www.opb.org/news/article/portland-parks-bureau-levy-bond-coronavirus/>*

*A Bond measure to address the \$500 million and climbing backlog of needed capital repairs for PP&R building and other assets will likely be proposed at a later date. The technical jargon is that **LEVY** is for operational expenses and **BOND** is for capital expenses. You can't mix the two. Put more simply, **LEVY** money can't be used to build a new park but **BOND** money can.*

*In the interest of better understanding the information that was presented at the UFC meeting, I spent several hours going over the recording of the meeting and looking at available resources online pertaining to this topic. It should be noted that on Wednesday July 22<sup>nd</sup>, 6 days after this UFC meeting, City Council authorized taking the Operations Levy proposal to the voters in the November election. Mayor Wheeler and Commissioners Fritz and Eudaly supported the request. Commissioner Hardesty, needing to leave the meeting before hearing the*

*invited testimony and the public testimony, expressed strong support for PP&R but great displeasure with the process used for bringing the Operations Levy proposal to City Council. She said she would not vote in favor of taking this levy to the voters at this time.*

*The Policy Committee for Urban Forestry, which I am a member of, discussed this proposed Operations Levy at our meeting on Monday July 20, 2020. In preparation for that meeting I prepared the following. I believe it covers what was presented in the July 16, 2020 UFC meeting and much more.*

*The specifics of this levy are at the link below.*

<https://www.portlandoregon.gov/auditor/article/763942>

*Items in this Operations Levy that potentially address Urban Forestry operations and the urban forest of Portland include:*

“WHEREAS, Portland’s . . . trees, . . . improve public health, add beauty to our city, are essential public assets, and connect people to place, nature, self, and community;

WHEREAS, the City of Portland’s park system, which is managed by Portland Parks and Recreation (PP&R), includes . . . 1.2 million trees...

WHEREAS, PP& R is not appropriately funded to deliver the service levels that the community and the City Council have called for, and the bureau’s reliance on fees for program and service delivery is inequitable and causes a structural funding issue that has caused service level cuts for several consecutive years, and would continue to lead to cuts in future budget years...

WHEREAS, equity is achieved when one’s identity cannot predict the outcome, and today’s park system is inequitable in its distribution of . . . tree canopy . . .

WHEREAS, the levy would...end reliance on user fees to deliver programming, and center equity and affordability as outcomes...

WHEREAS, Portlanders value trees, and trees provide essential benefits by improving air quality, reducing heat island effects, decreasing heating and cooling costs, sequestering carbon, increasing property values, and more, but today, the benefits of our urban tree canopy are not equally distributed;

WHEREAS, the levy would provide resources to . . . improve the health and equitable distribution of our tree canopy, enable PP&R to proactively maintain existing park trees, and plant hundreds of new trees each year in parks and natural areas with low canopy;

WHEREAS, while PP&R augments its funding by . . . , funding is still insufficient to deliver promised services and outcomes . . . , and to meet rising internal costs;

WHEREAS, if approved, a Parks levy would raise an estimated average of \$48 million a year to . . . expand the urban tree canopy...

Included in the link above is a letter dated July 14, 2020 from PP&R Director Adena Long addressed to the Portland City Council on the subject of the Portland Parks 5-Year Operating Levy. She specifically states, “This levy would improve equitable delivery of our programs and services, end our reliance on user fees, increase safety and cleanliness in parks and natural areas, and grow Portlanders’ access to nature by protecting water quality, planting more trees, and removing invasive species.”

Also included in the link is Exhibit B. The Levy states the purposes of this new revenue include “ . . . safety and maintenance of trees on park properties, planning for and planting new trees, including data systems to manage trees . . . ”

Exhibit C, under the summary of the Operations Levy, states “Enhance and preserve parks...trees...”

Exhibit D as an Explanatory Statement, states “services and programs to be funded by this measure are planned to include, but not limited to:

- Plant new trees in communities where today canopy coverage is lower, to improve air and water quality, diminish the impacts of climate change, and provide wildlife habitat.
- Protect Portland’s 1.2 million park trees by performing proactive maintenance, safety checks, hazard removal, and replacement of damaged trees in parks and natural areas.
- Modernize data to improve internal efficiency.
- Prioritize services for communities of color and households experiencing poverty, including equity-centered engagement and outreach, community

partnership grants and increased engagement with volunteer and partner groups.”

For the IMPACT STATEMENT, there is a listing of specific benefits for those most impacted, including “...Increasing equity of tree canopy coverage across the City by planting trees in areas with lowest canopy coverage...”

A presentation made by PP& R staff at the Urban Forestry Commission’s monthly meeting on July 16, 2020 informed the Commission of the PP&R’s proposal to bring the 5-year Operations Levy to the voters in November 2020. City Forester Jenn Cairo listed specific benefits for the division of Urban Forestry that would follow from the successful passage of this levy. Urban Forestry (UF) is currently experiencing an \$800,000 shortfall. To address this shortfall, UF: a) will not be filling any current vacant positions, b) will use pre-Title 11 fund money (referred to as Legacy Fund by UF staff), and c) will use funds from the Urban Forestry Fund.

The Operations Levy would increase UF’s annual budget by 50% or roughly \$3 million. *(I clearly wrote down 50% and think the current UF budget is \$6 million.)* These funds would be used for a) additional work by the Permitting and Regulations group; b) working more in Parks and natural areas on tree maintenance and planting; c) funding an Urban Forestry planning staff position; and d) providing more tree planting infrastructure.

One area of concern raised by both Daniel Newberry and Gregg Everhard was the compression effect, should the Operations Levy be passed by the voters. Sarah Huggins responded that the anticipated annual \$48 million generated from this levy is the amount that will go to PP&R. *(Of this \$48 million, UF is anticipating \$3 million annually.)* There is additional revenue that will be generated which will be going to other agencies that will experience revenue loss due to compression *(Multnomah County Library, Children’s Levy, Oregon Historical Society)*. Representatives from all of those entities, as well as Portland Public Schools officials, are supportive of the proposed Levy.

Another area of concern, raised by Vivek Shandas, was that the Operations Levy did not include maintenance of street trees, including planting, pruning and removal. He expressed concern that the poll done may not have adequately explored this topic. Sarah responded that the poll just did not show a large enough level of support to merit inclusion in the levy. But PP&R will continue to look at

ways to address this important topic. Vivek emphasized that there is strong interest within the UFC for addressing this area.

City Deputy Attorney Tony Garcia reminded UFC Commissioners of the limitations on Commissioners' advocacy on behalf of or in opposition to the levy once there is a decision by City Council to put the levy before the voters. *After the meeting Tony forwarded to all UFC Commissioners documents spelling out in detail the state and city requirements on this.*

*Political Activities, Restrictions and City Employees, prepared by Office of the City Attorney 2.7.2020 (8 pp.)*

*2011 – 2015 Legislative Update: Oregon Government Ethics Law: Supplement to a Guide for Public Officials (4 pp)*

*Oregon Government Ethics Law: a Guide for Public Officials. Adopted October 2010 (53 pp)*

It was decided that any questions pertaining to the levy should be sent to Brian Landoe. He will forward them to appropriate PP&R staff.

**10:30 – 11:15 am South Park Blocks Master Plan Draft Preferred Design Presentation and Discussion Tate White (Portland Parks and Recreation), Laurie Matthews (Director of Preservation Planning and Design, MIG and Co.) and Morgan Holen (Morgan Holen and Associates LLC.), Rachel Edmunds (Landscape Designer, MIG and Co.)**

<https://www.portlandoregon.gov/parks/article/763757>

The preferred design for the South Park blocks Master Plan was reviewed. A large team is working on this. The plan should be considered as a guide for future modifications to the park. The plan is to only remove trees as they become hazards or are no longer healthy. Replanting will only be done in accordance with the Master Plan. A variety of community engagement activities are still planned as a way to get more community input as to the final design for the South Parks Master Plan.

After a review of the current Preferred Design, comments of the UFC Commissioners were entertained.

Barbara Hollenbeck (UFC Commissioner) - Cultural landscapes are rare in being recognized on the National Register of Historic Resources. It seems like there should be no change to the original landscape design, to preserve this cultural resource. Laurie responded that the modifications proposed attempt to honor the form and character of the original landscape but also create a landscape better adapted to the changing situation (users and climate).

Laurie Matthews (MIG) views the proposed changes as a sort of rehabilitation. Elimination of middle row of trees running north south, reduction in number of trees in the 2 outer east rows and the 2 outer west rows, planting of a few conifers at the south end of the Park Block to tie in with the conifer forests of the west hills as well as a connection to PSU's Native American Student and Community Center.

Damon Schrosk (UFC Commissioner) was pleased to see the possible inclusion of silva-cells under any newly constructed walkways. Even though these are more expensive they do potentially increase soil volume available for successful tree root growth.

Morgan Hollen (Morgan Hollen and Associates) replied that these are certainly a consideration for areas under paths. Structural soil is also a consideration. The goal is to give sufficient soil volume to allow for healthy trees.

Gregg Everhard (UFC Commissioner) suggested using different symbols on designs for trees that relate to their health status on the site. She also had reservations about the narrow sidewalk on the east side of the park.

Laurie Matthews (MIG) reminded everyone that trees will only be removed once they are dying, dead, or become a hazard. Currently there are fairly detailed tree health reports on all of the trees in the South Park blocks. The thinking currently is that planters in the center of the park will be removed over time because they obstruct pedestrian flow. Work is still being done to determine where these planters would be placed. Laurie also noted that there was a strongly expressed desire by PSU students and staff to include more dry seating in the South Parks areas on the PSU campus.

**11:15 – 11:20 a.m. Minutes Review Brian Landoe Urban Forestry Budget Analyst**

The minutes of the April 16, 2020 and May 21, 2020 UFC meeting were reviewed. Brian had sent the draft minutes to UFC Commissioners about a week before the meeting asking for edits prior to this meeting. Minutes of both meetings were accepted with minor changes.

**11:20 – 11:25 am Policy Committee Report Daniel Newberry**

Daniel presented a draft letter the Policy Committee had agreed upon to be sent by UFC supporting the Bureau of Environmental Service's E-zone Map Correction project. The letter as presented was supported by UFC, pending a few minor checks, and will be sent by UFC to BES. The letter expressing support of the E-Zone map corrections and expresses a hope that the conifer stands in east Portland as well as native oaks throughout Portland might receive special recognition.

**11:25 a.m. - noon UFC Priorities Vivek Shandas - Chair**

Vivek reminded UFC Commissioners of the basic Commissioner-identified priorities. It was recognized that with limited time it is necessary for the Commission to narrow its list of priorities. The initial list of 8 priorities includes:

- UF budget (City budget, PP&R budget, stability, Sustainable Futures)
- Communication and Outreach (messaging, culturally specific, hands-on activity)
- Street Tree Maintenance (right-of-way, funding, prioritize geographic areas)
- Title 11 needed amendments (how to prioritize)
- Canopy Equity (distribution, maintenance and access)
- Preservation of larger form trees (development situations, compliance with Title 11, loss of trees)
- Urban Forestry Action Plans (updating Forest Management Plan, integrate with plans of other bureaus)
- What is the role of UFC (governance, committees, priorities)

A quick UFC Commissioner poll was done asking for the top two priorities. The top two were Street Tree Maintenance and Canopy Equity. Also ranking high were Communication and Preservation of larger form trees. More discussion is necessary to develop consensus on a short list of priorities.

## **Next Urban Forestry Commission Meeting**

The next Urban Forestry Commission meeting will be 9:30 am – noon, Thursday, August 20, as a Zoom meeting. The agenda is unavailable at this time. Check the link below in August for meeting agenda, meeting materials, how you can gain access to this Zoom meeting, and how to make public testimony:

<https://www.portlandoregon.gov/parks/80167>