

TO: Neighborhood Tree Team members and Portland tree advocates
FROM: Bruce Nelson, Cully Tree Team 31 July 2023
RE: Portland Urban Forestry Commission Meeting July 20, 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 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 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 20 July 2023, 9:30 am – 11:30 am. It was held as a joint Zoom and in-person meeting at the Portland Building, 1120 SW 5th Avenue, at a meeting room on the second floor.

UFC Members Present Adrienne Feldstein, co-chair & meeting facilitator; Roberta Jortner, co-chair; Derily Bechthold, Ivory Iheanacho, J.R. Lilly, Justin Misner, Melinda McMillan, Bruce Nelson, Leah Plack, and Megan Van de Mark

UFC Commissioners Absent Casey Clapp

PP&R UF Staff Present Jenn Cairo, City Forester (PP&R UF); Brian Landoe, Analyst III, (PP&R UF); Jeff Ramsey, Science and Policy Coordinator (PP&R UF); Samantha Wolf, Science and Education team member (PP&R UF).

Other City Staff : None

9:40 Public Comments

Ken L. Krebs of 3341 SW Cascade Terrace brought his concerns about the delivery of requested services by PP&R UF. Mr. Krebs lives on a piece of property that is bordered on three sides by Hoyt Arboretum. Trees at Hoyt that overhang his residential property often have broken or hanging branches, especially after storms. In the past he has cleaned up the branches or promptly got someone from PP&R UF to clean up the broken or fallen branches originating from city-owned trees at Hoyt. He experienced a much slower service response from PP&R UF (18 months ago?) than in previous years.

Mr. Krebs stated that the PP&R UF tree inspector who came in response to downed and damaged branches from 2022 was not good in the manner in which he interacted with Mr. Krebs. Mr. Krebs believes it is very important that tree inspectors who interact with the public have good people skills before being sent out. After waiting 15 plus months for the tree damage from Hoyt trees to be dealt with, Mr. Krebs inquired about the process for giving public testimony at the Urban Forestry Commission. Almost immediately, though perhaps totally unrelated, he received a visit from another PP&R UF tree inspector, Rebecca, who met with him to review his tree concerns and talk about how they can best be addressed. Mr. Krebs was very impressed with her “people skills” and competency.

9:50 City Forester’s Report Jenn Cairo, City Forester (PP&R UF)

1. City Forester Cairo reminded UFC members that the City Respectful training is still available for those who have not received it. Contact Brian Landoe for more details.
2. The Healthy Parks, Healthy Portland annual report is available for review. <https://www.portland.gov/parks/documents/healthy-parks-healthy-portland-2023-report/download>

I briefly reviewed this 50+ page report to see how trees were addressed, where Urban Forestry's budgetary dollars comprise maybe 10% of PP&R's budget.

- a. Page 10 lists UFC as existing and gives its website.*
- b. Page 11 lists the Tree Emergency hotline contact information.*
- c. Pages 12-13 include a large picture with people walking in a forested area of a park.*
- d. Page 16 states that PP&R are caretakers of millions of trees.*
- e. Page 24 informs us that PP&R is striving to have an expanding tree canopy in Portland while also having tree canopy that is equitably distributed. Actions completed as part of this include ,2455 trees planted in priority neighborhoods.*
- f. Page 25 states that a goal of PP&R is to have people maintaining trees on their property and streets in ways that support the urban ecosystem. It also notes the economic hardship this goal places on some residents. A picture shows people picking up trees as part of the Yard Tree Giveaway. It is noted that PP&R UF piloted a program to make tree permits more affordable for some people.*
- g. Page 26 highlights Healthy Ecosystems and Climate Change Resilience by showing a tree canopy map for Portland above a heat dome map for Portland. The latter is from research done by Vivek Shandas's team.*
- h. Page 27 focuses on research of Vivek Shandas in driving where city-sponsored tree planting activities are focused.*
- i. Pages 50-51 contain a large picture with two youths walking along a path in a park area containing many trees.*

There is very little mention of street trees in the report.

3. This fall UF will make its annual Bill Naito Community Trees Award. Nominations for the individual award and the group award are currently being sought. If you wish to nominate an individual or group, more information is available at <https://www.portland.gov/trees/get-involved/naito-award>

These awards recognize volunteer efforts on behalf of Portland's urban forest. *Bill Naito served for many years on the volunteer Street Tree Advisory Committee (beginning in the 1970s), which became the Urban Forestry Commission in the late 1980s. He served on the Urban Forestry Commission beginning with its formation until his death in 1996. For most of these years, if not all, he chaired these volunteer bodies.*

4. Consultants have been hired to assist PP&R UF's updating of the Portland Urban Forest Management Plan. They are
 - a) Cascadia Partners <https://www.cascadia-partners.com/>
 - b) Parametrics <https://www.parametrix.com/who-we-are/about-parametrix>
 - c) consulting arborist Todd Prager. <https://toddprager.com/>

The specifics on the duties of each of these consultants and the costs involved are being worked out. UFC member McMillan has agreed to work with the consultants on behalf of UFC. During the meeting UFC member Iheanacho also agreed to assist.

5. Oregon House Bill 3414 failed to pass in the just completed Oregon legislative session. This is the bill Governor Kotek was pushing hard as a way to speed up housing construction by eliminating local constraints on new construction (like tree preservation or protection of environmentally significant areas). *It is quite possible this bill may reappear or that the Governor will seek other means to accomplish her goal.*
6. The 82nd Avenue Development Project is underway. A presentation on this will be made by PBOT staff at a future UFC meeting. PP&R UF staff have been engaged in this project. Currently they feel that insufficient attention is being paid to trees. It also appears that the proposal to put a median in the road with trees in it *on 122nd* is opposed by BES as it does not want trees near water or sewer pipes.
7. One proposed future UFC meeting agenda item is a discussion on how UFC can best advise the City on forestry issues. City Forester Cairo hoped that UFC members can get as much information as they can pertaining to Urban Forestry and Portland's urban forest. She encourages members to ask questions of bureau staff and experts in the area, get clarification from relevant bureau staff as to what role UF plays in the issue, and find out what community members need and want pertaining to Portland's urban forest. Urban Forestry's Tree Stewardship training is an excellent way to get valuable information. *I certainly agree with all of City Forester Cairo's suggestions. I would note that there are varying interpretations of the role of UFC. One interpretation is for UFC to advise Urban Forestry so they can do their work. A broader interpretation is to advise any and every bureau and elected official that takes actions affecting Portland's urban forest. The*

latter interpretation means that UFC often works in conjunction with UF but not exclusively with UF. But it should be noted that UFC is not allowed to send any document or recommendation as a body to any entity outside of City of Portland bureaus or elected officials without the expressed review and approval of the Portland Office of Governmental Relations.

8. The Design Review Advisory Committee (DRAC) is seeking new members. *I think it meets weekly at 8 am via Zoom on Thursday.* This committee reviews private property developments. It could be very helpful to have someone on DRAC who is a tree advocate.
9. UF is currently recruiting for a Tree Planting specialist.
10. At future UFC meetings, PP&R UF hopes to provide more information about the programs and services carried out by its staff.
11. The August UFC meeting agenda will likely include:
 - a) presentation by PBOT staff on the 82nd Avenue Project,
 - b) possibly more discussion on the ongoing UFC Community Agreement item.
12. In September two potential items are:
 - a) the 122nd Avenue Project (*PBOT or some other bureau?*),
 - b) PP&R presentation on the North Portland Aquatics Project,
 - c) possibly the UFC Community Agreement item

10:00 Appeals Board Appointments Brian Landoe Analyst III, (PP&R UF)

The Appeals Board needs to have 5 members, all from the UFC. Current members are UFC members Feldstein, Nelson, and Plack. UFC Commissioner Feldstein chairs the Appeals Board. Two additional UFC members have volunteered to serve on the board but need to be approved by UFC. UFC members Derily Bechthold and Casey Clapp were nominated and approved to join the UFC Appeals Board.

10:05 Urban Canopy Status and Potential Jeff Ramsey, UF Science and Policy Coordinator.

Ramsey supervises a small team at PP&R UF that works to characterize Portland's urban forest through its research of conditions and activities. The purpose of this presentation is to inform UFC members of a UF group's tasks, focusing on tree canopy coverage. Ramsey came to UF after having gone through the Tree Steward training program (put on annually by PP&R UF) in 2010. He is a geographer by training, and is now a certified arborist through his initiative and PP&R UF support. His work to help better describe where the existing tree canopy is in Portland helps PP&R UF better target areas that need additional canopy.

Samantha Wolf is a new UF staff member, as of today, and was present at this meeting. Part of her work includes staffing the Heritage Tree Committee for PP&R UF. Her other work responsibilities are still being worked out.

Ramsey showed an informative slide listing the various working groups within PP&R UF and the staff who work in each. *This is very useful information to have if you wish to know who to contact on a specific issue. However, in general, PP&R UF wants you to call 503.823.TREE and let them direct you to the appropriate person if they can't answer the question.*

Even though trees provide a lot of infrastructure services (shade, air cleaning, storm water capture, prolonged life of asphalt or concrete from shading, wildlife habitat, mental and physical health services for humans, and traffic calming, for example) these are very challenging to put a dollar figure on. *This is why the City does not currently consider trees as a capital asset that can be improved through the use of capital improvement bond money.* Tree canopy in Portland is used as a citywide metric for measuring environmental health. Canopy cover is mentioned in the City's Comprehensive Plan and in its Climate Action Plan. The listed canopy goal for Portland is to have 1/3 of the area of the city of Portland under tree canopy.

Data that PP&R UF has developed suggests that Portland has the potential to have a citywide canopy cover of 52%. For comparison, Pittsburg currently has a canopy coverage of ~40%. Their citywide canopy goal is 60%.

Currently 80% of Portland residents live east of the Willamette River, where the average canopy is well below 25%.

Ramsey's team uses data from Metro's 2019 Lidar fly-overs of Portland, along with other data gathered by PP&R UF. In a few weeks PP&R UF will be coming out with something they call TREE CANOPY EXPLORER for the Portland metro area. This will focus on parks and will be helpful in identifying areas where trees could be planted. The map may also help clarify where there has been canopy loss between 2014 and 2019.

PP&R UF has tree canopy cover data for Portland from 1972 – 2020. Sources include research by Joe Porasky and his PSU students (*Porasky was a member of UFC some years ago, was on the PSU faculty in the Geography Department, and was the researcher who identified what has become known as "the Friends of*

Trees effect” – increased canopy in areas in northeast and southeast Portland where Friends of Trees did volunteer street tree plantings for many years), PP&R UF research, and METRO.

1972	~25% canopy cover
2002	27% canopy cover
2014	31/5 canopy cover
2020	30.7% canopy cover
2022	29.8% canopy cover

PP&R UF data suggests canopy loss is across all zone types in the most recent years. Ramsey explains the increase in canopy from 1972 – 2020 as indicative of increased environmental concerns and related to the canopy growth from trees already planted. He also thought that there has been decline since 2014 for reasons that are not completely understood. During this time period Title 11 was enacted and that has led to saving many trees. Canopy loss in high-canopy areas seems to have been offset by the growth of the remaining trees. It seems likely that more canopy loss is occurring in areas with already low tree canopy. The result is an increase in inequitable tree canopy distribution within Portland.

Portland’s urban forest today is made up of 20% of one genus, *Acer*. These maples represent many different species (*most likely Acer rubrum, Acer saccharum, Acer saccharinum, Acer macrophyllum, Acer circinatum, Acer griseum, and crosses of different maples*). Members of the Rosaceae family represent 20% of the trees in Portland (crabapples, flowering plums, flowering cherries and others).

There is a notably uneven canopy distribution within the city. Ramsey expects that the results of the current survey of trees on public right-of-way (ROW) space and city-developed parks (*done primarily by Urban Forestry staff, unlike in 2011-2016, when volunteers were heavily involved*) will show a gain in the number of trees present. Early survey work to date supports this belief.

PP&R UF is strongly committed to planting a more diverse urban forest as a means to address future challenges to our trees. There is also a strong interest in using data gathered on street tree stocking level as a means to better pinpoint areas needing ROW trees. Often older parks have trees planted at about the same time and they are likely to decline about the same time. To address this situation in both parks and ROW plantings, it is important to develop green plans that include succession installation of appropriate trees. In general, parks have less diverse selection of trees but have bigger and healthier trees than those in the ROW.

Valuable information is available for trees on private land in Portland through the US Forest Service's MY CITY TREES, Urban Forest Inventory Analysis:
<https://mct.tfs.tamu.edu/>

Questions and Comments from UFC Members

--Commissioner Roberta Jortner: Is PP&R UF looking at forecasts relative to tree canopy in Portland? It is likely that trees in ROW space will be smaller than what currently exists, as older large trees die that are currently not on the approved list. If they are replaced it will be by smaller form trees.

Ramsey replied that we do have data on the width of all streets and what trees are currently there. *(He did not say that PP&R UF knows how many trees currently in the ROW space are oversized or undersized for their particular width.)*

City Forester Cairo reminded UFC members that tree-friendly design is very critical for increasing the space in ROW. This is an area that PP&R UF continues to explore with other bureaus.

--Commissioner Van de Mark: Do you have any suggestions for what UFC should target as our priorities, relative to our urban forest?

Ramsey replied that we know today where we lack trees. We also know about the urban heat areas in Portland. We also know that we have plenty of open space that could be used for tree planting.

City Forester Cairo reiterated that DESIGN is an important consideration. She hopes there will be comprehensive modification to address this. Additionally, work done on tree code compliance should help better address the need to get appropriate trees planted in ROW space.

--Commissioner Plack thought that development is creating challenges for trees. How do you get greenspace in denser residential areas? What levers can UFC push? Would mini-parks work?

Ramsey thinks we are losing canopy outside of development. His data suggests that it is not development that explains our current canopy loss.

--Commissioner Misner wondered if there is any thought to removing trees that are too small a form for the ROW space they are in and replacing them with more appropriate trees.

Ramsey stated that our best trees are the ones alive today and PP&R UF would not initiate a program to remove healthy ROW trees just because they are undersized for the ROW space.

--Co-chair Feldstein wondered if PP&R UF is doing a deep dive into why we are losing canopy coverage now.

The response from Ramsey was essentially that this is being looked at but at the moment PP&R UF does not have a decision on this.

UFC Community Agreement discussion Derily Bechthold, UFC member
UFC member Derily Bechthold thanked fellow members Roberta Jortner and J.R. Lilly for working on the current draft of the UFC Community Agreement. This document was sent to UFC members prior to the meeting. At this meeting further discussion occurred about the document.

Commissioner Lilly said that “calling in” members is a positive approach to help UFC members focus on the issue at hand and to work for solutions and understanding.

Commissioner Iheanacho wanted to know who to send edits to. Commissioner Bechthold said to send them to UFC members Bechthold, Jortner, and Lilly. Commissioner Iheanacho also would like to see better wording for the bullet point that currently says “Assume positive intent when people comment. Positive intent means believing and trusting that others come into the conversation with a genuine intent to contribute, not to harm or derail because we are all here to do good work.” Commissioner Lilly stated that all UFC members will need to learn together exactly how to appropriately “call in” one another.

Commissioner Van de Mark believes that community agreements evolve over time. She thinks that reading community agreements at the start of meetings is a good grounding for participants.

Co-chair Feldstein wondered how we stop activity that is disruptive, abusive, or threatening. How do we stop discriminatory language and behavior?

Commissioner Lilly believes the chair should have this responsibility.

Commissioner Plack stated that sometimes what is considered disruptive behavior is subjective. There are times when it is appropriate to be disruptive.

Commissioner Bechthold thinks the term “disruptive” should refer to behavior that attributes certain characteristics to a person who is part of some group, i.e., race, sex, ethnicity.

Commissioner Lilly stresses that our guidelines on behavior should be in tune with our values. There are some governance documents at the City level that define what inappropriate behavior is. *I couldn't find anything easily online that deals with inappropriate behavior.*

Commissioner Misner does not agree with everything in the draft UFC Community Agreement. He felt like this document is merely “slapping a band aid” on the problems recently encountered within UFC meetings. He considers this Community Agreement to be merely “performative.”

City Forester Cairo shared that the City does have a document on appropriate behavior. *I think what she is referring to is listed below.*

<https://www.portland.gov/sites/default/files/2022/guide-for-volunteer-boards-and-commissions.pdf>

Co-Chair Felstein called for a motion to end the meeting since it was 11:30 a.m. That motion was seconded and passed.

Next Urban Forestry Commission Meeting:

The next UFC meeting will be 9:30 am – 11:30 am, August 17, 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/events/2023/2/16/urban-forestry-commission-meeting>