

TO: Neighborhood Tree Team members and Portland tree advocates  
FROM: Bruce Nelson, Cully Tree Team 11 August 2022  
RE: Portland Urban Forestry Commission Meeting July 21, 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 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=PL1ToXf0RSV44U3FpC0nwIUqtFOMFuIxMY>

The decisions made at these meetings may affect volunteer tree advocacy and influence Urban Forestry division processes and actions. If you do not wish to receive this 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, 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, July 21, 2022, 9:30 a.m. – 11:35 a.m as a Zoom meeting due to COVID-19 demands.

**UFC Members Present** - Vivek Shandas (chair), Adrienne Feldstein, Ivory Iheanacho (late), Roberta Jortner, Melinda McMillan, Bruce Nelson, Daniel Newberry, Leah Plack, Megan Van de Mark

**UFC Commissioners Absent** - Anjeanette Brown,

**Urban Forestry (UF) Staff Present** – Jenn Cairo (City Forester, Portland Parks and Recreation (PP&R), UF division); Ashley Reese (Administrative Specialist II, PP&R, UF division)

**City Attorney’s Office** – No one was present

**Other City Staff** - Melissa Arnold (Community Engagement Manager, PP&R); Tim Collier (Community Relations Manager, PP&R)

**Other presenters** - Kathryn Jarrell (Future Work Design)

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

After reading the recent OPB story “Portland’s unfriendly treatment of Friends of Trees” by April Ehrlich, Larry Sanders asked how UFC members felt about being lied to by the City Forester, clearly a violation of the public trust.

Tim Collier replied that there were misquotes in the OPB article and other misleading or inaccurate information.

Megan was not pleased in the way the City responded to the article.

Bruce was dismayed to learn some of the information presented in the article and wished that more information had been communicated from UF staff directly to UFC.

Daniel said that there was not sufficient time at this meeting to discuss this situation. His inclination is to give Jenn the benefit of the doubt.

Vivek said he does not wish to rush this issue. It is very important for UF and UFC to have the public trust. His hope is that information presented in the article may be explored in the future.

Adrienne looks forward to a deep discussion about how UFC and UF can work effectively with many diverse tree organizations over time.

Vivek pointed out that all public comments are brought to UFC, even those presented in writing. He encourages members of the public to come to UFC with their comments. He expressed hope that there will be time on the agenda to allow for more discussion of this matter. He thanked Larry for his testimony.

#### **9:45 a.m. - Minutes review and approval**

Minutes from the March 17, 2022, April 21, 2022, and May 19, 2022 meetings were reviewed and accepted as amended.

#### **9:52 a.m. – City Forester’s Report, Jenn Cairo (City Forester, PP&R, UF division)**

1. Daniel Newberry is serving on the PP&R task force that is looking at potential long-term funding for various PP&R needs, including street tree maintenance and also capital maintenance. The PP&R levy passed in November 2020 expires June 30, 2026. The group is being led by Todd Lofgren (Deputy Director, PP&R). One meeting has been held already and two more are scheduled. To date, no substantive decisions have been made. *I don’t have any more information about this group, nor could I find information online.*
2. Jenn reported that the emerald ash borer (EAB) has been detected in Oregon. This wood-boring beetle’s larval stage feeds on the wood of ash (*Fraxinus* spp.), olive (*Olea* spp.), and fringetree (*Chionanthus* spp, *all in the same taxonomic family Oleaceae.*

*The following web sites provide more information on the biology of this serious threat to our ash, olive and fringe trees.*

<https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/ourfocus/planthealth/plant-pest-and-disease-programs/pests-and-diseases/emerald-ash-borer>

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emerald\\_ash\\_borer](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emerald_ash_borer)

Portland has about 95,000 ash trees, 74% of which are in natural areas (*Fraxinus latifolia*, Oregon white ash). Only 4% of Portland’s street trees and 3% of park trees are in the genus *Fraxinus*. The expectation is that all of these trees will be killed by EAB in time. *Although the numbers on street trees are relatively low, it is*

*a common practice to plant many trees of the same species on a street or for a specific property. For example, in a 2011 planting done as part of a road improvement project in the Cully neighborhood along Cully Boulevard, many street trees were added. Most of them were ashes or birches. Now those look like very poor selections for long-term survival. A number of the birches have already died from bronze birch borer. The ashes look very good at the moment, but their days are numbered due to the detected nearby presence of EAB beetles. In this one example alone, a 10-block street of Cully Boulevard will lose most of its shade trees within the foreseeable future. It is likely this same situation will happen in other areas of the city. It seems appropriate for Urban Forestry to start planning now for how to address this new challenge. It also seems apparent that planting a limited set of species trees along any stretch of road is potentially problematic. It must be about diversity, diversity, diversity, even on a street-by-street basis.*

3. No date is yet set for the Portland City Council to consider the technical amendments to Title 11 brought forward by UF after considerable input from staff, other bureaus, UFC, and interested Portlanders. An earlier scheduled date for consideration of these amendments was eliminated.
4. Recruitment is continuing to find two additional UFC members. Two positions are now vacant (Anjeanette has agreed to serve until a replacement for her is appointed) and at least two more spots will need filling after February 2023. Jenn is hoping she can recruit interested applicants from the housing development industry as well as low-income residents.
5. There is no new information on Streets 2035 or on the Water Bureau's Administrative Rule update.
6. At the August UFC meeting, one agenda item will be an update on PP&R Sustainable Futures work.
7. PBOT is working on a Master Transportation Plan for 122<sup>nd</sup> Avenue. One option being considered is placing a median strip, which will include trees.
8. UF staff provided extensive input on the Pedestrian Design Guide that has been adopted as an administrative rule by PBOT. There are many features in this document that will be beneficial to urban trees. One of them is the standard recommendation to use a 6' wide furnishing zone on "local" streets. "Local" is one category of street types used by PBOT. Tree wells now are to be 9' long as opposed to the 6' of the past.
9. At the request of a UFC member, Jenn reported the demographics of UF's staff:
  - In July 2012, 6% of the staff were people of color. As of May 2022, that portion rose to 30%.
  - In 2012, 19% of staff were women. As of May 2022, that portion rose to 28%.
  - Currently 50% of managers are female and 25% are people of color.

10. UF is recruiting to fill various job openings including Tree Inspectors (closing date August 8), Tree Technicians (closing date August 25), and Arborists III and IV, both tree-climbing positions (closing date August 29).
11. The Portland Climate Emergency Work Plan recently went to City Council, which heard public testimony. The Council will vote on the Plan, brought forward by Commissioner Rubio, in late August or September.

<https://www.portland.gov/bps/climate-action/climate-emergency/climate-emergency-workplan>

Written testimony can be presented to the Council prior to August 24, 10:25 a.m. at [cctestimony@portlandoregon.gov](mailto:cctestimony@portlandoregon.gov). Web information shows this item coming to City Council on August 24<sup>th</sup> at 9:55 a.m. for a 30-minute time period.

Roberta wondered if it would be appropriate for the Policy Committee to draft a response on behalf of the UFC on the draft Climate Plan. Jenn thought this might be a good idea. She will forward the City Council resolution and the draft Climate Emergency Work Plan to UFC members. UFC agreed to have the Policy Committee draft a letter, send it to Vivek, then have Vivek submit the written testimony on behalf of UFC.

**10:06 a.m. Healthy Parks Healthy Portland; Melissa Arnold (Community Engagement Manager, PP&R); Kathryn Jarrell (Future Work Design)**

Melissa gave an overview of the Healthy Parks, Healthy Portland initiative. The effort, with contracted assistance from Future Work Design, focuses on PP&R reexamining and redefining its mission, vision, and values as a means to guide its programs and future work. Information is being gathered from staff, park users, and groups, one of which is the UFC. (PP&R considers this “foundational work in reimagining as a power sharing bureau.”)

For an hour during the meeting, via a software program called Menti, which tallies and summarizes responses, UFC members were asked a series of questions, the same ones being asked of others as part of this initiative. The process started with a light-weight ice breaker question, then each respondent was asked about demographics and about potential missions, values, and actions that can help guide PP&R. Background information on this PP&R effort is available at <https://www.portland.gov/parks/healthy-parks>. I understand that this is an

*important initiative of PP&R. The questions asked seemed to have little relevance to the urban forest. Perhaps some very powerful change and good results will follow.*

Melissa said that the findings from their listening sessions will be shared in a report, hopefully by year's end. Any questions can be directed to her at [melissa.arnold@portlandoregon.gov](mailto:melissa.arnold@portlandoregon.gov).

**11:15 a.m. Tree Planting Update Jenn Cairo (City Forester)**

Jenn shared information that UFC and the public needs to know about the recent media coverage of tree planting, UF, the Bureau of Environmental Services' Tree Planting Program, and Friends of Trees.

UF manages and regulates Portland's urban forest. That role is assigned to UF by the Tree Code, Title 11. When City Commissioner Nick Fish was assigned the responsibility of overseeing both the Bureau of Environmental Services and PP&R (*in 2018*), he hoped to facilitate a coordinated relationship between managers in the two bureaus. This also was an opportunity to streamline city-delivered services in the area of tree planting supported by City dollars. No written intergovernmental agreement was developed. UF currently uses contractors to plant trees as part of its "Opt-Out" program.

Megan asked when it would be possible to hear from all groups engaged in tree planting that receive City funds.

Daniel thought there are a lot of issues that have arisen over the past two years when both UF and the Bureau of Environmental Services' Tree Planting program have modified their tree planting activities. Daniel would like to see the Request For Proposals (RFP) going out from UF for tree planting. He appreciates the need for competitive bidding and the desire for more BIPOC contractor bidders as part of the City's commitment to better address its contracting procedure. He hopes for more rapid progress on the RFPs.

Vivek would like to have more discussion time on this item at our next UFC meeting. Hopefully Brian will have a summary of the UFC goals meeting held in early June.

**Next UFC Meeting:** The next meeting will be 9:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m., August 18, 2022, via Zoom. Check the link below prior to the meeting for the agenda, meeting

materials, and how you can gain access, at

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