

TO: Neighborhood Tree Team members and Portland tree advocates
FROM: Bruce Nelson, Cully Tree Team 6 September 2023
RE: Portland Urban Forestry Commission Meeting August 17, 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 17 August 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, Casey Clapp, Ivory Iheanacho, J.R. Lilly, Justin Misner, Melinda McMillan, Bruce Nelson, and Megan Van de Mark

UFC Commissioners Absent Leah Plack

PP&R UF Staff Present Casey Jogerst, Acting City Forester, Manager for Permitting and Regulation (PP&R UF); Brian Landoe, Strategy and Planning Manager (PP&R UF); Angie DiSalvo, Science, Education and Planting Manager (PP&R UF)

Other City Staff: David Granfield, Regenerative Agriculture and Green Infrastructure Manager, Portland Clean Energy Fund (PCEF); Jaimes Valdez, Organization and Development Manager, PCEF; Nicole Pierce, Capital Project Manager, Portland Bureau of Transportation (PBOT)

9:30 Public Comments: Felice Kelly, a member of 350 PDX's Forest Team, testified on behalf of the importance of green infrastructure:

This is especially important now that we are increasingly aware that people in Portland die when we get really hot weather. It seems particularly inappropriate that Governor Kotek's Housing Production Advisory Council (HPAC) work group is proposing to gut local tree codes as a means to hasten housing production throughout Oregon. This proposal threatens to reduce canopy at a time when more canopy, not less, is essential. We need to better prepare for the climate crisis we are in. Please reach out to the governor to stress the importance of tree canopy.

9:40 Meeting Minutes Approval Minutes from the June 15, 2023 UFC meeting were approved with the edit suggestions from co-chair Jortner and Commissioners Misner and Nelson.

9:45 City Forester’s Report Casey Jogerst, Acting City Forester, Permitting and Regulations Manager (PP&R UF)

1. There has been recent coverage on the demise of trees that PBOT planted as part of a project in the Mill Park area. These trees were planted and maintained by a contractor for one year only. The contract expired after that year, and no further maintenance occurred. PP&R UF was not involved in this project at all. <https://www.wweek.com/news/2023/08/09/trees-planted-by-the-city-in-east-portland-two-years-ago-are-dead-because-the-city-didnt-water-them/>
2. PP&R UF is looking to hire for several open positions – Tree Planting Specialist, and Code Specialist. The latter will provide administrative support for the Permitting and Regulations team that Acting City Forester Jogerst manages. <https://www.portland.gov/parks/employment>
3. PP&R is leading a multi-bureau look at how the natural resources of Portland could be managed as part of the City government reorganization that will occur as mandated by a voter-approved ballot measure that includes: a city manager, 12 district-elected city commissioners, and the cessation of oversight by elected City Commissioners and the Mayor of city bureaus. This PP&R-led multi-bureau group is working on “Natural Resources Programmatic Delivery.” Angie DiSalvo is PP&R UF’s liaison to this group. At an August 8 Portland Parks Board meeting a presentation was given on the progress of this group.

I attended this August 8 meeting as an observer from the Urban Forestry Commission. Attendees included City Commissioner Dan Ryan’s Chief of Staff Kellie Torres (Commissioner Ryan oversees PP&R); Dawn Uchiyama, Director, Bureau of Environmental Services (BES); Chenoa Philabaum, Community Partnerships Division Manager (BES); Jenn Cairo, City Forester, PP&R-UF; Adena Long, Director, PP&R; and Claudio Campuzano, Finance, Property and Technology Manager, PP&R. Most of the 2-hour meeting focused on the report of the consultants on their review of the natural resources currently under management by any Portland city bureau, with suggestions on how to address management of these resources. The three consulting firms contracted to assist in this endeavor are:

ECO Northwest (Chris Wallace Caldwell)

<https://econw.com/>

New Theory Consulting (Jamila Dozier)
<https://www.newtheoryconsultingllc.com/>

Catalysis LLC (Becky Stickler) <https://catalysisllc.com/>

The process involves:

- facilitating a series of workshops with appropriate bureau directors, key city staff, and subject matter experts;*
- identifying a preliminary vision, including problems, opportunities, scope of work and “Blue Sky” scenario;*
- conducting an inventory assessment across the five bureaus managing natural resources--PP&R, BES, Portland Water Bureau (PWB), PBOT, and the Bureau of Planning and Sustainability (BPS)-that includes programs and money allocated;*
- reviewing a natural resources inventory conducted by ECO Northwest;*
- holding conversations with advisory groups;*
- conducting follow-up surveys*

I believe two meetings have been held between high-level city staff in which posters were created to show visions of what an integrated resource service delivery model for Portland looks like. This involved identifying problems and opportunities at a very high level. There is unclear ownership of natural resource services since responsibilities are distributed across several bureaus. It is not clear what the best route is to identify and integrate community needs and expectations, relative to natural resources. Redundancies and inefficiencies exist in city management of natural resources. It is difficult for members of the public to navigate the City’s natural resource management system.

This inventory of City natural resources will not include the Bull Run Watershed or natural resource projects initiated and facilitated on private property within Portland. No reasons were given for these exclusions.

*A “BLUE SKY” brainstorming session was held on April 21, 2023, at a Natural Resource Delivery Workshop. On August 1, 2023, ECO Northwest presented its **City of Portland Natural Resource Service Delivery Assessment Inventory**.
<https://www.portland.gov/pub/documents/natural-resources-service-delivery-assessment-update/download>*

Becky Stickler shared that she reviewed 141 documents from PP&R, BES, BPS, PBOT, and PWB. This included memoranda, maps, budgets and more to better understand the intra- and inter-bureau agreements regarding natural resource

management. The Catalysis focus was on how governmental decisions can be improved. Their draft suggestions were reviewed by bureau directors, then revised, and a final report was issued. Catalysis staff felt there was incomplete information to adequately understand the ways bureaus work with each other.

The topic areas reviewed included access to nature, environmental education, natural resource stewardship, climate resilience, environmental planning, fish and wildlife, urban canopy, and vegetation remediation, along with others. Many areas of cooperation between bureaus exist in these areas.

It is expected that the Portland Clean Energy Fund will be funneling a lot of resources into climate resilient actions that include natural resource management within Portland.

Regarding the Portland urban tree canopy, the four bureaus most involved with this are PP&R, BES, PBOT, and PWB. Portland has about 2.9 million trees on private property and 1.2 million trees on public property, which includes 218,000 trees in the right-of-way space.

The main challenges identified by the consultant groups included:

-Attaining greater efficiencies in delivery of activities by reducing costs through reduced staff time or reduced service time;

-Producing a more equitable delivery of natural resource-related programs and service;

-Delivering a higher quality of service relative to natural resource management.

The consultant teams identified five possible opportunities or options that Portland could pursue as part of the upcoming charter reform for its approach to natural resource management:

-- Keep the current organizational structure while working to increase equity, and while staying true to Portland core values.

-- Consolidate equitable delivery of natural area services into one organizational unit.

-- Consolidate equitable delivery of green stormwater infrastructure services into one organizational unit.

-- Consolidate equitable delivery of urban canopy services into one organizational unit.

--Consolidate equitable delivery of natural resources services, green stormwater infrastructure services, and urban canopy services into one organizational unit.

The consultants will look at what different communities across the US are doing in regards to natural resource management and what is working, what is not, and why.

4. For two years a City Task Force has been looking at means to expedite the permitting process for new developments on private property. A proposal will come to Portland City Council on August 30th pertaining to this topic. *It passed Council on Wednesday August 30. The link is below*

<https://www.portland.gov/council/documents/resolution/adopted/37628>

It is not completely clear how this will affect PP&R UF's Permitting and Regulation operations.

5. Brian Landoe shared more information pertaining to HPAC activity, which was addressed earlier in the meeting by the public testimony of Felice Kelly. On August 8, 2023, staff from various cities in Oregon including Portland met with state officials (*I'm not sure if it was the Governor's office or HPAC*) to present information on how city regulations affect trees and construction. In Portland most high-density housing occurs on lots where much of the tree code does not apply. In Portland, city staff said, trees are not a significant obstacle to building housing, especially -density and affordable housing. PP&R and BES both plan on submitting responses to the Governor in opposition to the current proposals being suggested by a workgroup within HPAC. If UFC wishes to express any public statement on this matter, it will need to be cleared by the Portland Office of Government Relations. <https://www.portland.gov/ogr>

Commissioner Van de Mark stated that too often statements are made that it is either housing or trees. However, the two are both necessary and go together.

Commissioner Misner wondered how much housing this HPAC proposal would apply to in Portland. Brian replied that it would only affect a very small percentage of development projects.

Commissioner Nelson proposed that the Policy Committee work on a draft letter addressed to the Governor to bring to the September UFC meeting. This proposal was accepted by UFC.

10:00 PBOT's 82nd Avenue Crossings Project Nicole Pierce, Capital Project Manager, PBOT; Brandon Namm, Tree Inspector, PP&R UF

Manager Pierce is the lead in the PBOT project **Building a Better 82nd Avenue**. This project has come about as part of the transfer of 82nd Avenue from an Oregon State Highway to Portland in summer 2022. As part of this transfer, various safety improvements have been done and more are in the planning or construction phase. There is quite a large backlog of maintenance necessary along this 7+ mile stretch of 82nd Avenue extending from NE Killingsworth /Lombard to SE Clatsop Street. Most of the neighborhoods abutting 82nd Avenue contain a diverse population. 82nd Avenue is a high transit-use road. The bus line, #72, is one of TriMet's highest usership routes. There has been extensive community input solicited and given to PBOT about the needs and wants of local residents, business owners, and others. In survey work done by PBOT, trees consistently ranked very high in terms of community needs.

The current phase is addressing crossing 82nd Avenue safely at various locations. This is being done by:

- Installing six new signalized pedestrian crossings on 82nd Avenue, at NE Beech, NE Klickitat, NE Schuyler, SE Clinton, SE Ash, and SE Schiller. Federal American Recovery Act funding (\$80 million) is being used for this work, which must be completed by 2026.
- Installing tree medians as part of each crossing. There will be about 6 trees in each median. PBOT, PP&R UF, and BES are working together to coordinate what trees can be used, how many, who cares for them during and after establishment, and where they can go. BES has concerns about trees being within 10' of a sewer line, as they want clear access to sewer lines in case of the need for repair.
- Providing improved street lighting along all of 82nd Avenue.

Brandon Namm is the lead PP&R UF staff person on this project. He works primarily on Capital Improvement projects for PP&R UF. To date, much of their efforts have been around the medians being planned. PP&R UF has developed a list of acceptable trees for this project, is recommending that ground cover also be used in the medians, and that silva-cells or structural soil be used in the medians. The tree list was developed bearing in mind the limited amount of soil volume that will be accessible for the trees, the large amount of reflected heat that will be coming off of the road surface, the likely drought stress that will exist in the median, and the need to include trees adapted to changing climatic conditions.

The current approved list of trees (deciduous and evergreen) was presented. *The online sharing of this list was too small for me to see all of it. I do not currently have a link to the list. It did include some evergreen oaks.* Tree Inspector Namm shared that he was looking for trees that do well in California, as projections are

that within the next 25 to 50 years Portland will have a climate similar to that of current Sacramento. The list includes trees that could greatly assist in increasing tree diversity along 82nd. *Currently about 80% of the street trees along 82nd are maples and flowering pears.*

Comments and Questions from UFC members

Commissioner Nelson would like to see tree diversity represented at each pedestrian crossing. He wonders why the plan is calling for 6 of the same tree selection at an individual crossing. Why not diversify at the micro-level so that if a specific pest comes in it would not necessarily take out all the trees at a particular crossing. Tree Inspector Namm thought that was worth considering.

Commissioner Nelson wants to know who will do maintenance for these trees.
Response: Short term is PBOT and long term is PP&R UF.

Commissioner Bechtold: Are there any power lines of concern?

Response: There are no power lines in the middle of the road where the medians will be. Tree selections do take into account the power lines on both sides of 82nd Avenue.

Co-chair Jortner: How can UFC assist in this project? Manager Pierce: PBOT will talk internally about this.

Commissioner Clapp: Is it possible to plant more evergreen trees? Would it be possible to somehow plant them in the right-of-way space? It is important that trees remain a portion of whatever the final long-term plans are for 82nd.

Commissioner Lilly: How many trees in total are to be planted at these 6 pedestrian crossings? Response: 26 median trees and 15 street trees.

Co-chair Feldstein: Thank you very much for addressing the strongly communicated concerns regarding safety. It seems that street trees remain an afterthought in this process. How can this planning process and the end result proactively include trees? Manager Pierce replied that trees are very important.

10:30 Portland Clean Energy Fund Equitable Tree Canopy Initiative Update
David Granfield, Regenerative Agriculture and Green Infrastructure Manager, Portland Clean Energy Fund (PCEF); Jaimes Valdez, Organization and Development Manager, PCEF

Manager Granfield briefly reviewed the history of PCEF. In November 2018, Portland voters passed a measure that called for taxing larger corporations a set amount annually to fund community-powered climate solutions. The measure has been generating considerably more funds than were originally anticipated. Also, the heat dome occurred in 2021. Both have led the PCEF team to be more strategic in its funding efforts, including support for tree planting. Many members of the public have been asking for more tree planting programs to be funded by PCEF.

In fall 2022, PCEF changed its procedures to allow it to broaden where money can be awarded. This change allowed potential recipients to include government entities and private businesses. Previously, PCEF funding had only been available to non-profit entities. The rationale for this change was to allow more money to be awarded on an annual basis. Regarding tree planting and other tree-related activities, PCEF staff have been working with PP&R UF to develop a plan for PCEF-funded tree-related activities.

To date, PCEF has awarded ~\$12 million to community non-profits for green infrastructure planning and implementation. But PCEF wants to spend \$80 million over the next few years. This will require large-scale community tree plantings. For this to happen, in the opinion of PCEF, there is a need for greater city support. *I assume this means support from PP&R UF and possibly the BES Tree Planting program.* It is PCEF's goal to focus these tree planting/maintenance activities in areas that currently have low tree canopy, are high summer heat areas *and areas with higher population diversity and lower per capita annual incomes.*

PCEF wants all tree planting activities to include tree maintenance for a 5-year period. During this establishment period, PCEF funding should be used for activities after planting - like watering, mulching, weed control, and structural pruning so that a high percentage of the trees will successfully establish. The PCEF goal is to fund the planting of 15,000 trees over the next 5 years. This will require a period of ramping up by PP&R UF.

PCEF is also in the process of establishing a needs-based tree maintenance fund to help low-income property owners maintain existing mature trees. *I assume this means on public and private property so both street and yard trees can be addressed.*

PCEF staff have engaged in a variety of forms of public engagement to help it get to its current approach toward tree-related funding. For the past 18 months it has received input and thought on how best to design a tree planting and tree

maintenance program. This has included 5 different round table discussions with selected individuals and 2 open public comment periods. PCEF staff have participated in the Shade Equity Coalition. Many community groups have also given PCEF feedback on potential tree-related activities.

A PCEF tree workgroup will be formed to serve in an advisory function for PCEF-funded tree-related activities. The workgroup will:

- Evaluate tree program data received relevant to goals for PCEF funding;
- Prioritize tree planting/maintenance in specific geographic areas;
- Develop the Request for Proposals (RFP);
- Review outcomes of various funded programs;
- Monitor PCEF's efforts to fund tree-related programs.

It is anticipated that this workgroup will have 9 to–11 members. The contact lead for this group will be PP&R UF. Members of the committee will include individuals from BES, UFC, PCEF, research/academia, community stakeholders, implementation partners, and additional invited individual participants. PCEF staff will oversee the operation of the work group.

The PCEF Equitable Tree Canopy initiative will be ramping up over the next two years. Funds will be channeled through PP&R UF, which will coordinate and support in various ways both non-profits and commercial entities in grant proposals selected by PCEF. The timeline for projects is 5 years.

Questions and Comments from UFC Commissioners

Commissioner Misner wondered if any PCEF funds that are part of the Equitable Tree Canopy initiative will be available for sidewalk repair from street tree damage. Manager Granfield said no.

Commissioner Clapp noted that the newer street tree planting lists have eliminated many of the trees that commonly cause sidewalk damage. What exactly is the role of PP&R UF in this Equitable Tree Canopy initiative? Manager Granfield said the contract details between PCEF and PP&R UF are still being worked out.

Commissioner Nelson wondered how much money PCEF is paying PP&R UF to allow them to figure out how to manage its PCEF responsibilities. Manager Granfield did not answer the question. Manager Landoe said this involves multiple contracts, workforce development, and developing programs.

Commissioner Van de Mark wondered if scaling up programs available to non-profits is a possibility. Is there a separate process for non-profits? Manager Granfield said that this is a capacity issue for both profit and non-profit contactors. PCEF is really hoping to have workforce development work be an important component of the fall/winter round of grant applications.

Manager Valdez reminded UFC that the workgroup will help shape the development allocations in round #3 of grant applications. There will be a \$5 million allocation for existing mature trees. There will likely be some allocation for 82nd Avenue.

Commissioner Bechthold thinks that the timeline for work in the Equitable Tree Equity initiative is quite fast and she appreciates that. Manager Valdez added that the budget needs to include a 5-year maintenance program for all newly planted trees. There is currently no expiration time for PCEF.

Co-chair Jortner noted that it is often very hard for smaller non-profits and commercial businesses to meet city contract requirements. Manager Granfield (*or was it Manager Valdez?*) said that PCEF staff have experience in working with small contractors. This has involved educational outreach to contractors explaining what is involved. Sometimes a small group may start out with a very limited PCEF-funded project. PCEF has a wide range in amounts that it has awarded to date. This can be very helpful to smaller entities. The term “umbrella type of contracts” was used.

Commissioner Bechthold shared that it is not uncommon in contracts to request that larger contractors give selective preferences to smaller entities (private and non-profit).

Co-chair Feldstein wondered how PCEF helps smaller entities build their capacity to allow them to participate in PCEF funding. Manager Granfield said assistance sometimes includes funding for equipment and additional administrative staff or helping them use equipment from other sources. Manager DiSalvo of PP&R UF said that PP&R UF tries to provide advice to any contractor new to this arena. Manager Landoe stated that PP&R UF works with small contractors for planting trees. This includes women, minority, and BIPOC enterprises. This allows them to gain experience at planting that can be applicable if they decide to scale up in their grant applications.

Co-chair Feldstein wondered how UFC can be supportive of the work that PCEF is undertaking in this Equitable Tree Canopy initiative. Manager Granfield hopes that once the workgroup is up and running, he will be better able to answer this question.

Manager Jogerst wants to have this workgroup in place for multiple years but that has not yet been determined.

Co-chair Feldstein hoped that UFC can receive timely updates on this PCEF initiative.

Next Urban Forestry Commission Meeting:

The next UFC meeting will be 9:30 am – 11:30 am, September 21, 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>