

TO: Neighborhood Tree Team members and tree advocates
FROM: Bruce Nelson, Cully Tree Team 1.25.20
RE: Portland Urban Forestry Commission Meeting 1.16.20:
Summary and Comments

These two-hour meetings occur on a monthly basis, on the third Thursday of the month at City Hall, usually in the Lovejoy Room. 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 January 16, 2020 in the Lovejoy Room in City Hall, 10:55 am – noon.

Urban Forestry Commissioners Present - Vivek Shandas (Chair), Anjeanette Brown, Gregg Everhart, Brian French, Barbara Hollenbeck, Bruce Nelson, Daniel Newberry, Damon Schrosk, Thuy Tu, Megan van de Mark

Urban Forestry Commissioners Absent -
Lorena Nascimento

Urban Forestry Staff Present - Jenn Cairo (City of Portland Forester),
Brian Landoe (Budget and Programs Analyst)

Deputy City Attorney- none present

Visitor Presenters – Tate White (Senior Planner, Portland Parks and Recreation),
Laurie Matthews (MIG – a consulting firm on design and more), Morgan Holen
(consulting arborist with Morgan Holen and Associates)

Public Comments

A member (I did not get her name) of the Downtown Neighborhood Association Land Use and Transportation Committee testified in support of the South Parks Master Planning Process. The Downtown Neighborhood Association is trying to

get Heritage status for the South Park blocks. This Committee hopes that the planning for the South Park blocks will include retaining the deciduous tree canopy existing today. This provides significant overhead high canopy during the heat of the summer and maximizes light exposure during cloudy winter months.

Minutes Review and Approval: No past minutes were reviewed nor approved.

South Park Blocks Master Plan: Laurie Matthews (MIG) and Morgan Holen (Morgan Holen and Associates)

Laurie presented an overview of the steps to date that had been taken as part of the process to update the South Park blocks design and usage to accommodate the changing city, and the changing environment in and around the park. The South Park Blocks are twelve narrow blocks of green space stretching from SW Salmon to SW Jackson Street (between SW Park and SW Park/9th).

(Put another way, it is the South Park Blocks that go from where the Wednesday Farmers' Market occurs south to the Native American Student and Community Center at PSU).

(It seems like the process used by Parks on a large project like this is to contract out most of the work in the planning and building of the park. MIG is a design firm that originated in the San Francisco area, formed by three designers whose last names start with the letter M or I or G. The company does work in many parts of the country, involving large-scale projects. They currently have a satellite office in Portland.)

Information on the South Parks planning process and decisions can be seen at the website <https://www.portlandoregon.gov/parks/78629>

Community listening sessions have been held to gather information. The site has been analyzed for use patterns, existing hardscape features, and existing vegetation and its health. Historical changes of the South Park blocks have been reviewed. All of this information has been pulled together by the MIG staff and is presented in some sort of visual form at the website previously listed. Urban Forestry Commissioners were also shown some of this information in the presentation.

Morgan Holen (local consulting arborist) did a site analysis of the trees in the South Park blocks in May 2019. She identified trees in the South Park blocks by species, size, and condition (good, fair, poor, or dead). This information is partially shown on the website.

Tree species identification is not available anywhere on the website currently. The South Park Blocks have 382 trees with 22 different species.

- American elms represent 50% of the trees in the South Park blocks.
- 90% of the trees in the South Park blocks are rated as being in fair to good condition.
- There are only 17 younger trees in the South Park blocks. It appears that little structural pruning has been done for these trees.
- Many of the older trees would benefit from pruning.
- Small, young trees have been planted for tree succession reasons to fill spaces that open up as the elms succumb to Dutch elm disease or open spaces created for other reasons. Many of these young trees are shade intolerant and are struggling as they try to get established in the shade of the large elms.
- Maintenance pruning of large trees in close proximity to these small, younger trees (red oaks, lindens, beeches, white oaks) could allow more light to the youngsters which will greatly improve their health.

In reviewing the South Park Blocks, Morgan identified 285 trees worthy of retention, 29 that should be removed for a variety of reasons, and 68 trees that she considered optional (could stay or could be removed if closer examination found significant defects).

In response to questions from the Urban Forestry Commissioners, Morgan and Laurie stated that succession planting and planning for the South Park blocks is a huge challenge. Originally, all of the American elms were planted at the same time and grew together as an urban forest. With the aging of these American elm trees (*planted in 1870s, potential of 300 years of life normally but now rarely more than 100 years*) and the likelihood of Dutch elm disease ultimately killing most of them, it is essential that Portland plan the next life for this vital public space.

Through extensive community and stakeholder engagement, MIG staff have developed 3 different concepts that could form the basis for the South Park Blocks design. They are called

1. Emerald Arrow concept
2. Braided Districts concept
3. Mirrored Chain concept

Each of these draft concepts addresses a) tree plantings and ecological health, b) movement experience (*not sure exactly what this means*), and c) new park features and gateways. All of these factors came out of the Community and Stakeholder meetings and discussions held in 2019.

The Emerald Arrow Concept elements

1. retain the historic spatial character;
2. create a central promenade;
3. keep the rows of elm trees;
4. retain/redistribute cultural district planters;
5. add art periodically throughout park;
6. provide gateways at park endpoints;
7. design tabled (?) intersections and closed streets;
8. include added/existing art and fountains + renovated Smith Amphitheater;
9. provide the Green Loop along Park Avenue West.

The Braided Districts Concept elements

1. create sequential related woven spaces and enhance corners;
2. increase tree variety that includes the aesthetic qualities of added trees;
3. retain/expand the Cultural District planters;
4. add art to Cultural District closed streets;
5. create terminus at Native American Community and Student Center;
6. narrow roads to shorten street crossing distances, close streets;
7. install interactive play features;
8. highlight distinct three district identities (Cultural institutions, Neighborhood housing, University -Portland State University);
9. allow the Green Loop along the perimeter with diagonal connections.

The Mirrored Chain Concept elements

1. promote a special organization that is block by block in response to the immediate context;
2. design a diagonal "x" pattern for the pedestrian experience;
3. plant a biodiverse tree canopy including conifers;
4. reconfigure areas to include diagonal planters;
5. add Art to the Cultural District's median islands;
6. install gateways at endpoints and midpoint;
7. provide periodic street medians;
8. install interactive art features as well as new plazas in University District;
9. provide Green Loop route around the perimeter along Park Ave/East/West.

General questions and comments from Urban Forestry Commissioners and responses from the consultants followed.

- Yes, an overall goal is to maintain or reestablish a closed canopy overhead for much of the South Park blocks.

- American elms should not and are not part of the long-term plan because of their susceptibility to Dutch elm disease.
- A definite move to diversifying the tree species and understory in the planting is under consideration as part of the tree succession planning and landscape planning. The point person at Urban Forestry is Joel Smith, who is working closely with the consultant team in plant possibilities.
- There is general agreement to keep the central allee or central promenade.
- A thought is to perhaps include conifers in patches.
- Currently 40% of the smaller trees in the South Park Blocks are cultivated varieties of elms (*hopefully selections that are resistant to Dutch elm disease although they likely do not attain the size of a species American elm*).
- In the planning there really isn't any timeframe yet for when trees would go in. Specifically, there isn't a plan to plant some trees in year one and then 10-20 years later plant some more trees, as a means to allow for suitable growing conditions such as full sun, partial shade, or full shade for newly planted trees.

Comments and suggestions pertaining to the South Park Blocks planning are welcome and should be sent to Barbara Hart, the City's Community Engagement Representative on this project:

Barbara.hart@portlandoregon.gov or phone at 503.823.5596

City Forester Report **Jenn Cairo**

1. With Commissioner Fish's death, Mayor Ted Wheeler has taken on the responsibility of Commissioner Fish's bureaus. Portland Parks and Recreation (PP&R) as well as the Bureau of Environmental Services (BES) are now under the Mayor. The Mayor has retained the staff of Commissioner Fish so it is anticipated the Urban Forestry contact person within the Mayor's office will continue to be Everett Wild everett.wild@portlandoregon.gov There will be a special election held in May to select a person to finish Commissioner's Fish's term. If someone wins a majority of the votes cast they will take office immediately. If there needs to be a run-off, that will happen in November.
2. Urban Forestry Commissioner Thuy Tu's term is ending at the end of February. She has decided not to request to serve a second four-year term. Jenn thanked her for her contributions to the work for the Commission and wished her well in her increasingly demanding professional work. Applications for the soon-to-be-open Urban Forestry Commissioner position will be accepted by the Office of Community and Civic Life (OCCL). (*I was*

not able to find any listing currently at Office of Community and Civic Life. It will be on the OCCL site tentatively by February 13th. If you need information prior to that, talk with one of the current Urban Forestry Commissioners or contact Brian Landoe, who is the point staff person at Urban Forestry who works with the Urban Forestry Commission, brian.landoe@portlandoregon.gov 503.504.0836)

3. Portland Bureau of Transportation's (PBOT) Streets 2035 Technical Advisory Group is moving along. To date they have met several times. Jenn is part of this group, representing Urban Forestry. This is at least a 3-year planning project that is led by Matt Berkow at PBOT. Matt will present an update on Streets 2035 at the February Urban Forestry Commission meeting. (Matt can be contacted at Streets2035@portlandoregon.gov Additional information about Streets 2035 can be seen at <https://www.portlandoregon.gov/transportation/79886>)
4. On January 8, 2020, City Council passed the Mayor-introduced resolution that directed City bureaus to undergo three projects pertaining to the Title 11 Tree Code:
 - a. No later than July 7, 2020 Bureau of Development Services (BDS), Bureau of Planning and Sustainability (BPS) and (PPR) shall complete necessary technical analysis and coordinate legal review to develop an analysis that addresses the exemption from preservation and density regulations in 1H, 1G1, EX and CX zones and develop a proposal to remove those exemptions if analysis and legal review allow.
 - b. No later than July 7, 2020, BDS, BPS and PP&R shall prepare a proposal to amend the regulations for tree preservation, including evaluating reduction of critical tree size threshold for inch-for-inch mitigation from 36" to 20", if the analysis and legal review allow for reduction of the critical tree size threshold.
 - c. No later than December 7, 2020, City bureaus shall develop a requested scope (for BDS only) and budget (BDS, BPS and PP&R) for additional updates to strengthen Title 11. Budget requests to fund this work will be made at the Spring Budget Management Process (BMP). (*late budget requests for current budget year*).
 - d. During the Spring FY 19/20 BMP, the three city bureaus BDS, PP&R, and BPS shall develop and present for approval a detailed scope and budget for the necessary work to look at the zones exemption amendment and the critical tree size amendment.
 - e. The City Forester wanted to especially recognize the unprecedented outpouring of public comment on these items

brought before City Council. This strong public involvement greatly raised the awareness of the Commissioners on these items. It also greatly influenced the timeline which was accepted for these items. The timelines accepted by Council were much shorter than those originally proposed by Council.

5. PP&R is hoping to get a limited time position for a planner to work on Street Tree Policy only.
6. New Urban Forestry staff member Bryn Davis was introduced. Bryn has worked several years on a part-time basis for Urban Forestry in Tree Survey work. Her position is as a Tree Technician where she will interact with the public at 503.823-TREE as well as in review of plan submission and emergency tree vehicle dispatch in storm/crisis situations.

Portland Parks and Recreation budget Advisory Committee Megan van de Mark

Megan has served on this Committee during this fiscal year. The financial situation for PP&R is very dire. The key focus, thanks to the efforts of Commissioner Fish and many others, is to find long-term, sustainable funding sources for the services delivered by PP&R. A work group, called Sustainable Futures, is exploring various options for ways to generate the funds necessary to support the Park system wanted by Portland residents. It is expected that this process will take several years plus likely ballot measures for the citizens of Portland to approve. Until such time as there are additional revenue sources it is expected that services for parks will decline and upkeep on capital assets will fall farther in arrears (*currently estimated at \$450 million*).

<https://www.portlandoregon.gov/parks/80219>

Heritage Tree Committee Gregg Everhart.

Gregg has concerns about training a replacement for her as chair of the Heritage Tree Committee, as other UFC Commissioners on this committee are unable to take over the chair responsibilities.

Gregg shared with the Commission the trees submitted for Heritage Tree recognition by the City Council. Fifty-three trees were submitted for consideration. The Heritage Tree Committee selected 13 of these to nominate to City Council.

A map of the locations of current Heritage Trees was shown. There is uneven geographic distribution of Portland's Heritage Trees (*that shows some parallels*

with historical and current income distribution within the City). The Committee continues to look for trees in areas with few or no Heritage trees.

The Urban Forestry Commission approved unanimously the Heritage Tree Committee's recommendations for trees to nominate for consideration by the City Council. One declining Heritage tree was approved for de-listing consideration by City Council. Trees nominated include Spanish fir, copper beech, London plane, Deodar cedar, silverleaf oaks, European beech, spinning gum/silver dollar gum, silver linden, American elm, ginkgo, Lavalle hawthorn, and orangebark/tall stewartia.

Jenn Cairo shared that there are numerous Urban Forestry staff members who work with this Committee in recommending trees, evaluating trees, caring for the trees, and posting information about the trees on the website. Current Urban Forestry Commissioners on the Committee include Gregg Everhart, Brian French, and Damon Schrosk.

Gregg is hoping in the future to go through the completed Parks Tree Inventory to seek out potential trees for consideration for Heritage Tree status.

Vivek thought that another factor that might be considered for Heritage Tree status is functionality (*I am guessing this would include pollutant capture, rain water usage, wildlife habitat, cooling effect. Some of this may informally be taken into account but I am not sure*).

Megan thought that dbh should not be the only factor in determining if a tree should get Heritage tree status.

Other

A Commission member requested that Brian send out an updated list of when the terms of the Urban Forestry Commissioners are up as a means to look at succession planning within the Commission.

Next Urban Forestry Commission Meeting

The next Urban Forestry Commission meeting will be Thursday, February 20, 9:30 – 12 noon in the Lovejoy Room at City Hall.

The agenda is unavailable at this time. Check the link below in February for meeting agenda and materials: <https://www.portlandoregon.gov/parks/80167>