



**URBAN FORESTRY COMMISSION**

Meeting Minutes

April 18, 2024

9:30am – 11:30pm

Hybrid Meeting: Online and in-person at the Portland Building

**Commission Members present:** Co-Chair Adrienne Feldstein, Casey Clapp, Ivory Iheanacho, J.R. Lilly, Justin Misner, Bruce Nelson, Megan Van de Mark, Leah Plack

**Commission Members absent:** Melinda McMillan, Derily Bechtold

**Urban Forestry staff present:** Jenn Cairo (City Forester), Belinda Judelman (Analyst II), Brian Landoe (Strategy & Planning Manager); Blake Carlile

**City staff present:** Laura Lehman (Sr City Planner), Adena Long (PP&R Director), Dawn Uchiyama (BES Director)

**Public Comments**

1. George Marshall asked if a review process has been set up to evaluate the decision to deny a removal permit for a tree that caused property damage during the winter storm in January 2024. George Marshall discussed this situation previously in a public comment at the March 2024 Urban Forestry Commission meeting.
  - a. City Forester Cairo responded that there is currently no review being done for this decision. City Forester Cairo also clarified how trees are evaluated and approved for removal. Trees that are dead, dying, or dangerous at the time of inspection are allowed to be removed. If a permit is denied, the property owner may appeal the decision or apply for a new permit at any time.
  - b. Mr. Marshall spoke about an unrelated permit application from last year, where they requested a removal permit for a large cedar after a landscaper was concerned about the tree. An arborist inspected the tree and denied the permit.
    - i. Commissioner Nelson said that if an arborist can see movement in the ground, cracks, or a change in the tree’s orientation, those would be danger signals. If there is no evidence of that, then the tree may not be dangerous.
    - ii. Mr. Marshall asked what would happen if the arborist was wrong and who would take responsibility for the mistake. Commissioner Nelson said that the tree has survived many storms and high winds.
  - c. Mr. Marshall asked about tree risk analysis. City Forester Cairo described the Tree Risk Assessment Qualification and other required arborist certifications and said staff would share more information over email.

**Approve Meeting Minutes**

1. The UFC meeting minutes for February and March 2024 were approved.

**City Forester’s Report** – Jenn Cairo, City Forester

1. City Forester Cairo thanked the UFC for their service to the City and the urban forest.
2. The meeting agenda includes an important discussion about the Urban Forest Plan Update project. Commissioners will be given a status update on the project and will be able to provide feedback.
3. The transition to the new form of government is proceeding. We have a new Deputy City Administrator for the Vibrant Communities area, Sonia Schmanski. Kellie Torres is her Chief of Staff.
4. The PCEF Equitable Tree Canopy Initiative is proceeding. The community advisory work group for this program is still being put together by the Bureau of Planning & Sustainability. Urban Forestry is in the process of contracting with four community organizations to provide outreach for the Yard Tree Giveaway Program, funded by the Equitable Tree Canopy Program. The four organizations will be announced soon.
5. There will be no changes to Title 11 permit fees this year.
6. City Forester Cairo invited questions from the UFC.
  - a. Commissioner Nelson asked whether the Deputy City Administrator was an appointed position. City Forester Cairo responded yes. Commissioner Nelson asked who they were appointed by. City Forester Cairo said that it was the commissioner in charge of the service area, which Brian Landoe confirmed. This will change when the city government

**Urban Forestry Commission**

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is reorganized. City Forester Cairo added that the Deputy City Administrator reports to the commissioner in charge of the service area and supervises the Parks Director.

### **Natural Resource Service Delivery Project Update – Chris Wallace Caldwell**

1. PP&R Director Adena Long and BES Director Dawn Uchiyama thanked the UFC for their participation in this project.
2. Chris Wallace Caldwell began a presentation on the Natural Resource Service Delivery (NRS) Project workplan. Workshops were held on March 22<sup>nd</sup> and April 12<sup>th</sup>, 2024.
  - a. Workshop participants included advisory representatives from the Portland Utility Board, UFC, and the Parks & Recreation Board. Subject matter expert staff from BES, PP&R, BPS, PWB, and PBOT were also included.
  - b. The purpose of the workshops was to collect input on the current Natural Resource Service Delivery Workplan draft. The workplan itself will not lay out the changes that need to be made to NRS, but will include the process to get to final recommendations.
  - c. The revised draft workplan with input from the 1<sup>st</sup> workshop integrated will be provided 4/18/2024. Brian Landoe confirmed that it had been sent out already.
3. Chris Wallace Caldwell thanked members of the UFC for their participation in the workshop.
  - a. Commissioner Lilly shared that the workshop was very engaging and interactive.
  - b. Commissioner Iheanacho thanked Chris Wallace Caldwell for facilitating the workshop.
  - c. Commissioner Van de Mark asked if anyone wanted to share any feedback that would be important to highlight. Ali Berman wanted there to be a larger emphasis to be placed on the current biodiversity crisis. Additionally, Ali Berman said that this could be an opportunity for City entities to rebrand themselves and transform public communications.
  - d. Commissioner Nelson asked if water was involved in the plan, to which Adena Long responded yes. Commissioner Nelson asked about the water quality of the Willamette River. Adena long responded that this is a level of detail that will be discussed in the future. Chris Wallace Caldwell added that water quality metrics are included in some of the blue sky scenarios and water quality is also referred to specifically in the city resolution.
  - e. Commissioner Nelson asked how changing City service areas will impact this project. Dawn Uchiyama responded that there will be coordination across service areas.
  - f. Commissioner Iheanacho shared that this workshop was very meta, and the facilitators were helpful in guiding the process. They were also helpful in clarifying the problem the City is working to solve and clarifying the roles of the stakeholders involved.
  - g. Commissioner Clapp shared curiosity about what this project will look like once it is implemented. Commissioner Clapp also advocated for natural resources to be considered city infrastructure rather than “green” infrastructure.
  - h. Commissioner Van de Mark advocated for a City commitment to prioritizing and elevating natural resources and ensuring they remain funded. Commissioner Van de Mark also emphasized that this is a shared goal among those attending this meeting.
  - i. Dawn Uchiyama expressed appreciation for Commissioner Van de Mark’s comment and urged the UFC to stay involved in the process.

### **Portland Urban Forest Plan Update and Engagement– Brian Landoe, Belinda Judelman**

1. Belinda Judelman gave a presentation on the Urban Forest Plan, including a status update and a summary of community engagement with the project.
  - a. The project is split into 3 phases. Currently, the project is in Phase 1: Listen & Learn.
  - b. Urban Forestry has been working with advisory committees and the general public to inform the development of this plan.
    - i. The Community Advisory Committee has met twice. This advisory committee provided feedback on the project’s community engagement strategy and discussed ways to connect with specific groups within the public. The committee also discussed barriers to preserving, planting, and caring for trees.
    - ii. The Technical Advisory Committee, which includes staff from City, County, and State offices, has met twice. This committee has assisted Urban Forestry with evaluating the project’s scope, engagement strategy, and management.
  - c. The project is engaging with the public through a survey, open from March 25<sup>th</sup> through May 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2024 and an open house held on April 24<sup>th</sup>. Additionally, seven focus groups have been held to engage with underserved communities such as people with disabilities, BIPOC, immigrants, and refugee communities. Four of these focus groups were conducted in languages other than English, and stipends were provided, as well as meals for in-person activities.
  - d. Presentations were given to various other city advisory committees to reach more stakeholders that weren’t reached through other activities.

*Audio recordings of Urban Forestry Commission meetings are available upon request.*

- e. The project consultant is developing a ‘State of the Urban Forest’ report, which assesses the current conditions of the urban forest. The report includes an analysis of city-wide canopy coverage.
  - i. Using LiDAR data, a new canopy coverage map has been created which divides the city into 25-acre hexagons.
  - ii. A map showing canopy cover by council district was presented.
    - 1. Commissioner Nelson asked if this map was displaying averages across each entire council district, to which Belinda Judelman responded yes.
  - iii. Canopy cover is also being evaluated by neighborhood. One initial takeaway from these data is that canopy loss is occurring in areas where there are higher levels of existing canopy.
  - iv. New data shows that neighborhood walkways have higher levels of canopy than average for streets in Portland, however, this includes trails.
  - v. Major Transit Priority Streets, which are intended for frequent transit service, have significantly lower levels of canopy than the average for all streets in Portland.
  - vi. Canopy cover varies by land use, with industrial and commercial areas having the lowest levels of canopy cover.
  - vii. Among schools, colleges and universities have the highest levels of canopy cover, while high schools have the lowest.
- f. An assessment of management needs and challenges is also a part of the Urban Forest Plan. The Technical Advisory Committee and interviews with staff are informing this assessment.
  - i. In interviews, staff were asked about their role in managing the urban forest, how climate change and equity were being prioritized, and what challenges and opportunities they were observing.
  - ii. Staff from eight different bureaus were interviewed, including PP&R, BPS, BDS, PWB, BES, and PBOT.
  - iii. Key takeaways included a need for improved data and work tracking systems, engagement with UF early on in projects, consistency in planting practices across bureaus, and better communication with the public. Additionally, equity issues such as the need for the city to take on street tree maintenance were consistent themes. There was a desire for the city, region, and state to work together to prepare regional guidance for addressing the climate crisis. Providing longer establishment periods for trees during our hotter summers was a priority. Policy goals such as better protections for large trees and support for habitat restoration were also identified.
- g. A new vision and goals are being created as part of the Urban Forest Plan.
  - i. The first draft will be developed with input from the CAC, TAC, PP&R, and community organizations working with trees. The vision and goals will be shared with the public during Phases 2 and 3 of community engagement.
  - ii. Discussion questions for the UFC:
    - 1. What would you like us to consider as we create the vision and goals?
    - 2. Are there specific topics or themes you’d like to see reflected in the goals?
    - 3. What is your vision for the future of the urban forest?
      - a. Commissioner Van de Mark asked if the plan would prioritize increasing canopy cover in industrial areas, and how expansive the definition of the urban forest is in regards to natural resources and wildlife habitat. Brian Landoe responded that heavy industrial zones are exempt from tree preservation and planting requirements in development situations. There is an ongoing process by BPS to address this and other issues with industrial lands in Portland.
      - b. Commissioner Plack asked for clarification about tree canopy data provided previously by Vivek Shandas, which appeared to show canopy growth in areas with higher canopy levels.
        - i. Jeff Ramsey explained that there is significant loss in well-canopied areas, but there is also loss in lower canopy areas on the east side.
        - ii. City Forester Cairo said that this may vary by land use; residential areas with high canopy could be losing more canopy in comparison with open space.
        - iii. Jeff Ramsey added that development is increasing in Southwest Portland, which may be contributing to recent losses in canopy coverage.
        - iv. Commissioner Plack speculated that these differing results could also be due to new data providing a more detailed view of canopy coverage in the city.
      - c. Belinda Judelman addressed Commissioner Van de Mark’s question by clarifying that Urban Forestry defines the urban forest as every tree in Portland, including in natural areas.
      - d. Commissioner Clapp asked if the Urban Forest Plan Update Project will explore any changes to the city code. Belinda Judelman clarified that Title 11 will be updated after this project is completed.

- e. Commissioner Plack highlighted the need for denser housing while preserving green space. Street trees are an opportunity to prioritize this goal.
- f. Commissioner Nelson said that the plan should prioritize accommodating trees in right-of-way parking spaces. Commissioner Nelson also shared the perspective that the Portland Urban Forest Plan should reflect the goals of Urban Forestry and not other bureaus. Belinda Judelman shared that the pilot program “Trees in the Curb Zone” will be breaking ground soon, and the program is being prioritized in the plan. Brian Landoe said that other bureaus play a role in achieving Urban Forestry’s goals, and the plan will reflect this.
- g. Commissioner Feldstein asked how disagreements between bureaus will be resolved as the plan is implemented. Brian Landoe responded that the Technical Advisory Committee may be assisting with this, and the new city structure may improve the decision-making process. Additionally, when the plan is adopted by city council, potential disagreements can be addressed. Belinda Judelman added that this plan focuses more on implementation than previous plans. Commissioner Feldstein said that the steps to achieving the goal of preserving and growing the canopy are unclear.
- h. Commissioner Iheanacho gave several recommendations for improving the Portland Urban Forest Plan:
  - i. If the goals of the plan are listed in order, reorder the bullet points on the plan.
  - ii. Change language from “the urban forest” to “our urban forest” and add the word “infrastructure.”
  - iii. Improve outreach and provide consultative services for tree species selection.
  - iv. Include future stakeholder partnerships in the document.
- i. Brian Landoe shared his support for providing more outreach services. Commissioner Clapp echoed support for more outreach services.
- j. Commissioner Misner suggested providing more resources for people doing their own tree maintenance. Commissioner Misner also asked what work is being done to collaborate with PBOT to look at the right-of-way holistically, including trees, curbs, and sidewalks. Belinda Judelman said that Urban Forestry has PBOT representatives on the Technical Advisory Committee. A previous PBOT plan (Streets PDX) also attempted to create a more holistic view of the city right-of-way. Justin Misner asked if the city would play a role in managing interactions between trees and the right-of-way, such as leaf pickups or fixing sidewalk conflicts.
- k. Commissioner Plack noted the negative outcomes of broken sidewalks that become inaccessible. Brian Landoe added that sidewalks are the responsibility of the adjacent property owner, which leads to inequitable outcomes. City Forester Cairo said that we can do more in this area and the Urban Forest Plan is a good place to explore that. Sidewalk repair is the responsibility of PBOT and was not included in the original cost estimate for city-managed street tree maintenance.
- l. Belinda Judelman thanked the Urban Forestry Commission for their feedback.