



**URBAN FORESTRY COMMISSION**

Meeting Minutes

June 20, 2024

9:30am – 11:30am

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

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

**Commission Members absent:**

**Urban Forestry staff present:** Jenn Cairo (City Forester), Belinda Judelman (Analyst II), Blake Carlile (Community Service Aide II).

**City staff present:**

**Public Comments**

1. George Marshall discussed a conversation he had with Julie Fukuda. Due to “litigation,” Julie was unable to talk about an event wherein a tree fell on a Portland family’s home during a severe winter storm in January 2024. George Marshall suggested that Urban Forestry ask City Council to amend Title 11 to allow anyone to remove trees that they consider a danger to their home.
  - a. Commissioner Clapp said that George Marshall’s suggested amendment would make Title 11 a pointless venture, and asked Mr. Marshall if he would be willing to discuss something more reasonable. Mr. Marshall expressed his opinion that there is no way to accurately assess the safety of a tree.
2. George Marshall said he would forward all of the meeting recordings to the person who wrote the original article about the tree failure in Willamette Week.

**Approve Meeting Minutes**

1. Commissioner Nelson said that he forwarded suggested amendments to the meeting minutes to Brian Landoe. Blake Carlile responded that he received these suggestions and implemented them.
2. Commissioner Nelson expressed confusion about the City’s budget adoption process. City Forester Cairo shared that the City budget is approved, amended, and then adopted by City Council.
3. The Urban Forestry Commission (UFC) meeting minutes for May 2024 were approved with amendments specified by Commissioner Nelson.

**Appoint Leah Plack as UFC Co-Chair**

1. Commissioner Plack was appointed as UFC Co-Chair for one year with the opportunity to renew.

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

1. City Forester Cairo thanked the UFC Commissioners for their service.
2. Commissioner Iheanacho stepped down from her role with the UFC. Applications are being received to fill another vacancy. City Forester Cairo encouraged UFC commissioners to share the opportunity widely.
3. Starting July 1, all City bureaus will report to the mayor and the interim City administrator. This structure is expected to be in place until January 1, when the newly elected officials will take their roles.
4. On July 1, Portland Permitting and Development will take effect. This new entity will be responsible for private property and associated public works permitting. All infrastructure bureaus are transferring some staff to this program, including Urban Forestry. Seven Urban Forestry positions will be moving over to Portland Permitting & Development.
5. A public hearing on the Large Tree Amendment will be held on July 23 at 5 pm.
6. Last week, City Council adopted the fiscal year 2024-2025 City budget. It includes \$65 million in funds for the Portland Clean Energy Fund (PCEF) Tree Protection and Care initiative. Through this initiative, Urban Forestry will develop Portland’s first street tree maintenance program. The amount is not as much as requested by Urban Forestry, but it will be sufficient to start developing the program. A separate \$35 million in PCEF funds will be used to replace general funds in fiscal year 2024-2025.

**Urban Forestry Commission**

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7. Urban Forestry has acquired PlanIT Geo tree asset management software. This tool will be critical to efficient and accurate street tree maintenance, tree canopy programs, and park tree maintenance.
8. Connecting Canopies facilitates a diversity in green jobs program, which Urban Forestry participates in. Two graduates of this program have become Community Service Aides with the street tree inventory project.
9. City Forester Cairo invited questions from the Urban Forestry Commission.
  - a. Commissioner Nelson asked how much of Urban Forestry's budget will come from general funds in fiscal year 2024-2025. City Forester Cairo responded Urban Forestry will receive almost no general funds in 2024-2025. Commissioner Nelson asked if Urban Forestry would be completely dependent on PCEF funds. City Forester Cairo responded that Urban Forestry has multiple funding sources, including the Parks Levy and Title 11 trust funds.
  - b. Commissioner Van de Mark asked if there would be any shifts in Urban Forestry services due to the change in funding from general to PCEF funds. City Forester Cairo said that she anticipates Urban Forestry's existing services will continue as usual, as was the intention of City Council.
  - c. Commissioner Van de Mark asked if employees that are moving to Portland Permitting and Development (PP&D) would still be a part of Urban Forestry or if they would become PP&D employees. City Forester Cairo clarified that they would leave Urban Forestry and become PP&D employees. She expects that Urban Forestry will work closely with PP&D to teach them the correct methods.
  - d. Commissioner Feldstein asked if the revenue from permitting fees in private property development would be moving with staff. She also asked if these fees are in excess of the cost of the program and are reinvested in other tree programs. City Forester Cairo said that the revenue from private property development permit fees is only used to cover the cost of the permitting program. Because there is no excess revenue, transferring this program from Urban Forestry to PP&D will not represent a loss for other tree programs.

#### **Portland Urban Forest Plan – Belinda Judelman (Analyst II)**

1. Belinda Judelman gave a presentation on the Portland Urban Forest Plan, which she is developing to replace the 2004 Urban Forest Management Plan and the 2007 Urban Forest Action Plan.
  - a. Phase one of community engagement included meetings with advisory committees and community events such as an open house and citywide survey. Belinda Judelman and Brian Landoe gave presentations to other City advisory commissions, such as the Multnomah Youth Commission and Historic Landmarks Commission. The team also held discussions with over 80 staff.
    - i. Some of the top community priorities included assistance with tree planting and maintenance, equitable distribution of tree canopy, and preservation of large trees.
    - ii. A few of the biggest barriers to having trees in the city included cost of planting and maintaining trees, hazardous trees, and root damage.
    - iii. Portlanders generally wanted more trees along the street, in parks and natural areas, and in apartment communities.
    - iv. Overwhelmingly, Portlanders requested more support for private property owners. This included financial support for tree maintenance, planting, and removal.
    - v. The team is now moving into phase two of the plan.
      1. Commissioner Plack asked Belinda Judelman if she noticed any differences in opinion between groups that were engaged during phase one. Belinda responded that the community groups had surprisingly similar perspectives about trees. Differing opinions primarily came from specific stakeholders such as industrial landowners.
      2. City Forester Cairo asked what bureaus were involved in this phase of the project. Belinda Judelman responded that the Portland Bureau of Transportation, Bureau of Environmental Services, Portland Water Bureau, Portland Fire, Bureau of Emergency Management, Bureau of Planning and Sustainability, and Bureau of Development Services (now PP&D) are involved through the technical advisory committee and interviews.
      3. Commissioner Nelson asked if the project included any engagement with neighborhood organizations. Belinda Judelman said that she shared information about the open house and the survey with neighborhood organizations and offered to do presentations for them, but they were not interested.
      4. Commissioner Van de Mark asked how Urban Forestry might be able to act on community requests for financial support. Belinda Judelman said that the new PCEF funding will provide opportunities for providing financial assistance, and recommendations within the Urban Forest Plan will explore even more potential pathways.
2. Belinda Judelman shared the process for creating the draft vision and goals of the Urban Forest Plan. Belinda then read the draft vision for the Urban Forest Plan.

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

- a. Commissioner McMillan commented that the community was very happy with how the vision statement turned out.
  - b. Commissioner Plack shared appreciation for the vision’s mention of climate resilience and its acknowledgment of past policy decisions and their consequences.
  - c. Commissioner Van de Mark said that the climate emergency could be emphasized more within the vision.
  - d. Commissioner Nelson said that the text surrounding the climate crisis needs to be strengthened. Commissioner Nelson suggested that there may be more underserved groups identified in the future, and there could be space in the plan to acknowledge that in some way. Commissioner Nelson also commented that this document could be more visionary and assertive.
  - e. Commissioner Misner commented that the vision and goals do not match what Urban Forestry is currently doing. They expressed their opinion that Urban Forestry has not been accountable for its actions in the past, and it has taken an active role in going against the goals outlined in the Urban Forest Plan.
  - f. Commissioner Plack reminded the UFC that the vision and goals are not designed to match what is currently being done, rather they are meant to guide improvements in the future.
  - g. Commissioner Clapp said that the vision and goals could be more science-focused and aspirational.
  - h. Commissioner Lilly voiced their support for any indigenous stewardship principles that could be implemented. They also advocated for community partnership throughout the plan.
  - i. Commissioner Plack asked if a timeline had been identified for implementation of the plan. Belinda Judelman said that this would be a 10-year plan. Under ideal conditions, the goals would be achieved within 10 years. Belinda thanked Commissioner Plack for the reminder that the vision and goals are not meant to reflect what Urban Forestry is doing today, rather it outlines where Urban Forestry hopes to be in the future.
  - j. Belinda Judelman responded to comments from the UFC, emphasizing that input surrounding the urgency of the climate crisis was helpful. She asked Commissioner Van de Mark to clarify what scientific information could be strengthened within the text. Commissioner Van de Mark emphasized the importance of accessibility within the document and specified that more climate science should be included, as it is closely related to tree science.
  - k. Commissioner Feldstein advocated for a bigger emphasis on canopy growth. She also shared support for including indigenous stewardship principles and making the plan more visionary and aspirational.
  - l. Commissioner Clapp said that including a stronger statement about the climate emergency would be beneficial.
  - m. Belinda Judelman said that the team will be involving community organizations as actions and recommendations are developed, facilitating a collaborative process.
3. Belinda Judelman read the draft goals of the Urban Forest Plan.
    - a. Commissioner Nelson said that the goals would be a good place to include a statement about funding for street tree maintenance.
    - b. Commissioner Lily said that the term “Portlanders” does not reflect the entire community of folks who could benefit from more trees in the city. People who don’t live in Portland can still benefit from Portland’s trees. Commissioner Lily also said that the goals are very human-centered and lack emphasis on plants and wildlife.
    - c. Commissioner Plack said that there are no measurable goals and wondered if these would be specified elsewhere in the plan. Belinda Judelman said that these measurements would be outlined in other parts of the plan.
    - d. Commissioner Clapp said that specifying measures and targets for these goals is necessary.
    - e. Commissioner Van de Mark said that Belinda responds to feedback very well. She also said that the goals would benefit from a greater emphasis on wildlife and biodiversity, echoing Commissioner Lily’s earlier remarks. She also said that the goals could be more proactive and visionary.
    - f. Belinda Judelman said that Commissioner Clapp’s earlier comment was a good segway into the next part of the presentation, which will include quantitative, measurable canopy goals.
    - g. Commissioner Feldstein identified tree safety as a concern and suggested developing a comprehensive safety plan.
    - h. Belinda Judelman thanked the UFC for their comments.
    - i. A meeting chat message reminded the UFC about the loss of life incurred by the 2021 heat dome event.
  4. Belinda Judelman continued her presentation with a section about tree canopy targets. A tree canopy target is a goal for how much area in a city should be covered by its tree canopy. Urban Forestry’s tree canopy target(s) will include a percentage of tree canopy coverage and a timeframe to meet this percentage. To set these targets, the team reviewed scientific literature and canopy targets from peer cities. Peer cities were selected for their similarity to Portland in population size, climate, land area, and other variables. Among the 13 selected peer cities, the most common canopy target was 40%, and the average timeframe to meet canopy targets was 20 years. Some peer cities with high population densities have maintained higher canopy levels than Portland.
    - a. Commissioner Clapp noted that some of the peer cities with higher canopy levels and goals maintain their street trees.
    - b. Commissioner Feldstein asked if the team knows what factors have contributed to the success of peer cities with the highest canopy levels. Belinda responded that this is a question the team is looking into now. Commissioner Nelson

noted that some of the peer cities get rain during the summer. City Forester Cairo added that they receive more snow and storm activity during the winter.

- c. Commissioner Van de Mark asked how the tree canopy in peer cities is distributed across land use zones such as parks, industrial areas, and natural areas. Belinda said that the team does not have this information currently, but they can look into this in the future.
5. Belinda Judelman summarized the community feedback received by the Urban Forest Plan team, including support for trees in neighborhoods, parks, and schools across Portland. Additionally, the team received mixed opinions on tree presence in industrial areas and major streets. Belinda gave a recap of the team's process and guidelines for creating canopy targets. Lastly, Belinda presented different approaches for creating tree canopy targets and asked the UFC for input.
  - a. Commissioner Nelson asked for the presentation to be sent to the UFC. Commissioner Nelson asked if canopy measurements are 2-dimensional and suggested that 2-dimensional measurements may not capture the quality of the canopy.
  - b. Commissioner Feldstein suggested that Belinda could come back at another meeting so the UFC can have more time to discuss and learn more about the different approaches to creating canopy targets.

**Meeting adjourned.**