



URBAN FORESTRY COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes

November 16, 2023

9:30am – 11:30am

Hybrid Meeting: Online and in person at The Portland Building

Commission Members present: Co-Chairs Adrienne Feldstein and Roberta Jortner, Casey Clapp, Bruce Nelson, J.R. Lilly, Megan Van de Mark, Melinda McMillan, Leah Plack

Commission Members absent: Derily Bechthold, Justin Misner, Ivory Iheanacho

Urban Forestry staff present: Jenn Cairo (City Forester), Brian Landoe (Strategy & Planning Manager), Belinda Judelman (Planning & Policy Analyst); Nik Desai (Botanic Specialist II); Biz Miller (Botanic Specialist I)

City staff present: Bob Del Gizzi, PP&R Financial Planning & Analysis Manager

Public Comments

1. Bob Sallinger, Urban Conservation Director at Willamette Riverkeepers, provided public comment on the recent City Council resolution to add Citywide Operational Natura Area and Tree Management to the service area with Parks & Recreation in the City’s new organization chart. He expressed concern about the City’s capacity to finance this change over time, potential legal implications of the use of sewer ratepayer funds, and potential regulatory implications. Mr. Sallinger expressed support instead for a resolution proposed by Commissioner Mapps for the formation of a Natural Resources work group within the Public Works service area.

City Organization Update – PP&R Deputy Director Todd Lofgren

1. Todd provided a briefing to the UFC on City Council’s approval of the City’s new organizational chart which included the resolution to add Citywide Operational Natura Area and Tree Management to the service area with Parks & Recreation.
2. The City will be organized by service areas which will be overseen by the Chief Administrative Officer. The organization chart will take effect July 1, 2024.
3. Portland Parks & Recreation will be in the Vibrant Communities service area with the Portland Children’s Levy and the City’s arts program.
4. Todd provided clarification in response to the comment provided by Mr. Sallinger. The organizational chart adopted by City Council included a recommendation to continue the exploration of evaluating the formation of a new Natural Resources organizational unit. The Mapps proposal would have move ahead with placing this new Natural Resources organization unit in the Public Works service area. It did not include specifics on which works groups, staff, or funding would be included. The resolution proposed by Commissioner Ryan and adopted by Council instead called for having the day-to-day management of natural areas and trees within Portland Parks & Recreation. The recommendation to plan and evaluate a new Natural Resources organization unit was still adopted by City Council and that work will continue.
5. Commissioner Nelson asked how the new organization chart will impact how trees are considered by the bureaus included in the Public Works service area (PBOT, BES, PWB). Todd responded that the authority given to the City Forester in Title 11 and tree regulations those bureaus must abide by are not impacted by the new organization chart. And one of the benefits of organizing all natural area and tree management into a single work unit is increased coordination and accountability.
6. Commissioner Van de Mark commented that excluding natural resource and tree management from the Public Works service area could have the effect of perpetuating perceptions that trees are not part of Portland’s essential green infrastructure. Todd noted that over the last few years the level of investment in Urban Forestry and the raising of its profile is unprecedented and speaks to both PP&R’s and the City’s commitment to trees.

City Forester’s Report – Jenn Cairo, City Forester

1. Urban Forestry is currently recruiting members for the Portland Urban Forest Plan’s Community Advisory Committee. The project team is currently finalizing the Community Engagement Strategy and this will be shared with the UFC when it is final. The first Technical Advisory Committee meeting will convene next month as well.
2. The joint UFC/Parks Board statement on the Housing Production Advisory Council was submitted to City Council.

Urban Forestry Commission

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3. A Commissioner submitted a request for more information on ODOT's project on Powell Boulevard. This was covered in a previous meeting, but Jenn reiterated that Powell is a state-owned roadway and as such is not regulated by Title 11. Urban Forestry did commit significant time to the project which almost certainly resulted in greater tree retention and planting.
4. Urban Forestry is encouraging community members to care for their trees in anticipation of winter storm season. Urban Forestry is also undertaking preparations for winter emergency response. As a reminder, Urban Forestry responds to tree emergencies in the right-of-way 24/7. Recently, intake of tree emergency calls shifted from 823-TREE to the City's growing 311 service.
5. Sarah Huggins, PP&R's Sustainable Future program manager, is compiling additional information related to financing street tree maintenance including all information gathered to date, funding scenarios under consideration, and information on general obligation bond eligibility. This information will be provided to the UFC in the next few months.
6. Casey Jogerst, Permitting & Regulation Manager, has been appointed to the National Urban and Community Forestry Advisory Council which is advisory to the Secretary of Agriculture on national urban forestry issues.

Urban Forestry 2024-25 Budget – Jenn Cairo, City Forester; Bob Del Gizzi, Financial Planning & Analysis Manager

1. The Commission received an overview on the [PP&R and Urban Forestry budgets](#) which included detail on funding sources and spending priorities.
2. Urban Forestry is submitting two decision packages as part of the 2024-25 fiscal year budget. The first will request funding to continue developing the Arborist Trainee program and the second would implement the PCEF-funded Equitable Tree Canopy program.
3. Commissioner Feldstein asked about the role of Urban Forestry in meeting various state and federal environmental regulatory requirements and how that could be impacted by changes to the city's organization. Deputy Director Lofgren responded that the City of Portland is the legal entity for complying with these sorts of requirements and is responsibly for meeting them. This is not impacted by changes to how the City is organized or which bureaus are responsible for different functions.
4. Commissioner Jortner noted that there is no current budget package related to aligning natural resource and tree management in PP&R and asked how that will be addressed particularly given bureaus have different funding sources. Todd responded that PP&R currently has about 140 interagency agreements with PBOT, BES, and PWB to provide services which are funded by those bureaus. The new structure being proposed would simplify the bureaucracy and will be worked out through the budget development process. The intention is to functionally align those services and is not intended to reduce funding for them.
5. Commissioner Van de Mark asked how street tree maintenance fits into this considering that funding and staffing for Urban Forestry has doubled in the last few years. Jenn responded that the entire Urban Forestry budget is \$19 million which is roughly equivalent to the anticipated annual cost of providing citywide maintenance of street trees. Street tree maintenance remains a significant need, and new funding is still needed to deliver that service.

UFC Liaison to PP&R Budget Advisory Committee

1. The Commission approved Commissioners Plack and Van de Mark to serve as the UFC's representatives to the PP&R Budget Advisory Committee.

Street Tree Inventory Update – Nik Desai, Botanic Specialist II; Biz Miller, Botanic Specialist I

1. The Commission received an update on Urban Forestry's project to update its inventory of the City's street trees.
2. The project started last summer and will conclude in October 2024.
3. The data collected so far indicates a 23% increase in the number of street trees since the last inventory was completed in 2016.
4. Commissioner Nelson commented that using paid staff for the inventory rather than volunteers could decrease community involvement and support for funding measures. Nik responded community field days have been part of the project and UF will look to increase these opportunities in the future. Jenn also added that UF's education and outreach capacity has increased with a focus on tree preservation and planting with community groups and members in East Portland. Urban Forestry also worked with the PP&R Youth Conservation Crew as well.
5. Commissioner Plack asked for clarification if the number of street trees has increase or if the canopy coverage had increased. Nik clarified it is the number of trees, which at about 218,000 represents a relatively small portion of the total number of trees in the city.
6. Commissioner Feldstein recommended a future discussion on ensuring tree planting spaces are not underplanted.

Meeting adjourned.