URBAN FORESTRY COMMISSION
Meeting Minutes
November 20th, 2025
9:30am – 11:30am
Hybrid Meeting: Online and in-person at the Portland Building

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Commission Members present:	Co-Chair Leah Plack, Co-Chair Adrianne Feldstein, Derily Bechtold, Bruce Nelson, J.R. Lilly, Melinda McMillan, Megan Van de Mark, Casey Clapp
Commission Members absent:	Vesla Lee, Matt Sanchez
Urban Forestry staff present:	Prescilla Celino (Analyst II), Tiana Bernard (Administrative Specialist II), Belinda Judelman (Policy Analyst II)
City staff present:	Robert Irving (Interim Manager I)

Public Comments

1. Chris Yeargers shared their feedback and experience with an issue with a tree on their street to advocate for fewer restrictions for tree pruning. They provided a timeline of events related to the tree issue where a large crack was discovered in a street tree limb at their neighbor's house and the subsequent events that followed. They opined that the City's priorities and policies appear to be informed in the following order 1) trees, 2) financial, 3) safety.
   - Co-chair Plack thanked Chris Yeargers for sharing their experience.
   - Commissioner Clapp asked for confirmation if it was a street tree or private property tree. Chris confirmed it was a street tree.
   - Commissioner Clapp stated that City Forester Jenn Cairo is not present at this meeting and should be made aware of this, and requested Belinda Judelman bring this issue up with the Urban Forestry (UF) operations team. Belinda confirmed acceptance of the request.
   - Commissioner Clapp acknowledged that any precautions with elm trees are to save as many of those as we can from Dutch Elm Disease though in an emergency, but that is not the policy.
   - Commissioner Nelson addressed the restricted pruning time frame and suspects the policy in Portland is informed by not wanting to attract beetles that are vectoring Dutch Elm Disease.
   - Belinda Judelman shared appreciation with Chris for sharing their concern on this issue and shared that we are launching an update to the tree code project and these comments and concerns will be taken into consideration.
   - Co-chair Plack requested confirmation that emergency situations would supersede, Belinda Judelman could not speak to order of operations but would follow-up and find out.
   - Commissioner Clapp confirmed that an emergency situation would supersede.

City Forester's Report – Belinda Judelman, Policy Analyst II

1. Belinda Judelman introduced herself as acting City Forester for this meeting.
2. Belinda Judelman provided an update on the Urban Forest Plan, which was unanimously approved by the Portland City Council on October 22, 2025. The plan was adopted with a few minor amendments that do not substantially impact the intent or implementation of the plan. The amendments add specificity about implementation details or clarify priority communities or areas that UF was already planning to prioritize. Now, the implementation of the plan is underway, and staff are working to create a process to track and report on process. The final adopted plan with the councilor's amendments is available on the project website.
3. Belinda Judelman shared Economic Opportunity Analysis (EOA) is a project led by the Portland Bureau of Planning and Sustainability (BPS) to analyze and forecast growth in Portland's industrial areas and other business districts, designate an

adequate 20 year supply of developable land for business and job growth, provides recommendations for natural resource protections across industrial land including expanded application of environmental zones, river setbacks, floodplain, riparian, tree code standards. The EOA provides a low, medium, high natural resource policy scenario for heavy industrial areas including a combination of tree planting and preservation requirements. The discussion draft was recently released, and the public comment period has ended. UF staff have requested BPS staff present draft to UFC to learn more and provide feedback. This may be taken up in December UFC meeting.

4. Belinda Judelman provided an update on the Code alignment project is led by BPS and adopted by Portland City Council this past September 2025. The project's intent was to simplify the regulatory process for permit approval and speed up the permitting process. The recommendations put a temporary pause on certain city policies including street tree planting requirements for additions and alternations, reducing tree planting requirements in certain situations, and reducing the minimum tree planting size. The pause went into effect at the end of October 2025 until January 2029. This is the project that the UFC provided feedback in spring 2025. Belinda shared links in chat including the updated Urban Forest Plan and draft EOA) and opened it up to questions.
5. Commissioner Van de Mark expressed the importance of EOA and shared historical context to help understand the potential impact. Years ago, this was discussed with the UFC related to tree regulation and zoning, there was previously a strong desire to change requirements in specific industrial areas. The EOA directly informed what was and was not possible. EOA requirements related to what was needed to maintain land for potential industrial job use directly impacted the inability to shift tree requirements.
6. Commissioner Nelson noted that most industrial land is located adjacent to low-income neighborhoods with limited tree canopy, a point he suggested keeping in mind when the EOA is presented to the UFC. He added that industry continues to seek additional land for future potential. He raised the question of what types of job growth the city expects from industrial versus other land uses. He also mentioned that the Bird Alliance of Oregon has been advocating on this issue for many years.

Update on Permitting and Regulation Transition to Portland Permitting & Development (PP&D)– Robert Irving, Interim Manager I

1. Robert Irving introduced himself as the interim Tree Permitting Manager, noting over 25 years of experience in tree permitting and environmental planning, prior service as UF Coordinator for the City of Tampa, and credentials as a University of Florida–trained certified arborist. Robert Irving explained that David Kuhnhausen, Portland Permitting & Development Director, was unable to attend this meeting due to a conflict.
2. Robert Irving shared background on the UF division's Permitting and Regulation team's transition to PP&D effective October 1, 2025, due to City Council directed budget amendments and provided a status update on the progress.

    Robert Irving mentioned that Trees for Life sent in a list of questions last night, which he will incorporate into this update. The PP&D Tree Permitting team met with Trees for Life Oregon (TFLO) on September 25, 2025, TFLO requested an update in mid-November.

    - Robert Irving provided an overview of recent staff movements, Tree Permitting Division's responsibilities, and service level impacts and turnaround times since July 2025.
        - On July 1, 2025, 10 FTE were eliminated from UF Permitting & Regulation. On October 1, 2025, 37 FTE in Permitting & Regulation, of which three were vacant, were transferred from PP&R to PP&D. There are 26 active positions with 3 still currently vacant.
        - For non-development tree permit decisions when the tree inspector would start their work the turnaround time was around 2 weeks from the request, now it is 5-6 weeks. Plaintiff verification inspections for removal replant permits went from 6-7 weeks to now 8 weeks. Code compliance for emergency response follow-up inspections was previously 3 weeks moved to 5 weeks, code compliance team phone calls and responses went from 2 days to 4-5 days. There has been no change from development and the CIP team in responses. For administrative review requests, it was 4 weeks now it's about 8 weeks, but there were a couple of projects that bridged the gap between the October 1, 2025, transition. Intake and Support Analysis went from within one day to 2-3 days.
    - Robert Irving mentioned Trees for Life shared questions in advance and asked if Prescilla Celino shared with the group who confirmed she did not. Trees for Life sent a letter back in June/July 2025 with concerns about the transition.
        - How will UF staffing capacity (both FTE, training, management and oversight), functions (types and levels), management/oversight, quality, monitoring/tracking be affected by the budget cuts and moving staff to P&D? Robert Irving confirmed he addressed this in his update regarding turnaround times on requests, responsibilities, staff vacancies.
        - What UF functions, and with what numbers of staff and vacancies, have moved over to P&D? How have staffing levels changed with the budget cuts? Will any of those vacancies be filled, and if so, when? If not, how will functions be affected? Robert Irving confirmed he addressed this in his update and one vacant manager position that he currently holds. Other supervisory positions have also been appointed on temporary basis.

- What types of funding issues across bureaus have arisen and been resoled or are still pending? How are funding issues affecting UF programs and numbers of staff that have moved over to P&D? Robert Irving referenced a budget presentation that PP&D provided at the Portland Housing and Homelessness Committee on November 18, 2025, which is available to watch online. The FY26-27 budget process has not yet begun and will start in a few months.
- What is the status of 823-TREES? How many staff are working on it (compared to previously) and under whose leadership? Are some of them working in P&D while being managed by UF, as mentioned on 9-25 as being a possibility? How has customer service been affected or will be affected? Robert Irving confirmed this is the responsibility of the Intake and Support Analysis team and still coordinates and writes orders for Parks UF staff, specifically Tree Maintenance Operations. Currently, 4 employees are staffing 823-TREES/trees@portlandoregon.gov, previously it was 7 total – all now in PP&D. There is ongoing discussion about how UF may stand up a related team to address work orders and finalize transition items and responsibilities.
- What is the status of the Heritage Trees program? Robert Irving confirmed that the Heritage Trees program is still managed by Parks UF, however, any permitting of heritage trees on private property sits with PP&D.
- Which UF technologies are new to P&D with the staff transfer? Do they include TreePlotter? We understand that TreePlotter and AMANDA, the system P&D uses, do not "talk" to each other. Is this a problem, and if so, how are you resolving it? Robert Irving confirmed that TreePlotter is new to PP&D and several discussions were conducted this month on the software is partnership with UF to develop standard operating procedures on how to integrate TreePlotter with PP&D processes, addressing the inability to connect TreePlotter and AMANDA 7, and further implementation. UF staff hold the software licenses to TreePlotter.
- How will impacts to relevant program functions, staff, and the urban forest be monitored and made transparent to Portland leadership and the public? Robert Irving described an effort by PP&D to develop a dashboard for the Tree Permitting division that provides analytics. Robert Irving also offered to provide regular updates to the City Forester and can return to a future UF Commission meeting.

3. Robert Irving opened it up to questions.
   - Commissioner Nelson asked how many staff who used to work for UF now work for PP&D. Robert Irving answered it is 19 people and part of the confusion can be attributed to the initial naming of the new team in PP&D. As a result, PP&D renamed the division PP&D Tree Permitting.
   - Commissioner Nelson asked if there was any action from the tree planting program previously held by Bureau of Environmental Services (BES) tree planting program or if that has already been taken by UF. Robert Irving responded that he couldn't speak for BES. There is a program through development or public works permits where new stormwater facilities are required and trees be planted. Developers are required to pay a few in lieu and BES staff complete the planting, including street trees. Rebecca Criscillis, previously with UF moved over to BES, and was assisting with the transition and Robert Irving continues to meet with her.
   - Commissioner Nelson asked if there is advisory commission or committee like or equivalent to UFC for PP&D that regularly heard from PP&D about their operations. Robert Irving confirmed it is the Development Review Advisory Committee though it is not specific to trees. Robert Irving mentioned that City Forester Jenn Cairo has mentioned that if UFC has feedback or wants to provide feedback, we are welcome to accepting it by reaching out to the City Forester or Robert Irving.
   - Co-chair Feldstein shared confusion about UFC's role with this change, in particular how would the appeals process work? Robert Irving explained it depends on what section of code is referenced in Title XI. If it is non-development, the appeal would still be brought before the UFC. For development, a separate process would follow through administrative review first and the appeals go to the Chief Hearing Officer as laid out in Title XI. Therefore, there are no changes to the appeals process. Related to heritage trees, although PP&D is completing the permitting, if a heritage tree needs to be delisted and removed, it'll still come before the UFC.
   - Co-chair Feldstein added that there may be crossover issues that may be more appropriate for the UFC to hear than a group that's concentrating on development and is interested in hearing thoughts from PP&D and other commissioners. Robert Irving clarified whether or not UFC is more appropriate for specifically tree-related or UF-related question as it related to regulation versus the Development Review Advisory Committee and the response varies on the question. Robert Irving suggested if there are changes proposed to Title XI, it should go before both groups and will go through a variety of reviews before it is put before Portland City Council and is available to answer any related questions when they arise.
   - Co-chair Feldstein suggested improvement in communications based on what she has observed around permitting communications to the public and proposed having a public group review communications. Robert Irving noted that it is a great comment and PP&D is looking at communication holistically including webpages and content. He also acknowledged that based on his experience this is the most complex tree ordinance he's seen. The Intake and Support Analysis group does well in explaining in both plain and technical language to callers and requests for support. Robert Irving mentioned efforts to review and rebrand permits and documents from UF branding to PP&D and provided a specific example of a recent improvement for post-removal replant by adding a QR code on the permit itself so that instead of leaving it on door hangers.

- Co-chair Feldstein asked for Robert Irving's input on the public comment provided at the beginning of the meeting related to process rather than outcome. Robert Irving described Tree Maintenance Operations would go out and clear the limb from the road and. Whether a tree has fallen in the street or a limb drops in the road, once the immediate issue is addressed, it will be referred to PP&D to go out and take a look at it and determine whether or not additional tree work is needed, if a tree needs to be replanted or removed. If a tree has lost a limb and the tree has not been removed, tree inspectors do go out and assess the tree at that time. Robert Irving expressed interest in looking into this. They do an assessment of the tree and determine whether or not the limb needs to be pruned. Co-chair Feldstein thanked Robert Irving for his input. Robert Irving offered again to return to a future UFC meeting.
- Co-chair Feldstein asked for Robert Irving's thoughts on the public comment shared earlier in the meeting. Robert Irving responded that if a limb falls in the road, TMO clears out limb in road. Whether a tree has fallen in the street, once they've taken care of issue refer it to PP&D's team and take a look if additional tree work is required or tree needs to be planted. We might look at if it's a tree that has dropped a limb. We have tree inspectors go out and inspect. Robert Irving is interested in the address. There is a moratorium on elms during certain times of the year.

UF Commission Community Agreements

1. Co-chair Plack provided background information on the UF Commission Community Agreements. The document was shared in the chat and posted with the meeting agenda.
2. Commissioner Bechtold recalled earlier discussions when creating the agreements, noting that many commissioners serve on other boards where agreements are reviewed at the start of meetings. She emphasized revisiting them regularly, so they remain meaningful and integrated into commission culture.
3. Commissioner Lilly thanked everyone involved in developing the agreements and noted that they may need occasional updates. He described them as a living document and emphasized collective accountability.
4. Commissioner Nelson said the UFC rarely has difficult discussions with dissention but emphasized the importance of ground rules, especially in the advent of Zoom and hybrid meetings. He supported periodic review and orienting new commissioners to the agreements as essential for long-term success.
5. Commissioner McMillan appreciated the work behind the agreements and suggested a brief reminder session at the start or end of each meeting.
6. Co-chair Feldstein thanked Commissioner Bechtold and Commissioner Lilly for their leadership. While friction is rare, she noted appeals as an area where tensions arise and suggested pre-briefings or debriefings. She raised the challenge of how to "call in" commissioners when agreements aren't followed.
7. Commissioner Van de Mark reflected on how the agreements help build and shift culture. She suggested focusing on one agreement at a time as a way to maintain engagement and foster consistency, especially during moments of conflict.
8. Commissioner Bechtold emphasized orienting new commissioners and grounding difficult discussions, especially appeals, in shared agreements. She suggested future work sessions addressing how to respond to infractions on community agreements and recommended a short review period at each meeting.
9. Commissioner Lilly noted the list may be too long to read each time but suggested reviewing one agreement per meeting. He raised the question of how to handle disruptions in public meetings and whether the UFC needs formal procedures similar to a "sergeant-at-arms" model.
10. Commissioner Clapp appreciated the group's engagement and emphasized maintaining shared understanding of the commission's goals. He questioned whether the chair would take on the role of enforcing order and suggested adding "engagement" to the agreement themes.
11. Co-chair Plack summarized process ideas in the chat:
    Review periodically (annually?)
    Agree to call each other in and to be called in.
    Review at the beginning of the meeting. Focus on one and focus on an engagement of it.
    Spend a few minutes at the beginning and think about which agreements would be most important for the meeting agenda.
    Center in shared goals
    Starting this before public comment.
    Anything to add?
12. Commissioner Clapp supported the proposals but raised time concerns given the length of public comment. He suggested budgeting intentional time for the review.
13. Co-chair Plack noted the co-chairs can reserve time for this purpose.
14. Commissioner Clapp reaffirmed the importance of addressing public comment issues rather than leaving them unresolved.

15. Co-chair Feldstein added that public comment can be unpredictable and time-consuming. She supported discussing how to respond to different types of comments. On engagement, she noted the commission is sometimes inconsistent with round-robin participation and encouraged using it selectively for important or contentious items.
16. Commissioner Nelson appreciated when the chair ensures everyone has a chance to speak.
17. Commissioner McMillan emphasized the value of hearing multiple perspectives, especially during contentious items, and the importance of explaining commissioner reasoning to the public.
18. Commissioner Lilly said facilitators should ensure balanced participation, redirect when someone dominates, and create space for others to speak.
19. Commissioner Bechtold agreed, noting she often needs time to process but appreciates having space to contribute.
20. Commissioner Van de Mark appreciated this conversation and emphasized that commissioners engage differently and that facilitators can pause to invite quieter voices without pressuring anyone.
21. Co-chair Plack observed that Zoom tools such as chat and hand-raising support participation. She noted new commissioners may need extra time to get comfortable. She and co-chair Feldstein will follow up on integrating agreements into meeting structure.
22. Co-chair Feldstein encouraged commissioners to point out behavioral concerns and suggested using round robin selectively for significant votes.
23. Co-chair Plack emphasized hearing from all commissioners before votes and thanked the group for the thoughtful discussion.
24. Commissioner Van de Mark reminded the group to give facilitators grace as they support cultural development.

UF Commission Field Tour in Spring

1. Co-chair Plack introduced the idea of a spring field tour and noted past discussions. She asked for ideas, locations, and logistical considerations.
2. Commissioner Van de Mark suggested including a tree-planting activity.
3. Commissioner McMillan suggested visiting community leaders or specialists in climate resilience, tree planting, arboretum management, or tree identification.
4. Commissioner Lilly proposed visiting Heritage Trees, Bill Naito Award winners, and observing UF services such as participating in a ride-along or visiting an arborist site.
5. Commissioner Clapp supported touring development sites to see how policies have been applied over the last 10 years, including tree retention and planting constraints.
6. Commissioner Van de Mark suggested a “tree/infrastructure walk,” similar to those done by Friends of Trees, to observe interactions between trees and sidewalks, pruning, water meters, etc.
7. Commissioner Nelson recommended minimizing vehicle use and focusing on small geographic areas to observe policy successes, failures, planting opportunities, and maintenance needs.
8. Co-chair Feldstein noted enthusiasm for all the ideas and suggested these might become quarterly or triannual outings. She acknowledged prior barriers to arranging development site visits.
9. Commissioner Bechtold volunteered to help plan and suggested quarterly optional outings.
10. Commissioner Clapp also volunteered to help.
11. Commissioner McMillan noted commissioners may have useful community contacts.
12. Co-chair Plack asked whether tours should occur outside regular meeting times.
13. Commissioner Bechtold said scheduling during business hours can be challenging for her, but the emphasis should be on when community members can attend, and we get the greatest participation from commissioners.
14. Tiana Bernard shared that UF has events such as regular plantings that are scheduled a month in advance and offered to share information with the UFC.
15. Co-chair Plack invited suggestions for other topics.
16. Commissioner Nelson requested that the UFC designate someone to work on the 2025 annual report required by the Tree Code and bylaws. Reports have not been completed for about four years. He described the form as brief 1-2 pages and noted the difficulty of reconstructing past events the longer they are delayed. He had previously completed this for UFC.
17. Commissioner Lilly asked whether the UFC will meet in December. Staff confirmed planning is underway and alternative times could be considered if needed.
18. Co-chair Feldstein responded to Commissioner Nelson’s comment, noting that Brian Landoe had planned to draft the report for review. Belinda Judelman will follow up.

Meeting adjourned.

Audio recordings of UF Commission meetings are available upon request.