



CITY OF TACOMA SUSTAINABLE TACOMA COMMISSION MEETING NOTES

Date: July 12, 2016

Commission Members Present: Philip Coughlan, Chrissy Cooley, Sarah Chessman, Lowell Wyse, Agnes Pate, Peter Hickman, Josh Jorgensen

Commission Members Excused: Alison Bauer, Lexi Brewer, Theda Braddock, Alyssa Illich

Others Present: Kristin Lynett, Emily Watts, Michael Carey, Jeanne Walters, Lauren McKenna, Lisa Rennie, Clara Brown, Ron Stuart, Ulysses Martin, Geoffrey Smyth, Desiree Pooley

▪ **Roll Call**

The meeting was called to order at 3:30pm.

▪ **Approval of June 14, 2016 Meeting Notes**

The June meeting notes were approved. (It was noted that the Google doc link needs to be sent out).

▪ **Review of July Agenda**

The July agenda was approved.

▪ **Urban Forestry Background and Context**

- Mike Carey introduced himself as the new Urban Forester in the Office of Environmental Policy and Sustainability (OEPS).
- Tacoma has a history of urban forestry. The first tree ordinance was passed in 1927 regarding the right of way usage and responsibility. While there were many other historical ordinances, Tacoma hired its first full-time urban forester in 2008. In 2010, the City adopted the 30% canopy coverage goal (by the year 2030). In 2015, urban forestry moved to OEPS.
- One member asked if tree topping is ever the preferred method. Mike explained that yes, historically it was, but had a lot to do with requirements for power lines. Replacing trees is an alternate option so that trees grow to an appropriate height can be planted instead. The City is trying to follow the "Right Tree, Right Place" method of planning.
- In 1992, the Urban Forest Management Plan (UFMP) was created with partnerships between the City of Tacoma, Metro Parks Tacoma, Tacoma Public Utilities and Port of Tacoma. It was the first comprehensive look at what practices exist and how a strategy to standardize practices could be implemented. One member asked if this was referenced in the Environmental Action Plan (EAP). No, as the UFMP is not well known. Some work in urban forestry tapered out in the 2000's due to budget cuts.

- The UFMP has 6 defined goals that cover the areas of staff, legality, formal tree care programs, record keeping, and changing TPU's participation from line clearance to energy clearance; all in the effort to allow for a socio-political climate where urban forestry synergy can flourish.
- One member asked if the UFMP only applied to canopy on municipal land. It does include the right of way. The UFMP recommended that the City take responsibility for the right of way instead of property owners, so as to allow for greater standardization.
- In OEPS, urban forestry works with other departments like open areas in Environmental Services as it relates greatly to stormwater management. Urban forestry also relates to community and economic development as a method of making Tacoma an attractive destination and enhances livability.
- Our annual urban forestry budget is about \$1.31 per capita (average over five years). This does not include capital costs, Metro Parks or TPU. The budget allocation breaks down to about 26% maintenance, 55% planning, 5% management and 14% other.
- The City has had an average of 1.2 full-time employees for urban forestry. The national average for a City of our size is nine full-time employees.
- The new UFMP would be created in the next biennium as funding is currently being proposed during this budget cycle. It would look at existing canopy, gap analysis, code enforcement and more. The six primary components for the new plan would be an existing conditions audit, benchmarking research, cost/benefit analysis, implementation strategies, tree risk reduction plan, and tree and sidewalk operations plan.
- Currently there is no emergency management plan for fires, diseases, pests, or even for delicate situations such as view management or slope management.
- Development often contributes largely to canopy reduction. The common practice is to completely take out a tree without ever planting a new one. Additional benefits of canopy coverage need to be taken into account during development.
- There are three levels of service within urban forestry: 1) Minimum, reactive to problems, responsive to emergencies; 2) Adequate, responsive to citizen requests, routine tree maintenance, scheduled planting programs; and 3) High, comprehensive long-term plan, preventative care and maintenance, educational outreach, efficient with high-level of customer satisfaction. Currently the City is at a low level of service.
- The next steps are benchmarking research and analyzing existing conditions. An audit is in progress and the budget is not approved for the new UFMP.
- Mr. Martin noted that when he thinks of forest, he thinks of food forest and wonders if there has been any thought about the food, fiber, fuel concept so as to take into account an equity lense. Mike explained that the City provides fruit trees annually to local community gardens. OEPS strategizes with equity in mind. Community health research shows that there is a correlation between lower tree canopy and less healthy populations. Within OEPS, urban forestry hopes to strategize projects in areas of the greatest need. Metro Parks currently has the Swan Creek Food Forest to examine how food forests can look in more urban spaces.
- Member asked what number should be included in the EAP for tree canopy. Mike explained that we are currently planting fewer trees than we are cutting. People find it hard to see the benefits from planting as they come so much later in the tree's life. The urban environment is hard on trees so maintenance and care is essential. They need to be maintained and the City will have to be proactive about disease tree removal.
- Member asked if invasive species are a problem in urban areas. Mike explained that this is not usually the case, as there is often so little space.
- Member asked if Council decides to fund all of EAP, how long it will take to get to a medium or high level of service. Mike explained that he doesn't know this answer currently. He was then asked what the chances are of reaching the 30% canopy coverage by 2030. Mike believes that at the current low level of service, the City will not reach this goal. At a medium level of service the goal might be met.

- **Environmental Action Plan Budget Priorities**

- All members were previously asked to identify priorities within each EAP group. These were then spoken and recorded by Kristi who will compile a list.
- The City is currently in the budget process and hopes to adopt the budget before Thanksgiving.
- A draft budget from the City Manager should be available in October.

- **Staff Updates**

- This will be the last STC meeting for OEPS intern Emily Watts as her internship ends this week.

- **Public Comment**

There was no public comment.

- **Objectives for Next Meeting**

There was no discussion on objectives for next meeting.

- **Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 5:36pm

The next meeting of the Sustainable Tacoma Commission will be Tuesday, August 9, 2016, 3:30 to 5:30 p.m., Tacoma Municipal Building, 747 Market Street, 9th Floor Visibility Center.