

# Tukwila Tree and Environment Advisory Committee

## Meeting Notes

### Meeting 8, April 10, 2013

**Committee Members in Attendance:** Sean Albert, Nancy Eklund, Christian Faltenberger, Sharon Mann, De'Sean Quinn, Stephen Reilly, Don Scanlon, Heidi Watters, Kathleen Wilson

**Committee Members Absent:** None

**Members of the Public in Attendance:** None

**Staff in Attendance:** Carol Lumb, Sandra Whiting, Nora Gierloff

The meeting began at 5:35 p.m.

### Topics of Discussion:

1. Welcome to Committee members and visitors.
2. Public comment: (Time is set aside at the beginning of each meeting for brief public comments; the Committee is meeting in work session format, therefore, questions or comments from the public that come up during the course of the meeting should be directed to staff via e-mail or telephone calls after the meeting. These communications will be passed along to the Committee)

No members of the public were in attendance. Councilmember Quinn read two letters received from the public to the Committee members, the first from Brooke Alford, Tukwila resident who had made a presentation to the Committee about other jurisdictions' urban forestry regulations and the second from David Shumate, former Committee member who owns property in Tukwila.

3. Check-in with Committee members: The Chair asked if Committee members have any questions or comments from the previous meeting that they wanted to discuss.
  - The Chair reviewed Resolution 1767, which established the Advisory Committee, including the Committee make up, responsibilities of the Committee and staff, and schedule.
  - The Committee briefly discussed member's roles and the importance of maintaining impartiality.
4. Housekeeping:
  - The Committee approved the meeting notes from the 3-13-13 meeting with a revision on the second page, under #5, the introductory paragraph to the sections providing Committee revisions to the urban forestry goals and policies.
5. Staff presentation on current landscaping and street tree regulations:

After the PowerPoint presentation, the Committee discussed the following:

#### a. Goal 2, Policies 10 and 11:

- The current landscape code requirement for 40% coverage in 10 years for multi-family – unclear what this means and if it is a reasonable standard. Staff believes it means that of the trees approved and planted in the landscape, they must have 40% canopy

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coverage in 10 years. It does not mean that 40% of the total site area must have 40 percent canopy coverage. It is uncertain if this standard has been monitored and met.

- The need for ensuring that tree and landscape companies doing work in Tukwila meet minimum training requirements for pruning and other tree work. One possible way to do this, which the Committee has discussed previously is using the business license process as a way to require that tree/landscaping companies have some type of minimum training or certification for tree pruning work.
- How to handle any newly adopted landscaping requirements for a recently landscaped property under an old code, on which redevelopment/new development takes place. If there are newly adopted regulations would (for example) a parking lot be required to conform? Staff responded that this could be examined and possibly a time period could be applied – for example if a property were landscaped under an old code within the previous 2 or 3 years, it might be able to be exempted from having to meet new landscape codes.
- Because of commercial parking needs, the cost of providing parking, and potential conflicts with the goal of having more or larger trees in parking lots, the City may need to examine other opportunities to improve tree coverage by planting ROW and establishing medians that can be planted.
- Can allowing projects to be built higher be used as an incentive to increase tree planting/open space? It was discussed that in many areas of the City, the maximum height permitted is not being built to, so that may not be much of an incentive to retain or plant additional trees. However, in some cases surface water utility payments could be an incentive (the less impervious surface, the lower the fee). It was pointed out that the current structure of the surface water utility fees would not be enough of a financial incentive to convert some parking area to trees.
- Using a point system (like the one used in Federal Way or the one proposed for Seattle) to encourage the retention and planting of larger trees as part of a project where landscaping is required; Seattle's urban forester could explain how the point system was developed, especially since the development community was involved with crafting this system.
- What about using green walls and/or roofs as a substitute for trees (where there might not be enough room for additional trees).
- Flexibility is important to build into standards, but there should at least be minimum requirements. Don't forget to incorporate wildlife benefits as part of any tree point system.
- Why are the landscape standards for commercial areas different from those for industrial areas? Is there a way to accommodate more landscaping on industrial sites that takes into account the differing site conditions and development needs in these areas? Allowing permanent landscaping in parking lot corners might be possible, and

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also in employee parking lots, that aren't expected to be used for future truck traffic or new structures.

- Landscape requirements for the industrial area need to take into account that parking lots are considered an asset and that flexibility in their use/reuse for moving product, placing a building should be preserved.
- If the goal is to increase the tree canopy by 1% in the industrial area, how will that be achieved? Can more landscaping/trees be required along the front for screening rather than placing it in the parking lot?

### b. **Goal 3 Policies 6-8.**

#### **Policy 6** – diversity of tree species

- More diversity is good, although it's nice to have the same species of street trees to achieve a certain look – particularly at certain times of the year (like maples during the fall and cherry trees in the spring).
- Why not have a street tree plan that everyone follows?
- Break policy 6 into two policies – have a separate policy for ROW trees. Have a generic diversity statement and require diversity for landscape installations but allow some planting of the same species for street trees (maybe different species between blocks but same species allowed within a block).

#### **Policy 7** – minimum standards

- The need for manuals and whether or not there is money for developing these manuals? Can we adopt a professional organization's standards? Also, make the manual(s) or other more simple manuals available to the public/homeowners for their use.
- Concern about regulations that aren't enforced and the need for ongoing training for staff responsible for inspecting landscape installations and tree damage from construction or other activities.
- Suggestion, when inspecting landscape installations, staff should pull out a couple trees to see that they've been planted correctly.
- Develop handouts like Seattle's client assistance brochures
- Train city staff to know how to correctly prune street trees and trees in parks – send them to training, or bring someone in to train. Also explore the possibility of using volunteers for some tree care in public areas, as some cities do.

#### **Policy 8** – approved/recommended tree list

- Add wildlife to the list of items to take into account for tree selection.

6. The Committee returned to the discussion of proposed policy 1.d. of Goal 1, initially begun at the March 13, 2013 meeting, regarding whether and/or how much to regulate the removal of trees from undeveloped parcels. Staff had prepared a memo with several alternatives for the Committee's consideration. The Committee discussed the following issues:

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- Use a point system to encourage creative site design once a site is ready for development.
  - Safety of removal of trees over a certain height – this is why a permit should be required.
  - Permit should be required for hazardous tree removal but no fee would be charged;
  - Refine the policy to cover all significant trees, as defined by the Zoning Code – four inches or larger in diameter at four feet (breast height).
  - General consensus: prohibit removal of trees from undeveloped parcels until such time as a development or other permit has been approved, (with the exceptions noted). This provides the City and developer a chance to see where trees could be retained as part of proposed development
7. Next Meeting: finish re-review of urban forestry goals and policies; return to Natural Environment goals and policies to ensure consensus from the Committee on goals and policies to recommend to the Planning Commission.
8. The meeting closed at 8:30 pm.
9. **Action Items for staff follow-up:**
- a. Staff will incorporate agreed changes discussed to policy language, using strike-out/underline.