

District of Columbia Urban Forestry Advisory Council  
September 14, 2016  
DRAFT Minutes

The District of Columbia Urban Forestry Advisory Council held its first meeting on Wednesday, September 14, 2016 at 6:30PM at 1200 First St., NE, Washington, D.C. 20002.

The meeting was called to order by Jeff Seltzer, co-chair, at 6:34 pm. Introduction was provided by DOEE Director Tommy Wells

**Agenda Item: Introduction – Tommy Wells**

When Bowser first became mayor, we heard about the disconnect between the District citizen’s wishes and tree programs. UFAC is an opportunity for us to come together, and work for the citizens. DDOT and DOEE have strengthened coordination (MOUs), aiding us in the development of the UFAC.

Unique group here. This is a citizen activist’s dream group. Earl Eutsler (UFAC co-chair) is now a permanent appointee at DDOT. Jeff and Earl, as co-chairs, will help us lead a coherent, stakeholder involved transformation around how we deal with our tree canopy. DOEE will continue and advance our tree planting. Current goal: 15000, and would like to make that official.

**Agenda Item: Group introductions**

Council Members Present: Jeff Seltzer (DOEE), Earl Eutsler (DDOT), Brent Sisco (DPR), Perry Wheelock (NPS), Robin Snyder (GSA), Maureen Holman (DC Water), Mark Buscaino (Casey Trees), Nathan McElroy (Pepco), Irv Sheffey (community representative)

Council Members Absent: Delores Bushong (community representative), Dennis Chestnut (community representative)

Staff: Luke Cole (DOEE), Steve Saari (DOEE), Ben Stutz (DOEE),

**Agenda Item: Presentations by DDOT and DOEE**

Presentations: Setting a baseline of what the District is doing for the council.

Earl Eutsler, DDOT

- Overview of tree-friendly initiatives underway
- Working on tree canopy in DC for over 13y. Huge strides have been made, but no one department or group can achieve the tree cover needed alone.
- Themes: collaborate and pool wherever possible. Promote best practices. Innovate together. Sustain and maintain.

- Urban Forestry Administration (UFA): original mission was to care for the city's street trees. But has grown to take care of vegetated bioretention, permit removal of trees, planting and maintenance of DC public land (e.g., schools).
- Dramatic changes: used to plant same number of trees removed (1:1). 3y ago, planted 4-5:1 removed.
- Can't get to 40% with street trees alone. But for some populations in DC, it's the only forest people know. Best case: street trees are 10% of the District's canopy.
- Gauging success: service requests. 12000–15000/y. Proxy for public perceptions of the program. Through this, we can get a sense of public desires. DDOT is trying to catch up on deferred maintenance. Last 4–5y, calls to remove trees has been surpassed by requests to prune/manicure trees. So public is ready for a healthy tree canopy.
- Making ground on open tree spaces (there are 15000), lowest ever. Calls to plant trees has tripled.
- Citizens are interested in the UFAC's goals, and we have a great opportunity here.
- Other initiatives: collaborating with the public. Large staff of arborists, and can professionalize the public, like by partnering with Casey Trees to inventory parks, etc. Coordinating with utilities. Trees and wires used to simply lead to trees being cut down. Utilities are re-engineering wires to work with the tree canopy, and pruning. Working with DC Water with Bloom. Incredible integration of our purposes for the benefits of trees.
- Forward looking standards and practices in partnerships with DOEE. Stormwater, Tree Summit, GI.
- Goal of this council: maximize what is possible with trees in DC

Steve Saari, DOEE

- 4 areas: tracking (along with UFA). We work to track for our stormwater permit, for reporting to EPA for CBP goals.
- DOEE owns 0 land. So work through planning efforts, permitting, incentivizations.
- Incentives: UFA did research and found that 2 areas were prime targets for planting: private lands, and large open spaces. Both are areas that DOEE has built incentive programs to keep trees and plant trees.
  - Open spaces are easier, b/c they are larger landholders and agencies. Coordinated with UFA/DGS/DPR/OP/DCPS/DC Water to apply for a grant through sustainable DC to develop and implement plans to plants on school and parkland parcels. Have moved on to continue doing this and expanding it through Canopy 3,000 (C3K) onto DGS and NPS lands. Want to continue growing that during and post-C3K.
  - Private parcels: more of them in the city. Majority of land in DC. But so many people to reach, and have no control over whether they plant trees or not, so we incentivize. Partner with Casey Trees (CT) and Washington Parks & People, funds through DOEE Stormwater to start RiverSmart Homes to incentivize tree planting in homes for a small co-pay. CT works with the homeowner to find and plant the right tree in the right place. Also have option to plant tree and apply for a rebate (\$50/small, \$100/large canopy tree).

- Other incentives: Green Area Ratio: property owners have to have a certain % of green space, and have option to choose how to do this (planting or maintaining trees, for example). Also can apply for a stormwater discount on utility bill (DC Water and DOEE incentives). Stormwater regulations encourage homeowners to keep tree and forested land on their properties. If you do work, you can plant trees to help meet stormwater regulations.
- Planning: developing plans to determine where and how to do new plantings, and how to engage the citizens and other interested parties. A coordinated effort, like this group, can help us provide the useful information we'd need to guide those efforts.

**Agenda item: Introductions and reporting out on role of each group represented in the UFAC**

Jeff Seltzer, DOEE: averaging around 11K trees per year, and we're challenged to reach 15K going forward. Go around the room to see what people want to get out of the UFAC

Perry Wheelock, NPS: NPS is an enthusiastic respondent to the C3K effort. Have ID'd space to plant 1000 trees, which is tricky in a historic district like DC. Working internally and put money toward planting goals. NPS is planting trees as a gift from Canada. Recently won award to plant trees in historic locations. In talks with Casey Trees on how to accelerate volunteer opportunities with focus in NPC East unit as well as RCP.

Nathan McElroy, Pepco: maintenance program (2y cycle) to maintain the 800 miles of Pepco wires in DC. 400 mi/y are evaluated and maintained. Resource planners help create the work plans before given to a tree maintenance group. Keeps contact with UFA. Deploy tree-growth regulators, 1000 trees in summer 2016. Engineering enhancements to accommodate trees where they can. Partnership with Casey Trees (Right Tree, Right Place program), similar to RiverSmart program, but like RS, it is difficult to get people to take part in it. Tree caused outages: usually send out a UFC arborist to assess the situation. Usually not UFA trees, typically private trees. In June, 2016, there were 76 outages from one storm, and not a single one was a UFA street tree. Significant drop in tree-caused outages in the last 5 years.

Irv Sheffey: coming from perspective of former community organizer and environmental educator, a major concern—in terms of community—is to develop stewardship among citizens. We need to do our homework and decide how to talk to people who don't yet value the trees so they are maintained, and to encourage more plantings. As a body, wants UFAC to come up with ideas to appeal to a broader, deeper public, which will make all of our efforts much easier to accomplish. Average citizen has minimal bandwidth for trees, nature, etc. How do we attract *that* audience and aid them in wanting to be more actively engaged.

Brent Sisco, DPR: His agency is much more reactive than proactive as far as tree planting goes, and think that can be switched. Goal: master planning for trees on public parks, trying to find balance between open meadows and forested spots. Have a lot of trees that come to DPR properties that don't live more than a few years (*anecdotal*), but would like to improve and quantify that. DPR doesn't have money for tree maintenance, so try to be smart about tree planting locations. Third: McMillian project will have a LOT of trees. Working with the developers to plant the right trees in the right places. TREE STANDARDS: cannot find an approved tree planting list for DC, though can find it in surrounding counties.

Mark Buscaino, Casey Trees: easy tactical things this group can do to support one another. Casey Trees works from plantings, to easements, to budget hearings, congressional hearings. Always looking to quasi-train staff in any/other groups to learn how to maintain and care for trees. Pepco's Right Tree Right Place program is a marathon, not sprint. We need to look at our work through a similar lens. Our work will show benefits now, but will really come to life in decades. Working to get a slip into Pepco bills offering to plant trees. Coordinate with DDOT/DPR to source trees. As a group, we can have a real impact on creating easements to protect more land. We can do more of this. We can also put trees on roofs, need to encourage that and work with developers to get height limits modified—HUGE benefits. We could take this to city council. Trees will need to get more soil, and need to support programs to get tree boxes and silva-cells throughout the city. Every street will be torn up in the next 75 years, we can set standards to do this. Big opportunity: easement and engineering solutions. At the end of the day, development isn't going to stop, but we can identify easement locations and require developers to provide soil and space for trees.

Robin Snyder, GSA: planting long-lived and appropriate trees all within the constraints of a historic district like DC. A lot of GSA land is paved over. Challenges with stormwater obligations, and try to gird against climate change while also trying to get more GI on and around buildings. We need to make green infrastructure solutions as straightforward and standardized as possible. Goal: finding engineering solutions that will integrate with and replace bollards.

Maureen Holman, DC Water: thinking innovatively on how we maintain and care for our trees. Look into different ways to protect the water supply, which could be remedied or offset by non-potable watering. Leverage stormwater collection to offset. Also interested in feeding the trees, the right way. Trenchless technology for small root intrusions offers possibilities, but there are limits, and sometimes need to remove trees that have broken through sewer lines (and they're often big and strong, given the nutrients). Perhaps looking into areas where trees can't be planted as a way to focus our efforts. No recorded easements for any of DC Waters infrastructure. DC Water knows where these no-go sites are, so we can coordinate on those. Using BLOOM to feed trees the right way. The intent is to produce a product that can be customized as much, potting soil, etc. DC Water doesn't own any property, but operate on DC and Fed property. Would like to increase plantings by Blue Plains along 295.

**Agenda Item: Straws drawn for community member terms, as per Tree Canopy Protection Amendment Act of 2016**

3y: Irv Sheffey

2y: Delores Bushong

1y: Dennis Chestnut

**Agenda Item: Brainstorming of issues for UFAC consideration:**

Prepare for conversations on Solar and Trees; DC Sun: Irv S. and Anya Schoolman

NPS: regeneration of the tree canopy, including shrub space and growth.

Irv: need to formally address invasives. Anacostia Watershed Society tries to address this.

- DOEE has an operation to reduce invasives, and to coordinate with the existing groups knowledgeable and capable of removing.
- Rock Creek Conservancy does a training on IDing and removing invasives.

EE: we are open to suggestions from members AND from other groups. As well as activities, like bike tours of notable trees, etc.

Irv: ward-by-ward tour so we can be made aware of issues in other wards which would build our literacy of issues in other wards. Earth Conservation Corps is looking to have people use and tour their pumping facilities.

EE: discuss changes in the special trees bill. Creating an inventory of all of the Heritage trees.

- NPS records "witness trees" which are similar to Heritage trees. They will work in concert.

Mark B: pick a tough topic like trees and solar, bring in some council members, and discuss it with them to get a sense of what their constituents are thinking. Can we sit down with an engineering department at DDOT to discuss this to walk through what we can expect? Is there something the UFAC needs to know that could help our advising?

Nathan McElory: next summer, the Int'l Society of Horticulture is hosting their conference here in DC. Opportunity to tap that group.

**Agenda Item: Next steps**

- Next meeting date, perhaps do calls at first, but meet in some capacity. We can use the website.
- Bios and headshot for each UFAC member
- Confirm terms and members for UFAC
- Identify DGS replacement for Mark Chambers

**Agenda Item: Adjournment**

Upon motion duly made by Jeff Seltzer, and seconded unanimously, the Council voted to adjourn.  
Meeting adjourned at 8:08 pm.

Respectfully submitted,



Luke Cole

September 21, 2016

Date

Recorder and transcriber: Luke Cole