



PRCS/Tree Board Sub-Committee Meeting Summary Notes

May 30, 2013 6:15-7:45 p.m.
Shoreline City Hall Council Chambers

Board Members Present: Betsy Robertson, Christine Southwick, Garry Lingerfelt
Staff Present: Dick Deal, Director; Lynn Peterson, Administrative Assistant III

Purpose Statement: To provide the opportunity for these board members to increase their knowledge and understanding of the Seattle City Light (SCL) vegetation language in the Franchise Agreement, both current and proposed.

Public comment:

- Lance Young, Shoreline, distributed Vegetation Management Guidelines that he would like to have included in the updated agreement as well as line clearance diagrams. The subcommittee questioned the data source for the 20 foot line clearance assertion. Mr. Young presented copies of SCL's website that reference a line clearing standard of 10 feet plus 3 years' growth which Mr. Young stated constitutes the 20 feet. Mr. Deal clarified that 3 years' growth varies from tree to tree.
- Marti Davis, Shoreline, wondered how Seattle City Light handles bird nests found in ROW trees.
- Karen Benson, Shoreline, reported that trees were poorly pruned in her neighborhood in conjunction with the installation of bike lanes by someone who reported to have been from the City. Mr. Deal will follow up with this citizen.

Mr. Deal described the line clearing schedule followed by SCL. Brent Schmidt from SCL has agreed to attend the June PRCS/Tree Board meeting to provide information and answer questions.

The committee reviewed Ordinance 617 together. No questions.

The committee read through the current franchise agreement together. There were no comments. Then the group read the draft proposed language together line by line.

Questions and Comments from the Board:

Ms. Robertson:

- Are there sustainable ways to address line clearance issues such as removal of the wrong tree and replanting with more appropriate trees for the space? Mr. Deal: The Board will be establishing an Urban Tree Management Plan later this year funded by a Department of Natural Resources grant to address long-term solutions to existing problems. Also up for discussion will be the Approved Street Tree List.
- Would the City ever develop its own ordinance regarding line clearance? Mr. Deal: That is not likely.
- Under which circumstances would the City deny SCL's request to proceed? Mr. Deal: Tree removal and pruning can be denied if they are in violation of existing public safety standards or other compelling reasons as defined by the City. An example would be not having an approved right of way safety strategy in place.
- She requests clarification from Seattle City Light regarding the 20 foot line clearance concern raised by Mr. Young.
- The plan for tree replacement should be included in the notification of work so that citizens are aware of the replacement strategy.



Ms. Southwick:

- What are the conditions under which the City can waive the need to grind stumps? Mr. Deal: The receipt of an advance work plan by SCL will allow the City to provide input based on our assessments. Example: the City recommends against stump grinding if the stump is located on a steep slope or sensitive area.
- What is the agreement with SCL regarding the topping of central leader trees? She recommended that the city require tree replacement in lieu of tree topping. Mr. Deal: Removing the central leader from a coniferous tree is not good for the overall health of the tree and causes weak growth at the top of the tree requiring more pruning in the future, but if the tree is directly under the power lines there is no other option to maintain clearance.
- Ms. Southwick wondered whether situations could be specified that could waive the 12 foot restriction; for example, under high voltage lines. Mr. Deal: If the trees are on SCL property they have the ability to establish the limited height restriction.

Mr. Lingerfelt:

- The agreement language is process heavy and lacks definition of an end-product that takes into account aesthetics and the community's aspirations. Insofar as the City represents the desires of its constituents the community's recommendations ought to be included in the requests made to SCL.
- The Letter of Understanding says all the right things, but their own document is in conflict with itself regarding the 12 foot restriction and the tree list they publish.
- Recommends City input to SCL that goes beyond practical application and julie requests that recommendations reflect the community's desires, long-term vision, and desired outcomes.
- We are proud of our Tree City designation. The same organization that established Tree City USA has a Utility designation. Mr. Lingerfelt recommends that the City makes SCL aware of this designation and request that they consider adoption.
- It is difficult to negotiate with SCL when their work is contracted out and the contractors often don't seem to know who they really work for. Mr. Deal responded that the City is engaged in conversation with SCL *and* their contractors.
- Several cities are beginning to look at new vegetation management strategies because of the same issues facing Shoreline. The aesthetic issues of concern may not need to be so drastic with ongoing conversation about intentional pruning. SCL acknowledges on their website the radical amount of change they've had to undergo over the last 15 years. He encourages language in the franchise agreement that provides room for update and maintenance according to improved best management practices.

Mr. Deal reviewed a list of City of Shoreline strategies that reflect the City's commitment to environmental health and sustainability. He assured the Board that the City is interested in holding SCL accountable to a high standard of tree care.

Next Steps

- Ms. Southwick will approach the Bird Observatory Board members for guidelines for tree trimming/removal related to bird nesting.
- Ms. Robertson would like the questions expressed by these board members to be addressed by SCL to the Board as a whole.
- Mr. Lingerfelt expressed appreciation for the way the City is listening to the voices of the community as the City moves forward in their negotiations.
- No further sub-committee meetings were deemed to be necessary at this time.