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From: [Jean Hilde](#)

Sent: Thursday, March 3, 2022 3:28:57 PM

To: [City Council](#)

Subject: [EXTERNAL] For City Council Strategic Planning Workshop March 4 & 5, 2022

Sensitivity: Normal

Attachments:

[Jean Hilde Background Paper re Proposal for Urban Forestry Advisory Panel Tree Board.docx](#) 

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Thank you for sharing with Council! :-)

If anyone would like to have the referenced attachments, please let me know.

Jean Hilde

The PRCS/T Board has been asked to present a recommendation to City Council regarding the Tree Code Team's proposed Urban Forestry Advisory Panel (UFAP)

Regarding the PRCS/T Board's purview to make such a recommendation:

"The Board may take its own initiative to make a recommendation [to City Council] if desired."

Jan. 7, 2022 email from Colleen Kelly to Bill Franklin, Jean Hilde, Sara Lane and Dan Johnson.

It seems more than likely that City Council, upon consideration of the Tree Code Team's proposal, would reasonably ask "Well, what does our appointed Tree Board think about this?"

The Tree Code Team's proposal for an Urban Forestry Advisory Panel

"To establish consistent oversight and accountability for the city-wide urban forest and tree management decisions, a single source of expertise should be created to better coordinate and respond to the public's questions about the trees within Shoreline and the needs of diminishing canopy. The Urban Forestry Advisory Panel would be composed of five, seven, nine or eleven community members/volunteers with experience and background in urban ecology, urban forestry, urban wildlife, arboriculture, climatology, etc."

See: Tree Code Team's Scenarios for Urban Forest Advisory Panel vs. Tree Board, Tree Code Team's Proposed Amendment for Urban Forestry Advisory Panel and Tree Code Team's Proposed Organizational Chart including Urban Forestry Advisory Panel, attached.

The Tree Code Team's Alternate Proposals

Scenario 1 - Formation of Urban Forestry Panel: Establish the UFAP as a citizen panel which would advise the PRCS/T Board, the Planning Commission, and city staff on the city's urban canopy, including public and private trees. PRCS/T Board would remain in its current form. UFAP would operate under the aegis of the Planning Commission.

Scenario 2 – Repurposing Existing Tree Board: Establish a stand-alone, dedicated Tree Board (or UFAP), separate from the PRCS Board, which would advise the City Council, the Planning Commission, and city staff on the city's urban canopy, including public and private trees. The UFAP/Tree Board would operate under the aegis of the Planning Commission. The PRCS Board would no longer be the "Tree Board."

Two more (non-Tree Code Team) options that could be considered

Recommend Council's own suggestion: City Council has expressed interest in and support for dividing the current PRCS/T Board, with its "broad scope", into two separate boards, a Parks & Tree Board and an Arts/Culture/Recreation Board. *See below.*

Make no recommendation: Leave current status as is, with no changes to the PRCS/T Board.

City Council has expressed interest in and support for dividing the current PRCS/T Board, with its "broad scope", into two separate boards.

City Council recognized the potential benefit in dividing the responsibilities of the PRCS/T Board at its Annual Strategic Planning Workshop on March 5, 2021 (*as recorded in PRCS/T Board meeting minutes of March 25, 2021*):

"One idea shared was a possibility of making two Boards with one specifically focused on Parks and Trees and the other focused on Recreation, Cultural and Community Services to align with the new organizational structure. Several [council members] recognized that this board has a broad scope so potentially breaking into two Boards might make sense."

Trees were a primary focus during Council's Strategic Planning Workshop, including tree codes, regulations, protections and future actions. Councilmembers who spoke in favor of stronger tree protections included Scully, Robertson, and Roberts (all of whom are current Councilmembers.)

During the workshop, then-Deputy Mayor (now Mayor) Scully stated that the Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services/Tree Board's scope is broad, and that provides the Board an opportunity to balance various priorities. While he and other members of the Council expressed concern about "single-issue" boards, they stated they would be interested in the exploration of dividing the current Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services/Tree Board into two separate boards, the first being a Recreation, Cultural and Community Services Board, with focus on recreation, arts and culture and potentially human services, and the second being a Parks and Tree Board, with a focus on physical parks and open space and publicly owned trees. Councilmember Robertson suggested performing an analysis of the scope of the current Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services/Tree Board.

Please see the attached Shoreline City Council Summary Minutes Of Special Meeting, Annual Strategic Planning Workshop, Friday, March 5 and Saturday, March 6, 2021 for the full discussion [bold emphasis added by J.Hilde for ease of location]

In addition, we now have three new council members who have also expressed support for trees and the environment:

John Ramsdell: *"Members of the Council have played and will continue to play an essential role in mitigating the effects of global warming... Our future as a species depends on it."* Mr. Ramsdell was instrumental in the creation of the new Westminster Park and frequently submitted public comment at Council meetings in favor of parks and trees.

Laura Mork: Has served on Ronald Wastewater Board and Planning Commission so is presumably in favor of citizen advisory boards. *"I support park improvements, bike and sidewalk connections, trees, and efforts to reduce our climate footprint... Green spaces and trees provide many environmental benefits, and are good for our mental health."* She has been in favor of increasing tree replacement fees-in-lieu based on the dbh of the tree in question: *"Vice Chair Mork pointed out that basing the replacement value on tree size could result in a fee that is 3 or 4 times greater for a 48-inch caliper tree."* (*Minutes of October 7, 2021 Planning Commission meeting*)

Eben Pobee: *"Shoreline's decision-making process should be easier to understand so that everyone can provide input."* (*Edit: Providing input to and communicating with the Tree Board is sometimes an area of concern and frustration to citizens, as expressed in numerous public comments.*)

(All new City Council candidates, including Chris Roberts, were endorsed by the Sierra Club in 2021.)

Shoreline established its Tree Board in 2012 to qualify as a Tree City USA.
At the time, Council considered creating a "stand alone" Tree Board.

In 2011, when discussing the Tree City USA requirements, City Council considered creating a "stand alone" Tree Board and staff even drafted a proposed ordinance: *"The Shoreline Tree Board is hereby created. The board shall be advisory to the city council and supported by the Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Department, with a primary responsibility for making policy recommendations concerning the management of public trees located on City-owned public property and in City rights-of-way. The Tree Board shall be comprised of seven members who reside in or own property in the city of Shoreline and who have training or experience in environmental sciences, forestry, horticulture, arboriculture, landscaping, or urban design."*

Public comment was unanimously in support of a separate, stand-alone Tree Board. However, due to concerns about extra staff time and costs that a stand-alone board would require, Council eventually followed staff recommendations to add "Tree Board" to the Parks, Recreation & Cultural Services Board.

City Council Agenda 2/13/2012: "Adoption of Ordinance No. 617, Designating a Responsible Individual for the Management of City-Owned Public Trees in the City of Shoreline and Establishing a Tree Board"
<https://www.shorelinewa.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/13813/635180312688300000>

UFAP Scenario 2 echoes the Council's original "stand alone" tree board language. It also echoes the requirement that board members have relevant experience and backgrounds in urban ecology, urban forestry, urban wildlife, arboriculture, climatology, etc. By including that language in their draft "stand alone" Tree Board ordinance, clearly staff felt it was important for Tree Board members to have specialized knowledge and experience. Unfortunately, with the decision to addend the Tree Board to the PRCS Board, that important selection criterion fell away.

Many of our neighboring communities have stand-alone boards or commissions dedicated to trees.
Most (if not all) have advisory authority over private and public trees under an Urban Forestry Plan.

Seattle has an Urban Forestry Commission which advises the Mayor and City Council concerning the establishment of policy and regulations governing the protection, management, and conservation of trees, public and private, in the City of Seattle.

Lake Forest Park's Tree Board advises its City Council on policy and regulatory issues involving trees. The **Everett** Tree Committee is advisory to its Park Commission.

The **Woodinville** Tree Board makes policy recommendations regarding tree related issues such as tree preservation, planting and care. The Board maintains the City's Tree City USA status as well as updates the Community Urban Forestry Plan.

Edmonds' Citizens' Tree Board assists City officials in developing a tree ordinance and an Urban Forest Management Program.

Redmond's Environmental Sustainability Advisory Committee, while not a Tree Board per se, oversees the city's plan to expand green space and tree canopy on both public and private lands.

See: Neighboring communities that have stand-alone boards or commissions dedicated to trees, attached.

During the recent January 2022 PRCS/T Board discussion of street tree notifications, a board member pointed out the difficulties inherent in having disparate codes for different trees: *"I feel like this conversation just highlights the need for these other codes to be synchronized in some way. I mean, as much as this might be helpful for the roughly 33 [public] trees that will fall under it, there are vastly more trees that are impacted in development projects and I feel like that's still unresolved."*

Interestingly, back during the 2011 discussion of the proposed Tree Board ordinance, staff stated *"...an advisory tree board would help facilitate citizen input and recommendations for the annual community forestry work plan, and could focus on the development of other urban forestry work items."* [i.e., staff did not differentiate between public and private trees but used the unified terms "community forestry" and "urban forestry."] Further, staff stated *"The two major disadvantages of not having a standalone board is that board members might not have specific tree management and care expertise, and that the tree board will also be providing recommendations and input on trees outside the park system that may be unfamiliar to the PRCS Board."* [i.e. staff anticipated the Tree Board would advise on non-public trees]

During the 2011 discussion, City Councilmember Winstead followed up by asking about the number of jurisdictions in Washington State that include privately owned trees in their public tree management ordinances. The State Department of Natural Resources responded: *"There are no rules or regulations requiring cities to specifically address private trees (in their public tree management ordinances.) As a matter of fact, it is rare indeed for Cities to become involved with private-property trees, as this is often viewed as a threat to private property rights. Regarding cities that currently regulate privately-owned trees only a couple, Kirkland and Redmond, come to mind."*

<https://www.shorelinewa.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/13813/635180312688300000>

In the decade since then, the hesitancy of cities to manage private trees along with public trees has changed, as evidenced by the number of our neighboring cities that have established Tree Boards and tree codes that manage both public and private trees under an urban canopy or forestry management program. For instance, Everett's Tree Committee *"... on issues concerning the revision or establishment of standards or regulations concerning the city's urban forestry, the tree committee shall provide its recommendations to the city's planning commission in addition to the parks commission since these issues may affect the city's comprehensive plan, zoning code, subdivision code and other regulations."*

Such unified tree programs are imperative in the age of climate change. The PRCS/T Board recognized this with its adopted Vision Statement for the 2014 Urban Forest Strategic Plan (UFSP): *"Shoreline's urban forest is a healthy and cohesive ecosystem that is valued and cared for through community stewardship."* "Cohesive ecosystem" is defined as *"...an assemblage of both native and non-native species crossing public and private property lines, making it contiguous and functioning as a system."*

The 2014 UFSP's six Top Key Objectives also address the importance of a unified urban tree plan:

1. Achieve climate-appropriate degree of tree cover, *community-wide*
2. Establish a tree population suitable for the urban environment and adapted to the regional environment
3. *Comprehensive* inventory of the tree resource to direct its management and a *comprehensive* tree establishment program
4. Develop and implement a *comprehensive* urban forest management plan for *private and public property*
5. Develop and maintain adequate funding to implement a *city-wide* urban forest management plan
6. Employ and train adequate staff to implement *city-wide* urban forestry plan/program

<http://cosweb.ci.shoreline.wa.us/uploads/attachments/par/urban%20forestry/2014UFSP.pdf>

With the advent of climate change, municipalities are learning that development can and must be balanced with preservation of the urban canopy.

Since the year 2000, the City of Shoreline has amended its Tree Code 12 times. Unfortunately, eight of those amendments, some with multiple changes nested within them, have been exemptions to the Tree Code that allow even more tree removals, including:

- ~ exempting the MUR-70' and commercial zones from tree retention requirements
- ~ exempting some tree removals from replacement requirements
- ~ reducing replacement tree ratios from 2 to 4 replacement trees to 1 to 3 replacement trees
- ~ adding partial exemption for removal of 3 to 6 trees based on lot size
- ~ expanding tree exemption to include removal on parcels greater than 21,781 SF
- ~ changing commercial Regional Business (RB) zoning to Mixed Use Zone (MUZ) zoning while maintaining the zone as being exempt from the Tree Code
- ~ exempting single family homes from maintenance bonds for replacement trees.
- ~ allowing removal of additional trees every three years based on parcel size
- ~ exempting properties zoned Community Business, Mixed Business, Neighborhood Business, MUR- 70' or Town Center from the Tree Code, unless existing, significant trees were included as required landscaping within the previous three years
- ~ No specific notice is required for tree removal through a clearing and grading permit
- ~ authorizing planning director to reduce the minimum number of replacement trees required

These exemption policies stem from a premise that there is an inherent tension between preserving existing trees and allowing more urban levels of growth and density, a premise that unfortunately results in inequitable burdens on the economics, health and quality of life of the low-income families and people of color who disproportionately live in dense, multi-family housing. Numerous studies have shown how climate change, especially high heat events, disproportionately affects poorer communities who live in areas lacking mature trees.

With that evidence, many municipalities are challenging the premise that existing trees cannot co-exist with growth and density and are finding ways to balance these two important goals. For example:

Eighty percent of new housing units constructed in Portland between now and 2035 will be in apartment buildings. Because of the community's call for more affordable housing and its inclusion in the 2035 Comprehensive Plan, prioritizing housing with affordable units is a big part of new codified changes. At the same time, urban heat-island research is showing the ill effects of low tree canopy on vulnerable populations. Instead of relying only on the goodwill of developers, the changes require builders on large sites to leave more outdoor space for people and trees. The changes limit asphalt paving and parking-lot size in multi-dwelling zones citywide. Large sites more than 20,000 square feet are required to set aside 10 percent for outdoor common area. That's similar to pre-World War II courtyard apartment houses.

"Enhancing Quality of Life for East Portland Apartment Dwellers: New rules seek to improve multi-dwelling housing for the low-income families and people of color who disproportionately live in it."

<https://www.treesforlifeoregon.org/invisible-incentive-to-preserve-large-trees>

See "Mature Urban Canopy Benefits", attached

Emulating these new planning policies promulgated by Portland and other forward-looking cities would support the 2014 UFSP's No. 1 Key Priority:

"Achieve climate-appropriate degree of tree cover, community-wide."

After record-setting heat waves in our area, that priority is even more imperative today than it was eight years ago, while "community-wide" must be interpreted to include high-density, multifamily housing that has been historically vulnerable to tree loss, the subsequent health, socioeconomic, and cultural impacts of which inequitably affect the lower socioeconomic families and people of color who disproportionately live in affordable multi-dwelling housing.

Encouragingly, the 2014 UFSP's top priority has evolved into this important and enlightened Mission & Vision Statement from the recent Green Shoreline 20-Year Forest Management Plan:

"Sustainable urban forests are distributed equitably throughout the city, are not concentrated solely in areas of prosperity, and are supported by both city staff and the community."

<https://www.shorelinewa.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/52581/637647094267800000>

A dedicated UFAP or Tree Board that is focused solely on Shoreline's urban forest could bring "all things trees" together in the true spirit of Tree City USA: Public and private trees, conflicting and complicated city codes, climate change and inequity, urban growth and urban canopy, staying abreast of current science and best practices, and keeping pace with changing community needs and values through regular monitoring and updating of City ordinances, plans and goals.

In its "Bulletin #9: How to Write a Municipal Tree Ordinance", Tree City USA states, *"No tree ordinance is static. As communities grow and change, it is essential to review your ordinance and make certain it keeps pace with changing needs and challenges. Review what works and what doesn't work"*.

Further, Tree City USA points out that *"Monitoring is often the overlooked step in urban forestry. It is made easier when a tree board or department sets management goals annually and reviews the city's vision statement regularly. It also helps to stay current on what is being done in other cities with similar growth patterns and challenges. The bottom line is that ordinances are not onetime documents. They are a tool, and they need to be updated or replaced like any other tool in order to serve best."*

A year after the PRCS/T Board was established, the 2013 City of Shoreline Climate Action Plan stated *"Shoreline's Tree Board provides a single point of leadership and expertise for development and implementation of the City's urban tree policies and objectives."* However, in the years since, it has been difficult for the Board to provide that leadership and expertise, not only due to its narrow statutory authority but also because of the broad scope of its additional advisory responsibility for Parks, Arts, Recreation, and Cultural & Community Services for the entire city. Again, City Council has recognized this dilemma, suggesting that breaking the Board into two Boards might make sense.

Some Shoreline citizens have expressed frustration and concern at what they perceive to be the PRCS/Tree Board's limited jurisdiction and lack of authority, the difficulty they've had in communicating with the Board, the perception that Shoreline is a "Tree City" in name but not in action. A public comment recently submitted for the Board's December 2020 meeting passionately called for *"... ways to transform the Tree Board so it can take on challenges of protecting our canopy from ill planned development, mismanagement, and meet the challenges of regional climate impact and unforeseen tree diseases that will become more prevalent. We need you to engage more than currently allowed. The public and I are again your allies and care that the Tree Board evolves in ways that truly protect our urban tree canopy in parks, right of ways and city property and even private property when needed."*

See: public comments submitted to the PRCS/T Board, attached

It takes time to properly oversee the urban canopy as Tree City USA envisions, to assist city staff with monitoring, synchronizing and updating the multiple codes, the planning documents, and the overall goals and vision that make Shoreline's urban forest management a comprehensive whole. It takes time to keep up with the changing needs and values of a growing community, to communicate with and listen to that community, to stay current with science and best practices, to pay attention to what other cities and communities are doing. It takes time to consistently review what works and what doesn't work and to make changes when change is required.

In its current iteration, with its current duties, the PRCS/T Board simply doesn't have that kind of time.

Shoreline's urban forest is one of its most important and valuable assets, deserving of a caring and dedicated team to watch over and protect it, a team comprised of city staff and city residents. A dedicated Urban Forestry Advisory Panel could work with and advise the City Council, the Planning Commission, the Parks, Urban Forestry and other departments on a regular basis, together serving as stewards for all the city's trees, those in parks and public spaces as well as those subject to development and planning, ensuring consistency and continuity across the city's comprehensive urban canopy.

That same wise PRCS/T Board member recently commented: *"I feel like there must be ways for us to get closer to actual forward progress on the topic of trees if we advocate for the coordination of tree codes and practices across departments, and advocate for additional funding for urban forestry."*

A dedicated, stand-alone Urban Forestry Advisory Panel might be the answer to that query.