Washington Community Forestry Council Meeting
June 8th, 2020
Conference Call- Zoom

Members Attending: Dave Bayard, Juli Hartwig, Kirsten Lints, Ben Thompson, Semra Riddle, Kathleen Wolf, Lisa Ciecko, Paula Dinius

Members Absent: Angel Spell, Cindy Deffe, Kathy Sheehan, David Miller, Gary Stamper, John Bornsworth

Guests: Daria Gosztyla, Jeremy Porter, Garth Davis, Andy Tate, Julie Sackett

Meeting Convened: 9:00 a.m.

Welcome: Roll was taken. Chair and Semra welcomed members and guests. Last minute’s meetings were approved.

Minutes Approved: Motion to approve minutes from April 17th, 2020. Kathy Wolf moved and Dave Bayard seconded motion.

UCF Program Updates, Ben Thompson and Daria Gosztyla: Ben is continues to become more acquainted with projects, grant cycles, budgets. Recently UCF staff also spent time buttoning up position description for Ben’s former position, however, it will not be posted at this time due to agency caution until there is a clearer picture on future financial stability due to Covid-19.

Ben reported $130,000 additional funding from USFS for Urban Forest Pest Readiness Project was acquired. Department of Agriculture will receive some of this funding for aggregation of a single database that includes tree data from cities across the state of Washington. This data will be used to run pest risk analysis and monitoring.

Ben continues conversations on Salmon Strategy. Target watershed for the current pilot project is Snohomish watershed, which includes communities such as Monroe, Everett, North Bend, and others. Commissioner wants to adopt a green infrastructure plan for the strategy. UCF contribution to this project will be the outcome of previous Landscape Scale Restoration (LSR) funding that orients around a 3-county canopy analysis. Once canopy data is finalized, program can hone in on a specific project area or potential location for increasing canopy. Ben also noted that next round of LSR is approaching, DNR will apply but no project has been fully identified and ironed out yet. Projects will likely focus on job-building opportunities. Ben asked council to provide any input on ideas.

Julie Sackett, DNR Forest Health Division Manager has announced her retirement. Julie will retire at the end of June. Julie provided some insights on the position.

Daria has been helping with administration of ongoing community assistance and equity grants. UCF program had a busy month, 5 of the Small Urban & Community Forestry grants closed out on April 30th.
and their final reports were due at the end of May. Daria worked with each grantee to ensure that they submitted their final reports and that their deliverables were met even amid changes to some timelines that occurred due to COVID.

Daria also scheduled grant close-out calls with each of those grantees to learn more about their overall experience with the UCF grant program which will be used to help frame the upcoming grant cycle in September. Daria also took the time to check in to see how forestry operations have been affected due to COVID-19, which so far has had varying reflections from canceled arbor day events to city’s not rehiring forest tech positions to completely dropping seasonal staff that water and prune young trees—the effects have been all over the board.

Daria mentioned intention to also schedule similar calls with equity grant program past applicants and awarded grantees and will be looking to involve the Council’s Equity subcommittee in crafting questions for those calls and engagement in the near future.

Daria continues work on the Urban Forest Pest Preparedness Project and has held two virtual seminars that walked participants through the Pest Readiness Self-Assessment tool. Follow-up Office Hours, to help participants work through the playbook and to have continued conversation on pest readiness are scheduled. The next seminar will be August 12th.

Julie and Ben touched on ECA updates. Julie explained that the main question that is being asked is: “is this next session the right time to put this legislation forward?” DNR has not made any decisions yet, they have just held some conversations with a few legislators. Julie expressed that people are really committed to this act.

Kathy Wolf asked question on when budget cuts may be expected to come. Julie answered letting the council know that the governor put forth a hiring freeze but that DNR is currently on a hiring “frost” meaning each new position is getting a very hard look over. Julie explained that things aren’t great, so DNR has to identify what the critical components of each program are, what their requirements state, and how programs can be managed to continue the current commitments. Julie explained that the executive team has been running extensive analysis on this.

Kathy is optimistic about political support for conservation programming. Kathy provided additional insights on urban forestry—stating that we have some work to do in relaying the connections of urban forestry and human health.

**2020 UCF Equity Analysis:** Daria provided introduction on the updated equity analysis, and Ben provided additional context. Daria explained that the equity analysis update included the Health Departments’ Washington Environmental Health Disparities data, which takes into consideration a total of 19 health-risk indicators. Overall, the GIS analysis was derived from a weighted examination of environmental health disparity data from the Washington State Department of Health, tree canopy data from the United States’ Geological Survey’s National Land Cover Dataset, Tree City USA data, and income and demographic data from the U.S. Census. Areas of high “opportunity” indicate communities and regions of the state with high environmental health disparities where increased urban forestry efforts may have a relatively high impact whereas lower values indicate communities or regions with fewer environmental health disparities where urban forestry efforts, while still beneficial, may have a relatively lower impact.

Kathy recommended a change in title to the map to better emphasize the health component. A possible name change of “Wellness and Equity: Urban Forestry Opportunities” was identified. Semra provided
additional input to make logo larger and north arrow smaller, and relayed need to emphasize impact.

David highlighted the need to keep consistency between 2017 study by using similar equity terminology. Semra discussed considerations of how the map would change if canopy cover was more heavily weighted.

**Forest Action Plan update:** Andrew Spaeth provided update for the Forest Action Plan, explaining how this was a requirement from 2008 legislature. Andrew is in process of completing the 10-year revision. Andrew walked through the sections of the plan that relate to urban forestry. David presented the question of how prepared DNR is to accept that the primary goal (Goal #1 as written in the FAP) of Urban & Community Forestry’s program in the FAP is to advance the equitable delivery of urban forestry program services. David’s questions were: “How do we see that manifesting?” “What does that commitment mean and is it felt throughout the agency?” Ben responded, agreeing that this is the first time the plan has an equitable component which is a shift from previous plans. Ben stressed that UCF is committed to providing a state-wide program but socially, is continuously adding emphasis on public health disparities and equitable delivery of program services.

Kathy provided some insight and considered the question: what are the best practices of urban forestry that achieve health? Kathy highlighted that the council could start to draft up a version of these best practices for the sake of improving health and that there would be a receptive audience to this type of work. Ben asked the philosophical question of where the UCF program responsibility lays: “are we responsible that DNR is affecting people at the local level or does our responsibility stop at the local government that serves the local people?” At the very minimum, Ben stated that we should be actively promoting the goals surrounding equity in the FAP to our constituency as one of our main tasks, then ask how we can make it better and improve upon the goals and objectives.

Ben and Daria explained that they trimmed back the urban and community forestry section of the FAP and consolidated the plan into four core functions based on actions that Linden had drafted up. Ben reflected that he believes this will be the most functional plan for urban forestry efforts since 2009.

**Voluntary Check-in with WCFC Members:**

- **Kathy**—Assembled general public media about importance of trees and sent to council in email.
- **Semra**—Recognized that city budgets have become challenged due to COVID and lowering sales tax from revenue. It will be challenging for cities to match needs. Encourages consideration of reduction for matching funds in our grant program. Expressly state this in call for grant application introductions. Ben mentioned that he started this conversation with USFS.
- **Lisa**—Forested Cities Project received additional funding, continuing work in 10 cities that started the program. Partners in Community Forestry Conference session will focus on this topic.
- **Kirsten**—Worries regarding inventory are ongoing throughout the summer. Many plantings were cancelled in spring. Many inquiries about fruit trees and wanting to maintain and plant more edible species.
- **Juli**—State is trying to be proactive with budget. Juli is operating on essential functions of DOT program.

**Adjourn 11AM**, Lisa moved and Kathy second the motion to adjourn council meeting.
Next Meeting: September 15th, 2020, 9:00-3:30, Olympia. (currently scheduled as in-person meeting).