Clark County Commission on Aging
1300 Franklin Street, 6th Floor
Vancouver, Washington

MEETING NOTES

Wednesday, May 15, 2019
4:30 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.

Members Present: Ali Caley, Chuck Green, Amy Gross, Marjorie Ledell, Linda O'Leary, Donna Roberge, Larry Smith

Absent: Marian Anderson

1. **Welcome and call to order**
   Linda O'Leary opened the meeting.

   Approval of meeting minutes
   The January 15, March 20 and April 17, 2019 meeting minutes were approved.

   Member recognition
   Linda and Marjorie Ledell recognized departing members Ali Caley, Donna Roberge, Marian Anderson, and Councilor Temple Lentz.

2. **Presentations: Healthy Trees, Healthy Communities**
   Details on each presentation are available in the CVTV video recording and presentation slides.

   Presentation #1: Our Urban Forest
   Presenter: Jesse Batty, City of Vancouver

   Presentation highlights:
   - Think of your earliest tree memory. Most of us have some kind of positive association with trees.
   - A healthy Pacific Northwest City should have a 40% tree canopy. The city conducted a tree canopy assessment in 2011 and was at 18.6% tree cover.
   - In Vancouver, much of the tree canopy is on private property, 62.6%.
   - It's possible to get the city to 47.9% tree canopy, above the healthy 40% tree canopy threshold.
   - Canopy loss results from: individual trees removed by homeowner; trees lost to insects, disease, storm damage or other natural causes; and stands of trees are removed as part of residential and commercial development. The push and pull of

development is the main issue for tree loss. More efforts are needed from both the public sector, private developers, and homeowners.
- The city has seen a 121% increase in ROW trees between 2003-2010 as a result of the city's street tree ordinance that requires a 1:1 replacement for street tree removal and from partnering with Friends of Trees, a community forestry program.

How do trees work for you? / The benefits of trees

- Urban foresters think of trees as green infrastructure that provide many benefits described in more detail below.
- Trees improve air quality. 100 trees remove 13 tons of CO2 and 100 trees remove about 1000 lbs of pollutants per year, including: 400 lbs of ozone, 300 lbs of particulates (McPherson et al. 1999).
- Trees improve water quality. In the Pacific Northwest, trees are like sponges and can absorb stormwater and slow down the flow and filter the water.100 mature trees intercept about 250,000 gallons of rainwater per year, decreasing polluted runoff and decreasing soil, stream bank and hill erosion (McPherson et al. 1999, 2000).
- Trees provide valuable services in Vancouver (and save money for the services they provide). Annual dollar value of air pollution removal: $78 million. Annual dollar value of stormwater management: $13 million. These calculations are based on American Forests Rapid Ecosystem Analysis using USDA Forest Service models.
- Trees provide and improve wildlife habitat. Tree shade improves habitat, especially in streams. Trees provide food and shelter for birds, insects and small mammals. Native trees and shrubs help preserve native wildlife populations. Book recommendation: *Bringing Nature Home* by Douglas Tallemy on the impact of removing native plants and ways we can improve wildlife habitat.
- Trees sell houses (at higher prices). Each large front yard tree adds 1% to sales price. Mature trees can add 10%, or more, to property values (Anderson and Cordell 1988, Neely 1988).
- Trees are good for business and create a more desirable shopping location. In tree-lined commercial districts: more frequent shopping, longer shopping trips, shoppers spend more for parking, shoppers are willing to spend 12% more for goods (Wolf 1999).
- Trees can lower your energy use and utility bill. The cooling effect from shade is tremendous and can reduce air conditioner costs.
- Community trees are vital to community health. Tree-filled neighborhoods: safer and more sociable, trees absorb high-frequency noise, tree-filled landscapes reduce stress, lower levels of domestic violence, reduce crime, students have better test scores, trees decrease need for medication and speed recovery times for hospital patients, trees increase the weights of newborn babies, a matter of life and death? A study in the Midwestern US confirmed increased respiratory and cardiovascular deaths since over 100 million ash trees died from emerald ash borer. (Sullivan and Kuo 1996, Parsons et al. 1998, Miller 1997, Ulrich 1985)
- The *Green Cities: Good Health* website provides an overview of scientific evidence of human health and well-being benefits provided by urban forestry and urban greening. Link: http://depts.washington.edu/hhwb/.

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Vancouver's Urban Forestry Program

- Maintenance and preservation of existing trees
  - Street tree permits: required in the public right-of-way for planting, removal and major pruning (removing greater than 15% of canopy, removing branches greater than 3 inches diameter, and pruning roots). Major pruning requires a Street Tree Worker License
  - Buckling sidewalks. Urban Forestry's motto: right tree, right place. The city maintains a street tree selection list for choosing appropriate trees for the space you have. Street trees and sidewalks can co-exist. Right tree, right place and wider planting strips can help.
  - Private tree permits. For trees on private property, removal permits are required on properties that are: undeveloped or developing and zoned commercial, industrial, or multi-family; residential (single-family) if the lot is more than 1 acre, able to be sub-divided based on the underlying zoning, or built after 1997 and trees were identified to be retained on the subdivision's Tree Plan; protected under Critical Areas Ordinance because of wetlands, streams, wildlife habitat, steep slopes, or other designated sensitive areas.
  - Heritage Tree Program. Vancouver's Heritage Tree program aims to preserve and recognize the significant trees in our community. The city of Vancouver believes that by preserving our natural resources we preserve a vital link to our past. To be considered, the tree must be mature and distinctive in size, age, species, or associated with a historical event. Anyone can nominate a tree of note. A Clark County heritage tree program recently started through the WSU Extension Master Gardener Program.
- Tree canopy restoration
  - To reach the city's goal of 28% tree canopy by 2030, Urban Forestry is planting about 1000 new trees per year throughout the city.
  - Friends of Trees, a community development and forestry organization, organizes tree planting events in Vancouver and urban unincorporated Clark County.
  - Treefund is the city's tree refund program. Every tree planted in Vancouver increases neighborhood livability, adds to the values of our homes, decreases stormwater runoff, and reduces our energy costs. Plant an approved tree and receive a refund (up to 50%) for improving our community.
  - Witness Tree Program. City program to dedicate a tree in honor or in memory of a special person or a memorable event.
  - How do we prioritize where we plant? The city generally focuses on underserved and low tree canopy areas. There is canopy data down to the taxlot level. When Urban Forestry talks with neighborhood associations, they often show them a detailed map of their neighborhood's canopy cover.
- Education and environmental stewardship through public involvement
  - Education and outreach is an important component of the city's work because much of the urban forest is on private property.
  - Tree planting events are educational for those who participate.

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- The city offers an urban forestry course called Neighborhood Tree Stewards. It is a free seven session training from local arboriculture experts on tree identification, biology, regulations, planting, natural area restoration, property tree care, and the benefits of trees. After the training, the Tree Stewards will be equipped to take on the task of spreading accurate information about trees to their own neighborhoods. Tree Stewards volunteer to conduct a tree planting or tree-related education project in exchange for the training and education they receive, with the help of Urban Forestry.
- TreeTalk Workshops are free educational workshops about trees hosted by Vancouver Urban Forestry. Topics include: property tree pruning, tree planting, understanding hazard trees, tree identification, tree walks, and more.
- No tree topping campaign. Topping is usually done in an effort to keep a tree small. It doesn't really work, it's expensive, it starves a tree, it creates dangerous trees.
- Arbor Day is a nationally-celebrated observance that encourages tree planting and care. Vancouver celebrates Arbor Day each April with an awards ceremony for local tree champions, activities, and tree planting. Vancouver is a Tree City USA, an Arbor Day Foundation designation for having a tree board or department, having a community tree ordinance, spending at least $2 per capita on urban forestry, and celebrating Arbor Day.
- Invasive Tree education. Tree of Heaven is the number one offender. The city wants people to identify and remove it; we're better off without it. Black locust is another problematic tree.
- The Urban Forestry Commission was established to advise the Mayor and City Council on local and regional tree related issues. The Commission assists the city to develop good management practices to conserve the city's trees and forests, educate citizens on the importance of urban trees, and organize tree plantings.
- Three tree species recommendations for an urban environment:
  - Persian Ironwood – great street tree for a small space
  - Gingko biloba – great street tree for a large space. Make sure to plant the male cultivar.
  - Oregon white oak – great yard tree if you have the space. This is the most important ecosystem tree in the region. It is a protected species in the state of WA. It supports a huge number of caterpillars, birds, etc. and has a huge ecosystem impact.
  - Overall, the city wants to plant a diverse range of tree species so they don't all die off from a certain disease, etc.

- Trees increase neighborhood livability by improving air and water quality, reducing stormwater runoff, reducing traffic speeds, providing shade, and providing wildlife habitat. Trees also dramatically increase property values and help foster a sense of community…because trees are great!

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- Advice: we want to keep our positive emotional attachment to trees and also be able to view them as green infrastructure that are essential to a healthy community.

Presentation #2: Trees in the City of Camas
Presenter: Sarah Fox, City of Camas

Presentation highlights:

- Who manages trees in Camas? Planners field tree questions, engineers address right-of-way issues, operations is in charge of managing trees in parks and open spaces, the police do code enforcement.
- "Significant trees" are protected almost everywhere, i.e. Oregon white oaks that are over 6" diameter.
- Residential lots. Trees are protected if written into plat notes, are part of a critical area, or fall under shoreline management plan protections.
- View easements and conflict with parks. A view easement is, if I have a view and a tree blocks it, I can cut down the tree. This is especially problematic near public land. The conflict in Camas includes a property owner who wants a view and users of public space who don't want to see houses and/or have environmental concerns for tree loss.
- Land development and trees. Subdivision applications used to have language that said "to extent practical protect trees." The city has been involved in multiple lawsuits because of this statement. If you have a lot with trees on it and have the right to develop it, how do you keep trees there or make sure they won't become hazardous once you build new homes?
- Public became increasingly more vocal about tree concerns and about three years ago, a new tree committee was created. The Planning Department applied for a grant from the Department of Natural Resources to bring in an urban forester. The committee was made-up of stakeholders with a wide range of perspectives.
- Group explored new ideas and took field trips to communities with urban forestry programs. The group recommended a program similar to Vancouver's, but based on the City of Olympia. A value is assigned to trees and a minimum value of tree units needs to be adopted for new development.
- Camas adopted its new urban tree ordinance in September 2019.
    - There were crowded public hearings with people of all ages testifying. Some folks expressed opposition; concerns were along the line of wanting to be able to develop their property in the future.
    - Development regulations include a minimum tree density defined as tree units per net acre for new residential, commercial and industrial properties and tree replacement requirements based on tree units.
    - Due to the conflict of taking down trees in open spaces and critical areas, the ordinance increased penalties for illegal tree removal. There is now a fee schedule based on tree size.
    - Replacement trees must be monitored for survival.
    - New code replaced previous language on "retaining trees to the extent practical."
- Camas' first street tree removal permit process is underway. If you remove a tree, you need to replace it. The code allows options, i.e. if it's an invasive tree, you can remove it, and there's flexibility if it's not practical to replant the tree.
- Since the ordinance went into effect, development applications are including more trees per unit; some have been above the minimum requirement.

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- It is too early to tell if the higher penalties will be more of a deterrent.
- Next steps for Camas:
    - The city doesn't have urban forestry staff. The planning department is working to learn more, i.e. Sarah attended a conference.
    - The city is fine tuning how to present the new regulations to the public, i.e. sending out flyers on when you need a permit and when you don't.
- For other communities that might want to create a tree program, it's not just a matter of the benefits of trees, it's also about looking at the livability and future of neighborhoods. If trees are not required, they often don't get planted on their own.

Q&A and Comments from Commission on Aging:

- **Donna Roberge**: I'm interested in open spaces and how cities plan for those. How are they designated and how do trees get planted in them? **Response from Sarah**: Camas has a parks program. Open space is often city-owned property with no park planned. Ivy is one of the biggest issues for these spaces. A next step for the city is to get a better handle on ivy. **Response from Jesse:** In Vancouver, there is a Greenways and Sensitive Lands Team which is an operations team that manages open areas. The Parks and Recreation department looks for opportunities to purchase property. With newer, undeveloped parks, the Urban Forestry Department looks for opportunities to plant trees.
- **Larry Smith**: the most dangerous person in Clark County is an older person with a ladder. I applaud the city tree workshops because there are seniors who think they can clean the tree leaves from their gutters, but it can become increasingly challenging as we age. Because of this maintenance challenge, I see an opportunity for partnerships to help older adults take care of their homes and tree maintenance. Does the city see this as an issue or do outreach in this area? **Response from Jesse**: ladders and chain saws are both dangerous. I didn't talk about trees being imperfect, living things that drop leaves. Most of us don't like raking leaves or gutter cleaning. The city is not doing much in this area to help older adults, it is up to private property owners. There is some proactive pruning in parks. **Larry**: this could be promoted in Neighborhood Associations to get community help for our seniors. **Response from Jesse**: proper tree care is important. The city's recommendation is to hire a professional. Look for an ISA-certified arborist. The challenge is that not everyone has the means to hire someone to help out.
- **Amy Gross**: I'm looking at the Camas permit chart. If a new development is proposed, 20 trees units are required per acre. Is that a lot? **Response from Sarah**: most residential areas in Camas are single-family residential. Every new lot needs a street tree. Additional vegetation is needed for stormwater and other requirements. One large tree is worth more units. We got to tree units based on field trips to cities with similar programs. This is new, if it is not working, then we can revise it. **Amy**: do trees include dogwoods and other smaller trees? **Response from Sarah**: yes, any tree. It's about size, not the species, unless it is invasive. **Response from Jesse**: Vancouver code has a 30 tree units/acre requirement. I visit new development sites to look at the quality of trees on site. I generally look for big, native trees. The incentive to the developer for maintaining these is that if you have one large tree, fewer new trees need to be planted.
- **Marjorie Ledell**: do we know why people do illegal tree removal? **Response from Sarah**: In Camas, not everyone knows the rules. Others think the value of having their view is worth the fine. We are not sure if the fine is enough of a deterrent.

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- **Chuck Green**: I'm intrigued by the photo in Sarah's presentation with many houses in it, no trees planted, and few spaces to plant a tree. Is this Camas? **Response from Sarah**: the photo is not in Camas. I included it to illustrate the idea that when reviewing developments, there are lots of challenges of how many houses, trees, etc. can fit onto a property. **Chuck**: I can see the split between maintaining density and the urban growth boundary, but there's no way you're going to get much tree canopy in a development like this. How often do you encounter developments like this? **Response from Sarah**: quite a bit. My takeaway is if you want an urban tree canopy to mature, we need to leave more room for those trees to grow. A lot of engineering standards today are for a 4-ft wide planting strip and that is not big enough for a medium or large shade tree. We need at least a 6- or 8-ft wide planting area. That would mean less space in our right of way for other things. **Response from Jesse**: I agree. Designs come into Vancouver 4-5 per week and they don't all have tree preservation in them. It's much easier to wipe everything out and start with a blank canvas. The city is trying to adopt the State of Washington goals for Low Impact Development (LID) which includes preservation of existing trees, soils, understory plants, etc. City code says we can and will require site redesign. We're getting serious about it and trying our best.

Q&A and Comments from Public:

- **Erika Johnson**: I am an urban forestry enthusiast. I have been involved with Friends of Trees and lots of tree planting in the community. I was on the Vancouver Urban Forestry Commission for several years. When I started on the commission there was a staff of 1.75 FTE. The department now has a staff of four. Vancouver is really invested in its urban forest. It's a joy to see the change in Vancouver over the last 16 years that I have been in the city. I now spend more time in unincorporated Clark County. There is a strong contrast when you cross the city limits into unincorporated areas. In talking with other urban forestry enthusiasts about how to sound the alarm about concerns about our forest canopy and get people excited to address these concerns, we put together a proposal to have a commission for urban forestry for the county. The proposal lays out the benefits of trees and the intersection of clean air and clean water and human health and the myriad of things that the speakers talked about. I would love to get more support and energy behind this. If you spend time in unincorporated Clark County, you see how quickly urbanization is happening. With every new development, we're making decisions on behalf of future generations that they can never recover. The window is starting to close on having time to start protecting existing, beautiful, amazing trees. I work for the WSU Extension Master Gardener program. We started a heritage tree program for Clark County. If you know of any spectacular trees, let us know. Once cities have their own heritage tree programs, we can pass over our program to them.

Debrief:

- **Marjorie**: I think we should consider Erika Johnson's recommendation. Staff to share a copy of the proposal with the commission. **Larry**: Seconded Marjorie's idea. I worked with the city when they started the Urban Forestry program. An urban forestry commission is something the county should consider especially with the growth we're having.
- **Marjorie**: does the county comprehensive plan have a tree canopy goal in it? This could be recommendation number two/question for follow-up. Staff to follow-up.
- **Marjorie**: Does the county have a forestry FTE? **Hunter Decker**, the Clark County forester, introduced himself and provided a summary of the forestry rules the county

has. Within the urban growth boundary, we do not have an urban forestry program. We rely strictly on our forest practice rules which are for commercial timber harvesting. So, within the urban growth boundary, if you are going to convert less than two acres, it would be a class I non-exempt permit and you are allowed to convert up to two acres for a single-family residence. If you are going to convert more than two acres, in a rural or urban area, it would be a class IVg conversion permit which goes through a SEPA and archaeological review determination. If you have a development proposal, that would be included as part of that. Also, in rural Clark County, if you're building a single family residence you can convert less than two acres with a class I permit, but the rest of your lot would need to stay forested. Our forest practice rules pretty much follow state DNR guidelines. I get lots of calls every day on whether a tree permit is needed and I let folks know if they live in the urban area and there is nothing in their plat notes about retaining a tree, if it's not in a critical area, then it's considered landscaping and property owners have the right to remove that tree and replace it if they want. There is no direction on needing to replace the tree or on which type of tree to plant.

- **Marjorie**: are there fines for illegal tree removal? **Response from Hunter**: we go off of state law, which is triple the amount of what it's worth. If, for example, you have a $1000 tree, it is triple the amount for trespassing and removing or injuring it. It's assessed like a forester would assess a log's value and damage repayment is triple that amount.
- **Donna:** I wanted to give a shout-out about Washington State being recognized as the best place to live and I think a lot of that has to do with the beautiful trees we have.
- **Amy:** I would like to suggest we follow-up on Larry's point around home tree maintenance plans to help older people age in place, whether it's finding an organization that can pick that up or through neighborhood associations. **Ali**: I was going to flag that too. It ties into supportive services, housing, safety, etc.
- **Chuck:** Jesse mentioned tree maintenance in the ROW is the adjacent property owner's responsibility, like a sidewalk. If you have someone who can't take care of their tree, is there a program the City of Vancouver or City of Camas has that allows a city maintenance crew to come out and do the pruning for them or a list of on-call landscape crews? **Response from Jesse:** if there is a tree that is actively failing, a danger to the street, or an imminent threat, then the City of Vancouver Urban Forestry team will assess it and take care of it. There are a few thoroughfares in the City of Vancouver, i.e. Mill Plain, where the city will maintain those street trees. Most Pacific Northwest cities are set-up this way, including Seattle and Portland, where the adjacent property owner is responsible for street tree care. I grew up in New England and it's not like this. The city maintains street trees. There's good and bad to both though. On the east coast, the property owner has no connection to that tree. Here, I think people have more of a connection because it's like an extension of their property and they can do what they want with it. Unfortunately there is no preventative maintenance program for street trees in the city.

3. **Public Comment**
   No additional comments.

4. **New Business, Updates and Announcements:**
   The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, June 19, 2019 and the presentation will be on healthy food.

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5. **Adjournment**
   The meeting adjourned at 6:00 pm.

The Clark County Commission on Aging provides leadership and creates community engagement in addressing the needs and opportunities of aging.

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