



**City of Spokane  
Citizen Advisory Committee to the  
Urban Forestry Tree Committee**

3 p.m. Tuesday, June 3, 2025  
Hybrid in-person and WebEx virtual meeting  
Katie Kosanke - Urban Forester

**Committee Members:**

- X Kris Neely – Chair
- Tim Kohlhauff – (Absent – Excused)
- X Beth LaBar
- X Guy Gifford
- Cindy Deffe – (Absent - Excused)
- Joe Zubaly – (Absent – Excused)
- Matt Stewart – (Absent - Excused)
- X Justyce Brant – (Arrived 3:07 p.m.)
- X Ben Kappen
- Paul Lower – (Absent – Excused)
- X Logan Callen
- X Kathryn Alexander

**Parks Staff:**

Katie Kosanke

**MINUTES**

The meeting was called to order at 3:05 p.m. by committee chair Kris Neely.

**Approval of Minutes:** The minutes from **March 2025** and **May 2025 (April 29, 2025)** were approved. Motion to approve the March 2025 minutes by Kathryn Alexander, seconded by Guy Gifford, approved unanimously. Motion to approve the May 2025 (April 29, 2025) minutes by Kathryn Alexander, seconded by Guy Gifford, approved unanimously.

**Discussion Items:**

1. Ceremonies, Appointments, Announcements - None

**Public Comments:** None

**Standing Report Items:**

1. Community Assembly – No report. Kris Neely advised Katie Kosanke may attend the August meeting to speak to Community Assembly members and share information.

2. Staff Report - Katie Kosanke provided a staff report update.
  - a. Planting season is wrapping up. Many trees were planted this spring, including trees planted at all the golf courses, a planting with a Girl Scout troop, five trees planted at Fire Station 11, a Susie Forest tree planting at Rogers High School for a special group for their graduation, and many new and replacement trees throughout the park system.
  - b. The planning process for the Willow Project is progressing. Previously a survey took place asking the community what they would like to see done with the Willow tree area and the community voted for a nature-based playground. Urban Forestry provided Parks Planning with the history of the Willow tree and information about Willow trees in general. Katie Kosanke and Michael Urlacher with Urban Forestry and Heather Smith with Parks Planning visited two elementary schools and spoke with kids to see what elements they would like to see for the nature-based playground. The kids were presented with several options and chose their favorites. Many of the kids were familiar with the Willow tree and had special stories to share. Funding for the project is being determined. Some donations have been set up through the Parks Foundation, Katie will get the project on the list for capital project funding, and fundraising will be sought, including possibly doing a tree trot fundraiser, which would be an annual event at Finch to raise funds for various projects.
  - c. Development, Engineering and Tree Permits work has been steady. Many major city construction projects are starting. Urban Forestry has been involved with these projects from the planning phase related to tree work and the projects typically go very smoothly.
  - d. Urban Forestry nominated Nancy MacKerrow of the Susie Forest for an award through the Washington Recreation and Parks Association for the Susie Trail and Nancy was chosen for a community award. Katie attended the banquet with Nancy and was there to support Nancy in accepting the award. UF appreciates Nancy's contribution for the trail and for all the Susie trees in town, across the United States, and across the world.
  - e. Urban Forestry will be planting trees at On Track Academy for their outdoor forest classroom next Tuesday and Wednesday. UF is contributing trees through the grant program and through the Spokane Conservation District who are providing the trees through similar grant funding. The forest classroom will be an outdoor space for learning for OTA as well as adjacent school campuses nearby. Continuing education opportunities are being established for teachers and students to take place in the space. There is a great diversity of trees and OTA modified the irrigation and in addition will have a dedicated person to water the trees over the summer months. The site also features an accessible path and benches.
  - f. UF will be transitioning back to performing dead tree removals and then will transition to pruning.
  - g. UF has three new seasonal workers and are in the process of training them.

## **Old Business:**

1. **SpoCanopy Update** – Justyce Brant

Justyce provided an update on the Spring 2025 plantings through the SpoCanopy program. Spring planting is complete with a total of 157 trees planted across Spokane. Many more are also being coordinated by Amber Ramirez. She advised SpoCanopy is a partnership program between The Lands Council and the City of Spokane Urban Forestry Department through the Tree Equity Spokane Program. Free street trees are planted in neighborhoods that have low canopy coverage, which tend to be lower income neighborhoods. TLC communicates with citizens who want trees and are willing to care for them and works with them to choose the species of tree to be planted. The city hires contractors to plant most of the trees and TLC organizes volunteer plantings. A volunteer planting recently took place in the Emerson/Garfield neighborhood and there was a great turn out of volunteers, including many students and other groups. The Mayor's office honored Arbor Day and work being completed through the program. TLC hires seasonal employees in the summer to help check on trees that were planted last year and they leave a report card for the residence letting them know how their tree is doing and asking how we can help in the event the tree is not doing well. This year stickers for trees that are doing well, and buckets will be provided that are drilled with small holes to help water trees that are in need and provide other resources to help along with their education and outreach.

## **2. IRA Grant Update – [Tree Equity Spokane Spring Newsletter](#) - Katie Kosanke**

Katie presented an IRA grant update and shared the Tree Equity Spokane Spring Newsletter.

The IRA grant had been on full pause for any expenditures and UF was seeking clarity and proceeding with caution. Urban Forestry recently proceeded with requesting small increments of \$50,000 every 30 days and transitioning back to planting. Those invoices were reimbursed quickly so UF will proceed with transitioning back to removals and requesting increments of \$100,000 every 30 days. Regular communication has been received more recently and the recent trend has been support in increasing the work as regular reimbursements have been continuing to be received.

Contractor and volunteer plantings went smoothly this spring. Amber Ramirez with Urban Forestry created signs to place by trees in visible locations that were planted through the SpoCanopy program. The signs have a QR code that can be scanned to learn more about the program and sign up for a free tree to assist with getting the word out about the program. It was suggested that a QR code also be put on the signs that would link to the water brochure and provide a reminder for citizens to water their trees. Future plantings will exceed the original goals to make up for not hitting goals while the grant was on pause. UF is conducting additional education outreach regarding watering and would like to include a watering message with the Water Departments Spokane Scape, so the messaging is consistent and to help remind everyone to water their trees.

Several business districts (East Sprague and North Monroe) have many missing trees. While abutting property owners and/or the Business District are responsible for these trees, UF is helping with replacement trees through grant funding to bringing the areas back to excellent condition. The areas are on a city irrigation system. There have been some issues with the irrigation and vandalism and the irrigation issues are being addressed by the Water Dept. UF is working with the business districts to assure the trees are established well and watered during the hot summer months. They can also assist by monitoring the trees and alerting the city about any possible problems.

UF will be transitioning back to completing high priority street tree removals by previously hired Commercial Licensed tree services. Some have been completed and the remaining will be completed as soon as possible. Contracts for pruning are in place and pruning packages are being worked on. Pruning will take place after high priority removals are completed, however likely will start sooner. UF has received many calls from citizens who received letters about having their dead or declining tree removed through the grant program, checking to find out when their work will take place. They were advised if it is something that can't wait, as the abutting property owner they would need to hire a city licensed tree service for the work.

## **New Business:**

### **1. Urban Forestry Interns (information/idea) – Kris Neely**

Discussion took place regarding establishing an intern program as well as bringing more neighborhood awareness to available opportunities and expanding our social media presence. Interns would gain valuable education and workforce development training while assisting with Urban Forestry work. UF would provide a solid and safe foundation for interns to learn from our crews and gain valuable knowledge. UF was supposed to have an intern from WSU this year, which would have been paid for through a grant WSU had received. Katie will follow up for a status update. It was suggested to have more outreach to high schools, job fairs, etc. to bring awareness to intern opportunities and to Urban Forestry careers.

### **2. Key committees the UFCAC could be involved with (information/idea) – Kris Neely**

Discussion took place regarding key committees and other organizations the UFCAC could be involved with to collaborate. It was suggested to have a network summit annually where agencies/organizations performing similar work could share what they are working on, suggest ideas and information and collaborate with each other. It was noted that more information needs to be provided to the Community Assembly and Neighborhood Councils, so they are aware of work being done in their neighborhoods.

### **3. Summer Education and Outreach on tree watering – Katie Kosanke**

A small percentage of Biochar has recently been integrated into all tree plantings to help with water retention and is being mixed in with the soil when the hole is backfilled. A top dressing may also be used in the future. As an added bonus, biochar also absorbs pollutants in the soil. UF will be adding Biochar to trees that have already been planted that are not doing well to assist with retaining water and will also be offering watering buckets to help with watering. UF has a backup watering plan with grant funding and will use seasonal employees or contractors to assist with watering of trees that are not doing well to protect the investment.

Newly establishing trees need to be watered deeply at least once a week, especially during hot summer months. Consistent messaging has been provided to citizens who sign up for a free tree advising they must be willing to care for the tree and understand their commitment to caring for the tree, especially watering during summer

A watering brochure has already been created to assist with education and outreach. Other ideas include a watering video, interviewing citizens who already have a SpoCanopy tree that is

thriving to see what water tips they may suggest, and having messaging consistent with information the Water department is putting out related to general landscaping. It was also suggested to have a catchy jingle or tagline that would stick to help people remember to water their trees.

A social media post will be going out requesting buckets restaurants and people may have to donate that can be used for watering buckets – that otherwise would be thrown away. UF may brand the buckets with a watering message and has a template to provide to citizens that want to make their own buckets, so they know where and what size to drill the holes.

Outreach regarding pine bark beetles and other pests affecting trees was suggested. Education efforts have been completed in the past by the Spokane Conservation District and the WSU Extension Master Gardener program which currently have many fact sheets and other resources related to these issues that can be shared with citizens. UF is also working on a community educational workshop with a DNR entomologist this fall.

**Other Program and Partnership Ideas:** None

**Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned at 4:02 p.m.

The next regularly scheduled meeting is 3 p.m. July 1, 2025.

# Urban Forestry News

## Tree Equity Spokane



### Spring Tree Planting

TES Spring planting is nearly finished with two final projects being completed in the first week of June.

Our partner, The Lands Council was able to quickly put together a list of suitable free tree homes for our 3 grant contractors to plant.

A total of 157 SpoCanopy trees across 11 neighborhoods will have been planted by the first week of June to wrap up the season.

Free tree sign-up signs with easy to see QR codes were placed next to newly planted trees in high visibility areas to garner sign up for the Fall 2025 planting season.

The Lands Council will begin sending watering reminders to those who received free trees and offering additional education and resources to any locations that are experiencing difficulties watering.





## North Monroe

The North Monroe business district is getting a major makeover. Fifty dead or missing street trees are being replaced beginning on 5/28.

The Water Department is working alongside our grant contractor to ensure that any irrigation issues are worked through at planting.

## North Nevada

Three North Nevada tree wells with technical irrigation concerns will have dead stumps ground and be re planted the last week of May, improving an area of the Shiloh Hills neighborhood that is greatly in need of more tree cover.

On-Track Academy will be the recipient of 20 grant funded trees for their outdoor forest classroom to be planted with assistance from Urban Forestry the week of June 9<sup>th</sup>.

## High Priority Removals

A project with four, high-priority removals across three neighborhoods has been assigned to a grant contractor for immediate work.

These are trees in high occupancy areas that Urban Forestry have receives ongoing calls and complaints about.

Work packages for the approximately 250 remaining dead tree removals are ready to give to contractors once work on the project fully resumes.

## Pruning

15 parks have been vetted for major needs pruning and vetting is ongoing.

Pruning will begin once all the removals are taken care of since these were budgeted for year one and two and this is year two of the project.



