

**Urban Forestry Committee (UFC)**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
**February 13, 2025**

**Members Present:**

Tommy Allen, Dan Chase, Cindy Irving, Joe Sulak, Annabelle Wilkinson, Hannah Mico, William Vassilakis, Nate Henschel

**Others Present:** Travis Kurtz, Brent Geurink, Michelle Slykhouse, Nick Hitchcock

**Mission:**

*To provide guidance to the City Commission and City staff to promote and maintain a vibrant and healthy urban treescape and canopy for citizens of Grand Rapids.*

**Agenda:**

1. Call to Order: 4:03 p.m.
2. Determination of Quorum
3. Approval of Agenda  
Motion made by Joe Sulak, supported by Annabelle Wilkinson, to approve the agenda as presented. Motion carried.
4. Approval of Minutes from the January 9 meeting  
Motion made by Cindy Irving, supported by Annabelle Wilkinson, to approve the January 9, 2025 minutes as presented. Motion carried
5. Public Comments  
Hailey is here from the Documenters for the Raptidian. Addison also attending from the Documenters.
6. John Ball Zoo presentation  
Travis introduced himself and explained his work focuses on Habitat Hero. Over 2,000 native perennials, trees, shrubs, and grasses are given away annually as part of that program. Travis gave a presentation regarding The Mayors' Monarch Pledge and stated the designation focuses on increasing monarch conservation activities. There are three activities to complete the pledge. The items highlighted in yellow are things the Grand Rapids community is already doing. Of the items that are not highlighted the work seems to be attainable without too much additional effort.

Tommy stated that issuing a proclamation is one of the items that needs to be done to achieve the Mayors' Monarch Pledge. Travis stated the application work would need to be done by March 31 and is willing to assist with writing the proclamation.

Hannah stated the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board has discussed some of the items on the list. Hannah explained that Friends of Grand Rapids Parks

(FGRP) is working on invasive species removals. Travis will connect with Becky from FGRP.

Annabelle stated the climate action plan would cover some of the items on the list (second item specifically). Items 9, 15 and 27 were also mentioned as work being done or could easily be done.

Motion made by Hannah Mico, supported by Dan Chase, to work on achieving the Mayors' Monarch Pledge. Joe stated that the Executive Office could assist with the proclamation. Cindy stated if it is not possible this year to apply, that keeping these items in mind and getting the Mayors' Monarch Pledge done in 2026 would be something to work towards. Cindy stated it would be nice to get the neighbors involved in the application process. Cindy stated Commission Night Out is March 25 at Union High School so that could be a nice date for the proclamation if applying this year. Motion carried.

7. Nature Based Solutions from Climate Plan presentation

Annabelle stated the plan is a community-wide plan and intersects with the Planning Department's Community Master Plan. Annabelle stated strategy 7 action 3 relates to the work that UFC does. There are 9 in strategy 1 that also relate to UFC.

Brent stated the Planning Department has development project tree planting requirements in the zoning ordinance and asked if there are items in the Climate Plan regarding this. Tommy asked if there is anything in the Climate Plan that would place conditions on land bank properties. Cindy stated affordable housing needs to be made utility cost affordable, in addition to being initial purchase or rent affordable. Joe stated tree preservation seems to be missing. Annabelle will add text in section 1 some text for this. Cindy stated education is important for action 7 in section 1, how to maintain. Hannah stated when homes have older trees that need to be removed, a way to record that and have a cost-share program with a recommended replacement tree species would be good. Tommy stated section 4, action 6 could include colleges or universities. Cindy stated best practices for landscapers should be included. Annabelle thanked UFC for their input and will get these suggestions included.

8. Old Business

- Tree awareness items

No update.

- Tour des Trees

Nick stated the website is updated with Grand Rapids as the location for 2025. The event was brought up at Arbor Con recently. Tommy stated if there is an ask to the UFC that in March would be a good time to get that done.

- Forestry Operations & Management Plan

Joe stated the second draft is being reviewed and possibly in March the plan could be discussed.

9. New Business

None.

10. Partner Reports

- City of Grand Rapids

Nick stated that the Michigan Department of Natural Resources notified the City that there is Hemlock Woolly Adelgid reported in Aman Park. This is an invasive species that could cause significant damage to the trees. Forestry visited the park and found some trees with the disease. A plan for treatment and monitoring is being developed.

Joe stated a representative from Sons of the Revolution reached out to the City looking for a tree that is 250 years old or more to put a commemorative plaque on. A list of trees is being developed. Preferably a park tree will be identified for the plaque. Joe stated the plaque will not be allowed to be put on the tree, but would be placed next to it. During the process of identifying this tree some other unique trees were found throughout the City. A digital tree tour will be put together in the future.

Nate stated the City and Consumers Energy have been meeting and the work to be done in the City will be minimal this year.

- Friends of Grand Rapids Parks (FGRP)

No update.

11. Agenda Items for future meeting

- Zoning change and effect on canopy (Fall)
- Approved species list

12. Adjournment – 5:22 pm

**Next meeting scheduled for Thursday, March 13, 2025 – 4:00 p.m. at City Hall**