

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

**Members Present:**

Tommy Allen, Dan Chase, Annabelle Wilkinson, William Vassilakis, Nate Henschel, Joe Sulak, Becky Pobst, Nate Henschel, Cindy Irving

**Others Present:** 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: 4:01 p.m.
2. Determination of Quorum
3. Approval of Agenda  
Motion made by Jonathan Wilson, supported by Annabelle Wilkinson, to approve the agenda as presented. Motion carried.
4. Approval of Minutes from the February 13 meeting  
Motion made by Jonathan Wilson, supported by Dan Chase, to approve the February 13, 2025 minutes as presented. Motion carried
5. Public Comments  
None.
6. Old Business
  - Tree awareness items  
Becky stated Friends of Grand Rapids Parks (FGRP) will publish spring tree care tips on their blog and social media soon. FGRP will coordinate with the City's social media team to make sure the information gets distributed through their channels as well.
  - Tour des Trees  
Jonathan stated while there will not be financial support, the employee engagement group at DTE Energy will try to participate in some way.

Nate will check whether Consumers Energy can provide funding for anything.

Tommy stated the City is doing a lot of work to bring tree events to the area and this is a great event to support in any way possible. FGRP is looking to see if there are opportunities that they can help with.

Nick stated the organization does not need anything specific from the City or UFC. The Tour des Trees organization handles all the details and cyclists are responsible for fundraising.

- Forestry Operations & Management Plan

Joe stated the document is in final revision stage. The goal is to have UFC review in April and then use the document for a mid-year budget presentation to City Commission.

Tommy asked if there was a way to have former Mayor Bliss be brought in when the Plan is presented since she was a big advocate for tree canopy. Joe stated a media opportunity could be possible when the Plan is ready and that anyone could be a part of that.

7. New Business

- Mayors' Monarch Pledge

Tommy stated he talked to Travis and started completing some of the application. The proclamation would still need to be done. The application is due by the end of the month. John Ball Zoo is taking the lead on getting all the work and application done.

8. Partner Reports

- City of Grand Rapids

Nick stated the invasive species is spread all through Aman Park. Nick is working with Ottawa County to get a plan together for treatment. Nick stated that trees on private property are left up to the property owner to decide what to do. There are a lot of trees surrounding the park on private property so this could have an effect on the park trees.

Nick stated without treatment the trees will see a 4-10 year slow decline until the tree eventually dies. A Hemlock tree could live 100 years so it's worth the effort to treat and treatment application is effective for up to 2-3 years. There are restrictions on the amount per acre of pesticide and there is a river in the area so treatment will not happen when rain is forecast.

Joe stated the City is working to determine how to best move forward. Dan asked how the public will be notified about the invasive species and pending treatment. Nick stated the City will be providing information on treatment opportunities so that homeowners who have the trees on private property can get information about what to do. Nick stated treatments on City trees could start in May. Additional City Forestry staff are working to get their pesticide application license to help treat trees.

Cindy stated trees were starting to be removed on Ann Street for a street project and Nick explained to some upset property owners that the trees there aren't good for the location and will be replaced with a better tree. Nick walks each street improvement project and trees that are worth saving are, those that aren't get replaced with a tree that is better suited for the location. Cindy will start notifying UFC of upcoming projects.

Joe stated the priority 2 pruning project is ahead of schedule.

Annabelle stated the Climate Action Plan will be presented to City Commission in April.

- Friends of Grand Rapids Parks (FGRP)

Becky stated FGRP is getting ready for planting season (starting April 5). FGRP will be replacing some trees in the Uptown area. Arbor Fest will be April 25 in Oakdale and Boston Square neighborhoods. Becky stated a new grant manager at the federal level has been communicating about reimbursement requests, so things seem to be moving forward as planned with the federal funded projects. About 900 trees will be planted this year.

- Parks and Recreation Advisory Board

Hannah stated park construction projects were discussed at the last meeting. Travis has been invited to the April meeting to present on the Mayors' Monarch Pledge. Tommy stated that deer in the Creston neighborhood needs to be discussed as they are destroying trees.

- Consumers Energy

Nate asked if there is a way to better coordinate projects. Joe stated additional GIS data would be needed. Nate will check on LiDAR.

- DTE Energy

Jonathan stated DTE is working on a program where trees could be planted.

9. Agenda Items for future meeting

- Zoning change and effect on canopy (Fall 2025)
- Approved species list

10. Adjournment – 5:05 pm

**Next meeting scheduled for Thursday, April 10, 2025 – 4:00 p.m. at City Hall**