

Urban Forestry Committee Minutes

June 12, 2025 – 4:00 p.m.

City of Grand Rapids
City Hall – 300 Monroe Ave NW
Room 601

Committee Members Present:

Tommy Allen, Geoff Kempter, Hannah Mico, Becky Pobst, Dan Chase, Nate Henschel, Annabelle Wilkinson

Others present: Michelle Slykhouse and 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: 4:07 pm
2. Determination of Quorum
3. Approval of Agenda
Motion made by Hannah Mico, supported by Becky Pobst, to approve the agenda as presented. Motion carried.
4. Approval of Minutes from the May 8 meeting
Motion made by Hannah Mico, supported by Nate Henschel, to approve the minutes as presented. Motion carried
5. Public Comments – None
6. Old Business
 - Tree awareness items
Becky stated the communications position at Friends of Grand Rapids Parks (FGRP) is vacant. Unsure on whether someone new will be hired. Becky will be contact for FGRP on an interim basis and is working with Christy at Parks and Recreation if anything needs to be posted to social media for public awareness.
 - Tour des Trees
Event will be August 10-16. Tree Fund will plant a tree at Ah Nab Awen Park as part of the event. Locations are being determined and then species will be identified.

Geoff will get the date and time for the end of ride celebration and let the committee members know.

- Mayors' Monarch Pledge

Parks and Recreation Department is working with John Ball Zoo to finalize a date for the Mayors' Monarch Pledge to be announced by the Mayor later this summer at Lincoln Park.

7. New Business

- Approved species list

Nick stated there are changes with climate and he is reviewing a lot of information. Nick stated Alder trees are not in the City currently, and it could be a good tree to introduce. As more research is done a revised list will be provided to the committee for review.

8. Partner Reports

- City of Grand Rapids

- Forestry:

Emerald Ash Borer treatments happening. Hemlock tree treatments start at Aman Park next. It is estimated that there are 500-1000 trees to treat over the course of a few years.

Aman Park also has Oak Wilt and treatment will start for that as well. Trees will be girdled and herbicide placed.

Tommy asked about communications since the park is in Ottawa County. Nick stated the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) website will show where the Oak Wilt trees are and the MDNR will notify others in the area once found. Nick stated there will be standing dead trees and nothing can be done until winter or it will spread.

Tommy asked about Consumers Energy pruning and whether they have the same restrictions on pruning Oak trees. Nick stated it is in the Consumers Energy standards and contract, unsure on other utilities and contractors.

Geoff stated for a while it was routine that all cuts were covered. Need to get updated standards and see what other utility companies do when pruning.

Annabelle stated the Climate Action Plan will go back to Commission in July to present other priorities and provide potential choices for next steps.

- Friends of Grand Rapids Parks

Becky stated the spring planting season is done. Becky taught a tree identification class where Oak trees and the danger of Oak Wilt was recently discussed. The Green Team will water trees this summer and about 60% are returning Green Team members from last year. About 800 trees are watered all summer.

FGRP explore your park series will start soon.

- Consumers Energy
Some pruning work will be done in the City and there is great communication between the two entities on pruning now.

9. Agenda Items for future meeting

- Approved species list (September 2025)
- Forestry Operations & Management Plan (September 2025)
- Zoning change and effect on canopy (Fall 2025)

10. Adjournment – 4:52 pm

Next meeting scheduled for Thursday, September 11, 2025 – 3:00 p.m. at City Hall