

Urban Forestry Committee Minutes

May 14, 2026 – 4:00 p.m.

City of Grand Rapids

Grand Rapids Public Service Center – 1500 Scribner Ave NW

Room 2106

Committee Members Present:

Tommy Allen, Dan Chase, Max Gibbs, Cindy Irving, Becky Pobst, Joe Sulak

Others present: Christy Brunsell (City staff)

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: 4:06 pm
2. Determination of Quorum
3. Approval of Agenda
Motion made by Max Gibbs, supported by Cindy Irving, to approve the agenda as presented. Motion carried.
4. Approval of Minutes from the April 9 meeting
Motion made by Joe Sulak, supported by Becky Pobst, to approve the minutes as presented. Motion carried.
5. Public Comments – none
6. Old Business
 - Tree awareness items and communication
Tommy provided background information about the formation of the communications subcommittee.

Christy stated the communications subcommittee met for a second time and is seeking Urban Forestry Committee member input on selecting one tree per month to feature on social media. The tree must be on the City's approved species list. There may also be a new tree of the year program implemented.

For getting communication out quickly, Max asked whether neighborhood associations are notified to help spread the word. Tommy suggested reaching out to faith-based organizations, business and the Grand Rapids Chamber of Commerce.

Dan stated there are marks on trees left after trimming occurs at some Grand Rapids Public Schools sites.

The communications subcommittee will meet again towards the end of June

- Mayors' Monarch Pledge

An event will be held on September 9. Tommy stated the event is coordinated with John Ball Zoo and a pollinator bioblitz is the idea for the event. A proclamation will be done. The National Recreation and Park Association may have toolkits that could be used. Christy will create a brief summary of the potential event. Tommy, Christy, Max, and Joe are interested in getting details finalized for the event.

7. New Business

- None

8. Partner Reports

- City of Grand Rapids

Cindy provided some updates from the Engineering Department:

1. Cindy is the new City Engineer
2. CAAP (Climate Adaptation Action Plan) has asked that departments work to reduce turf grass in parkways. This will require cross departmental efforts. The intent is more stormwater management such as bioswales.
3. Opt-in option for tree planting during public engagement on design to identify species and let residents select a tree to encourage support, watering, and involvement in design.
 - a. Tommy asked how the opt-in affects timing of projects.
Cindy stated there is an increase of community engagement during the decision phase.
4. Plymouth Rd north of Leonard St there is a Consumers Energy easement. To be discussed with Parks team.
5. Cindy followed up on tree damage questions due to Plymouth Road construction.
 - a. Is porous mat the best option for tree wells? Engineering to collaborate with Parks regarding maintenance and replacement.
6. Request tree planting guidance to help with tree/sidewalk conflicts.

- Friends of Grand Rapids Parks (FGRP)

Becky provided some updates.

1. Planting season is underway.
2. Bartlett Tree will be using several FGRP tree planting sites to research the effects of using an air spade on newly planted trees to improve root growth and establishment.
3. Arborfest was a success over 250 Trees planted and over 100 free trees distributed in the giveaway.

9. Agenda Items for future meeting
 - Zoning change and effect on canopy
 - Approved species list (June 2026)
 - Tree inventory components and timeline.
10. Adjournment – 4:50 pm

**Next meeting scheduled for Thursday, June 11, 2026 – 4:00 p.m.
at Grand Rapids Public Service Center, 1500 Scribner Ave NW**