



# Urban & Community Forestry Council



## Meeting Minutes

Location: MSU Natural Resources Bldg. – In-person

Date: July 23, 2024

### Roll call

#### Present for the Council (council):

- Asia Downtin
- Heather Griffin
- Paul Hickman
- Lee Mueller
- Doug Schultz
- Gerry Santoro

#### Present for the DNR Staff (department)

- Grace Bianchi
- Kerry Gray
- Kevin Sayers
- Lawrence Sobson
- Andrea Stay

#### Others Present

- Lisa Perez (USDA Forest Service)
- Tiffany Giacobazzi (City of Ann Arbor/ISA-MI)
- Brian Murphy (City of Buchanan)
- Richard Martin (City of Buchanan)
- Ashley Reitter (Schoolcraft Conservation District)

Call to Order: 1:00 P.M.

#### Approval of Agenda:

Motion to approve: Santoro

Support: Hickman

Vote: Approved unanimously

#### Approval of Minutes of March 21, 2024 meeting:

None provided. To be approved at next meeting in fall.

#### DNR Program and Staffing Report

- Sayers provided brief program update on and status report with following highlights:
  - Program staffing changes: L. Sobson position is being converted to full-time permanent and solicitation for new, limited-term regional urban forester is going live next week.
  - Unsuccessful in recent submittal of program investment proposal to DNR management. Department feedback indicated that 1) UCF was not one of the 2

- priorities being supported this year and 2) UCF has sufficient federal funding i.e. low need/priority. Trying different approach for next year
- 2<sup>nd</sup> round of UCF IRA grants is accepting proposals through August 30 and next round of annual core-funded Community Forestry Grants is being announce this week with deadline of September 20. Details on [www.michigan.gov/ucf](http://www.michigan.gov/ucf)

## Committee Reports:

### **Grants** (*K Gray - chair, Downtin, Schultz, Sayers*)

- 2<sup>nd</sup> rd. of UCF IRA grants due August 30.
- Revised CFG grant application and handbook for FY25. Applications available thru September 20. Grant webinar being hosted August 1.
- DTE Tree planting grant has been pushed to September announcement due to workload from other grants.
- Continuing to work on creating a new online grant application system. Anticipated to go live in spring 2025

### **Forest Health** (*Kruise - chair*)

- No report

### **Advocacy** (*Vacant - Chair, Griffin, Foen, Hickman, Sayers*)

- With no acting chair, there was not committee report.
- Sobson arranged a virtual meeting with Michigan Municipal League for this Friday (July 26) to discuss UCF program and partnership opportunities. K. Gray and Hickman will also participate for MUCFC.

### **Data** (*Downtin – chair, Sayers, K. Gray, Klifman*)

- No report
- Downtin reiterated that this committee is seeking new leadership as her regular work commitments are limiting her time for this role currently.

#### Action item(s):

- *Anyone interested in taking on chair responsibilities should contact Downtin.*

### **Michigan Arbor Day Alliance** (*Lancour – chair, Sayers, Kruise, Stay*)

- Lancour absent due to work conflict with new job– no chair report

#### Action item(s):

- *Sayers will contact Lancour to confirm intent to maintain council/committee membership*

## Items for Discussion:

### **State Policy Discussions on Urban Wood Utilization (Hickman)**

- Continuation of initial discussion from spring meeting:

- Hickman gave more complete presentation on proposed state policy.
- Hickman met with Senator Sue Shank for some high-level discussion and explanation. Follow-up meeting to be arranged once priorities are outlined by Hickman.
- No plan or details on how this would be funded or by who – don't muddy waters with that yet
- Connections to Governor's MI Healthy Climate plan goals and DNR Forest Action Plan (county level requirements too?)
- Consider talking to MI SAF policy chair (Larry Leefers) for help

Action item(s):

- *Sayers to share Hickman's urban wood utilization policy with council members*
- *Sayers to share recent Southern Methodist University Urban Wood survey with council*
- *Hickman requested that DNR work to include content for urban wood utilization on program websites. Sayers will look into this and work with Hickman to identify specific items of interest.*

### **MUCFC Membership Update and Recruitment (Mueller/Sayers)**

- Update on status of membership and including expiring terms:
  - Current voting membership: 12
  - Downtin, Mueller, Foen, Griffin and vacant position expire at fall 2024 meeting
    - All are eligible to renew for new 3 year term.
    - Mueller not intending to renew after this term.
  - Chair (Mueller) and Vice Chair (Griffin) terms expire at fall 2024 meeting.
- Kruse notified Sayers and Mueller of her intent to resign official membership but may still participate on committees
- Other categories to consider for membership requirement include: *ISA-MI, volunteer, utility, tribal, transportation, nursery*

Action item(s):

- *Members with expiring terms should notify Sayers of intent to renew or not by October 1.*
- *Members should consider nominations for chair/vice chair for 2025 term*
- *Sayers will contact Lancour to confirm intent to maintain council/committee membership*
- *Members should seek to identify and share prospective interested individuals to fill gaps in desired stakeholder representation areas.*

### **MI UCF/IRA/MUCFC and Future Direction (Mueller/Sayers)**

- Mueller and Sayers initiated discussion of how to leverage current strong support and awareness for urban and community forestry, nationally and in Michigan, to improve current and future conditions for the DNR's UCF program, MUCFC and local programs and partners. The following offers a summary of the comments gathered from this discussion:
  - IRA roundtable was a great conversation. Need to keep it going
  - IRA roundtable forum was a good space for networking.

- Do we look to continue it (statewide) and at what frequency (annual)?
- An annual urban forest stakeholder meeting of some kind may be needed
  - It worked well to coordinate today's meeting with MUCFC in-person meeting
- Annual UCF awards program
  - Possibly combine with Tree City USA/Arbor Day event.
  - Award Categories:
    - Innovation
    - Volunteers
    - Municipal excellence
    - Community engagement
- Annual Shade tree shortcourse training
  - Networking and continuing education (e.g., other states)
- Guidance on Sustainable Forestry Initiative UCF Standards and implementation
  - Possible fall MUCFC presentation (Mueller/Dowtin)
- Continue using UCF e-news to promote things to stakeholders statewide
- Urban wood policies (Hickman)
- Creation of a Michigan UCF practices/specifications toolkit
- Analysis and report on UCF specific issues in the DNR Forest Action Plan
- Tree supply
- Support and coordinate in hosting a National UCF conference in Michigan
  - ISA and Tour de Trees, Partners in Community Forestry, etc.
- Development and promotion of a MI UCF Community of Practice forum

Action item(s):

- *Council to take up this discussion at fall meeting*

## Public Comment:

- Brian Murphy (City of Buchanan) expressed interest in MUCFC and possible membership consideration.
- Giacobazzi (City of Ann Arbor/ISA-MI Board) expressed interest in being considered for membership and provided background for review (City of Ann Arbor, ISA-MI Board member etc.)

Action item(s):

- *Mueller and Sayers will follow up to provide further information and answer questions and provide guidance to council members for possible voting at fall meeting*

## Staff Communications:

- Sobson
  - Working with MSU and MNLA and others to update recent tree selection guide for community plantings.

## Member Communications:

- Mueller
  - Partners in Community Forestry Conference occurring November 20-21 in Chicago.
- Downtin
  - New silviculture faculty (David Carter) hired and interested in urban silviculture.
  - MSU undergrad Forestry enrollment experiencing 3x increase
  - MSU possibly looking for qualified individuals to help instruct ucf/arboriculture courses in partnership with Muskegon Community College
  - 2025 ISA Tour de Trees coming to Michigan! Watch out for more details.
- Santoro
  - Currently has an intern helping with Green Macomb program. Looking to hire an AmeriCorps member to assist with urban forestry and energy issues
  - Several communities in Macomb Co. (Sterling Heights, Warren, etc.) are interest in talking with Urban Ashes about wood utilization idea.
  - Working with Centerline Schools on edible urban forest adaptation program.
- Hickman
  - Looking for up to 10 communities in Michigan to work on a regional urban wood project proposal for the FY25 Community Forestry Grant program

Next Meeting: Fall, Tuesday - October 29 (time/location tba)

Adjournment: 2:54 PM

Respectfully submitted: Kevin Sayers