



Urban & Community Forestry Council



Meeting Minutes

Location: Virtual meeting

Date: October 31, 2023

Roll call

Present for the Council (council):

- Doug Schultz
- Kerry Gray
- Annie Kruse
- Tyler Klifman
- Heather Griffin
- Paul Hickman
- Lee Mueller
- Asia Dowtin
- Alec Smith
- Silas Gray
- Gerry Santoro
- Fai Foen
- Kay Lancour

Present for the DNR Staff (department)

- Kevin Sayers
- Lawrence Sobson
- Andrea Stay
- Sue Tangora

Others Present

- Josh Issac, Dickenson/Menominee Cons. Dist. Forester

Call to Order: 10:05 A.M.

Announcement:

- Vice Chair Griffin announced that she is acting as Chair for this meeting due to recent resignation of Chair Tarpey. Tarpey advised that she needed to resign her membership, including council chair position, due to conflicts with ongoing work responsibilities at her employer. She expressed gratitude to council members for their time, expertise and passion for this work and her regrets for having to abruptly step down at this time.

Approval of Agenda:

Additions/edits: None

Motion to approve: Mueller

Support: Hickman

Vote: Approved unanimously

Approval of Minutes of April 19, 2023 meeting:

Additions/edits: None

Motion to approve: K Gray

Support: Schultz

Vote: Approved unanimously

Committee Reports:

Grants (*K Gray - chair, Mueller, Downtin, Tarpey, Sayers*)

- K Gray provided update on DNR's UCF_IRA grant proposals received in recent RFP
- 51 applications received (28 Core funding and 23 IRA funding)
- Total combined request: ~\$1.4 million
- Review team (Sayers, Sobson, Gray) are starting to review grants now.
- Asia Downtin will be alternate reviewer in cases where a reviewer needs to recuse themselves due to potential conflict of interest.
- Goal is to complete reviews and make recommendations by end of November and make awards by mid-December

Action item(s):

- *Grants review team will complete reviews and communicate recommendations to council end of year.*

Forest Health – Oak Wilt Coalition (*Kruise - chair*)

- Held oak wilt (OW) coalition meeting recently with good participation
- Working on a collaborative OW research grant proposal with MSU
- Noted OW interest and issues on west side remains high, (Grand Haven and Grand Valley State University). OW was also recently confirmed in Ann Arbor and Paul Hickman is working to document the management process.
- OW research efforts from MSU taking a hit with announcement that Dr. Monique Sakalidis has resigned to move back to New Zealand
 - Not clear which MSU department has lead responsibilities to push for renewal of position.
 - Industry, agencies and partners recognize the critical need for this research and extension support for these issues and strongly support rehiring the position as quickly as possible.
 - Council has a role to help communicate importance and need for this position and will facilitate writing a letter of recommendation/support to MSU College of Agriculture and Natural Resources (CANR) and Forestry Department.

Action item(s):

- *Downtin will initiate draft letter for Council to review with goal of sharing with industry partners to support/sign and ultimately to send to CANR.*
- *Need others to join this committee. Please contact Kruise with interest.*

Advocacy (*Kempton - Chair, Griffin, Foen, Hickman, Sayers*)

- No report

Action item(s):

- *Griffin will schedule a 30 min. committee meeting.*
- *Hickman offered to share updates on his advocacy work related to urban wood utilization.*

Data (*Dowtin - chair, Sayers, Mueller, K. Gray, Klifman*)

- No report

Action item(s):

- *Asia will schedule a 30 min. committee meeting.*
- *Looking for someone to take over chair of this committee.*

Michigan Arbor Day Alliance (*Lancour - chair, Sayers, Kruse, Stay*)

- Committee met last week to discuss Arbor Day activities planned for 2024.
 - Not planning a major tree planting event at this time.
 - Discussion and plans focused on idea of hosting an Arbor Day/Tree City USA and Awards Conference in early May (after Arbor Day) in Lansing area to provide recognition and awards (Tree City USA, Municipal Forestry, Project Learning Tree) and education sessions.
 - Kruse is investigating possible Lansing area locations, costs and availability.
- DNR working with Marketing and Outreach staff on ideas to help promote Arbor Day events occurring around the state (e.g. survey and mapping features).

Action item(s):

- *Lancour will set monthly MADA committee meeting schedule to continue planning for Arbor Day events and outreach.*
- *Kruse will report to MADA committee on options for event location, costs etc.*

Items for Discussion:

Membership

- Expiring Terms:
 - Chair and Vice Chair (annual election)
 - Chair position is currently vacant with recent resignation of Tarpey
 - Mueller offers to chair for 1yr. in
 - Griffin offers to renew as vice chair for 1yr.
 - Motion to Accept - K Gray
 - Support - Schultz
 - Vote - Approved unanimously

- Other expiring memberships: *Schultz, Hickman, Mueller, Kempter, Gray*
 - All are eligible for renewing full terms
 - Schultz, Hickman, and K Gray offer to renew for 3-yr. term, expiring fall 2026
 - Mueller requests renewal for a 1-yr. term, expiring fall 2024
 - Kempter has not attended past two meetings or responded to requests for intent on renewing membership. His position will now be considered vacant unless/until he indicates otherwise. To maintain balance of staggered terms for council members, the initial term for this vacant position (when renewed), will be set for 1yr., expiring in 2024.
 - Motion to Approve – Mueller
 - Support - Hickman
 - Vote - Passed unanimously

- New Membership to Confirm:
 - Gerry Santoro, Stanley (Silas) Gray, Eric Candella attended previous MUCFC meetings (spring/summer 2023), expressed interest and were nominated to join the council.
 - To maintain balance of members across 3-yr. staggered terms, the following initial terms will be assigned to new members:
 - Candella (3yr. - Exp. 2026), S Gray (3yr. - Exp. 2026), Santoro (2yr. - Exp. 2025)
 - Motion to Approve – Mueller
 - Support - K Gray
 - Vote - Passed unanimously

Action item(s):

- *Recruit new member to fill vacant position*

Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) funding

- Sayers provided update from recent national USFS UCF_IRA awards announcement
 - \$1.13 billion to 385 projects (most [65%] scaled way back from their ask)
 - 198 direct award managed by USFS, 175 managed bypass through partners
 - 12 national pass-through agreements managed by national USFS team
 - 247 communities, 17 educational inst., 6 state forestry agencies, 4 Tribal Governments
 - MI Specific Awards: (\$32.5 million)
 - 37 total proposals (~\$425 million requested)
 - 11 projects funded (\$32.5 million) either directly (6) or via pass-through (5)
 - 26 non-funded proposals
- Sayers provided update on previously awarded UCF IRA funds to State-DNR: (\$7.5 million)
 - Staffing
 - Interviewing 6 candidates for UCF IRA Grant coordinator
 - Hope to have hired by end of year

- FY24 DNR UCF_IRA combined funding Grants
 - Received 51 applications, 23 specifically for IRA funding.
 - Proposals under review with plans to award by mid-December.
 - Waiting to hire new UCF IRA Grant Coordinator before initiating further rounds of funding next year.
- Other (contracts)
 - Grants Management System
 - Conversations in progress with existing state vendor that developed the DNR's MI Grants system to create separate UCF grant system.
 - Drafting a statement of work with a preliminary cost estimate from vendor of ~\$50-60K to build it. Ongoing maintenance will be extra.
 - Goal is to have contract in place by end of year with build-out of system during spring.
 - Staffing and Data: No progress on contracting for additional staffing or statewide urban tree canopy data acquisition.

Action item(s):

- *Council recommendation to DNR UCF to coordinate with all MI UCF_IRA grant recipients to facilitate regular communications and meetings that will enhance awareness, networking, and improve overall cohesiveness of program and outcomes.*
- *Suggestion to identify relevant contacts and initiate an informal stakeholder meeting at ArborCon conference in February to start the dialogue.*

FY23 Federal Community Accomplishment Report (CARS)

- Sayers provided update for FY23 MI UCF CARS report
 - Overall, for FY23, % of Managing communities decreased and % Developing increased, likely due to:
 - Ongoing efforts by DNR UCF staff to verify accuracy of local CARS metrics (i.e. plans, ordinance, staff, board) to ensure compliance with updated federal CARS definitions. This has resulted in a decrease in some areas.
 - Annual reversion of some communities from Managing to Developing status as a result of change in status of local CARS metrics (e.g. outdated plans [10yr+], loss of staff, board, etc.
 - Looking at implementing an annual municipal CARS survey to improve data collection and record keeping.
- Overall DNR UCF program assistance increased by ~100K to nearly 5.4 M
 - Largely due to efforts of new additional staff (Sobson).
- Financial Assistance increased significantly for second year in row:
 - FY22 increase largely due to State Urban Forest Resilience grant (~\$500K) subawarded to American Forests to support Detroit Tree Equity Partnership (DTEP)
 - FY23 increase due to award of \$7.5 million in IRA funding

Action item(s):

- *None*

Forest Action Plan (FAP) Stakeholder meeting

- A. Stay provided update on annual FAP stakeholder meeting plans.
- No date or location set yet but anticipate late winter or early spring.
 - Likely to be a hybrid event (in-person with virtual option) again this year.
 - Interested in hearing feedback from committee on topics, format etc.
 - Downtin felt dialogue during last year's session went well using virtual tools.
 - Mueller suggested providing advance guidance to attendees about what types of questions and feedback are expected so they can better prepare and give more meaningful input to improve discussion and outcomes for event.

Action item(s):

- *Stay and Sayers will communicate date/location for stakeholder event as soon as it is set.*

MI MUCFC Handbook (Draft attached)

- Idea originated at summer call and is based on adapting from VT example (w/permission)
- Goal is to create a formal policy and guidance handbook for current and prospective council members.
- Per direction at summer meeting, Sayers and K Gray worked to develop draft document (provided) for council to review and comment on by end of November.

Action item(s):

- *All council members to review draft and provide comments, questions, feedback to Sayers by end of November.*
- *Sayers and K Gray will revise and share final version before posting to website by end of the year.*

Tree City USA and Arbor Day Conference and award

- Sobson provided update and comments relative to 2022 and upcoming 2023 Tree City USA program.
- Arbor Day Conference in planning phase (MADA committee) for May 2024 as event for hosting awards and education/awareness related to Arbor Day, Tree City USA, UCF IRA grants etc.

Action item(s):

- *Sobson verifying that DNR media release announcing 2023 Tree City USA application period to come out this week*
- *MADA committee starting to meet on monthly basis to continue planning for MI Arbor Day Conference in Lansing area for May, 2024 and will keep full committee informed of progress.*

Public Comment:

- Downtin – Asked if there's any way to advocate for legislative action to protect trees (issue of vandalism). Feedback suggested that this is often addressed at local level by ordinance.

Staff Communications:

- Sayers
 - MI Trees: Currently at 17.1M of 50M goal by 2030 (101K public, 17M DNR)
 - Belle Isle sawmill Phase II work in progress (site drainage and main door)
 - Recently announced award of 29 DTE grants totaling \$102 thousand
- Sobson
 - Presenting at several upcoming events: MPARK, WAM conf. and MGIA conf.
 - Recently presented at the MI SAF conf. and MI Planning Assoc. conf. this fall
 - Had a great experience attending the World forum on Urban Forests in D.C.
- Stay
 - Project Learning tree engagement and training events are helping expand program reach in Wexford Co. (Feb 12-13) and Detroit (March 16).
 - March 16 event [Black Faces in Green Spaces: The Journeys of Black Professionals in Green Careers](#).
 - Visit [website](#) to find out more and keep up with events and happenings

Member Communications:

- Foen
 - Greening of Detroit received \$9M in IRA funding
 - Workforce development program is employing 350 new individuals
 - Working to plant ~20 thousand new trees over next 5 yrs. from Meyers nursery
 - Fall 5500 total trees DTEP and [2500 from Greening (1,500 bb)]
 - Encouraged others to join a planting yet this fall
<https://www.greeningofdetroit.com/events>
 - Attended the World Forum on Urban Forests in D.C. recently.
- Santoro
 - Shared his experience attending the World Forum on Urban Forests in D.C. recently and that it was great meeting and networking with people nationally and from MI.
- Schultz
 - Shared positive experience at unique event that he attended earlier this fall at a U-pick chestnut farm in Lapeer – [Ivory Farms](#). Encourages others to participate and promote in future.
 - Mueller indicated a similar opportunity exists at [Winkel Chestnut Farms](#) in Coopersville (west Michigan) in September and early October.
- Hickman
 - MI Urban Wood Network board member nomination deadline is today! Contact him.
 - Helping host Urban Wood Utilization webinar in January. Will send further details.
 - Michigan Urban Wood Network Newsletter coming soon.

Next Meeting: Spring Tuesday, April 2nd

Adjournment: 12:05 PM

Respectfully submitted: Kevin Sayers