



Grand Junction Forestry Advisory Board Minutes

July 9, 2026

Roll Call

Board Members Present:

Joseph Chandler
Bill Cooper
Mollie Freilicher online
Dan Komlo
Kamie Long
Anna Stout online
Tanya Travis

Board Members Absent:

Earl Perry

Guests Present:

City Staff Present:

Rob Davis, Parks Supervisor, Forestry and Open Space
Cameron Walters, Communications Specialist
Anna Wirth, Admin Specialist
Sara Kinkade, Water Conservation Specialist

Meeting called to order by Bill Cooper at 8:38am.

Approval of Minutes

Kamie Long made a motion to accept the June 4 minutes. The motion was seconded by Joe Chandler and carried unanimously.

Public Comments

No Public Comments.

New Business

Sara Kinkade; GJ Water Conservation Specialist

Sara Kinkade, the City's new Water Conservation Specialist, introduced herself to the Board. Board members also introduced themselves.

Sara discussed challenges with the City's turf conversion program, noting that many completed projects have raised concerns about maintaining the health of existing trees as irrigated turf is removed. Most projects are located in the downtown area making it difficult to balance water conservation goals with preserving mature trees. Ongoing discussions with City staff have focused on identifying ways to maintain tree health while continuing to promote turf conversions.

Sara noted she is exploring a variety of water conservation strategies beyond landscaping, including consulting with staff at the water treatment plants, and is seeking as many ideas as possible to reduce water use.

Sara Kinkade asked about the potential damage sod cutting can cause to tree roots during turf conversion projects and whether there are alternative removal methods. Members noted that removing turf with sod cutters can damage tree roots, and alternatives such as cutting turf low, covering it, and using mulch were discussed.

Board members emphasized the importance of providing irrigation across the full tree root zone rather than only near the trunk, as mature tree roots often extend well beyond the canopy. Proper mulch, avoiding weed fabric near trees, and using appropriate irrigation methods were identified as key factors in maintaining tree health.

The discussion also highlighted that water conservation does not always require removing all turf. Alternatives such as native grasses, drought-tolerant groundcovers, and improved watering practices can reduce water use while preserving trees and creating more diverse landscapes.

The Board discussed the value of evaluating water savings from turf conversion projects by comparing changes in landscape type and water use. Staff noted that some previous conversions have not resulted in significant water reductions but have improved landscape health and maintenance needs. The discussion highlighted the importance of understanding the overall impact of conservation efforts and continuing to evaluate best practices for sustainable landscapes.

The Board discussed concerns about property owners discontinuing irrigation after turf conversions and the potential impact on mature trees. Staff noted that City code requires adjacent property owners to maintain watering of trees within the public right-of-way and suggested using conservation programs and available funding to help residents maintain tree health.

Anna expressed interest in developing recommendations for Council that strengthen protections for City trees, including potential updates to ordinances and enforcement practices. Board members emphasized the need for a balance between water conservation and preserving the community's urban tree canopy through education, outreach, and consistent enforcement. They also noted the importance of coordinating outreach so residents understand both their responsibility to maintain trees and available resources to help with irrigation improvements.

Tri-fold Follow-up

The Board revisited the proposal to distribute the forestry board's tri-fold informational brochure through a third-party marketing group that provides welcome packages to new homeowners.

Previously, the Board had discussed moving forward if at least 70% of the addresses reached were within city limits. Rob Davis reported that GIS review showed the percentage was significantly lower than expected, a little over 50%.

Overall, approximately 5,000 households had received welcome packages since 2023, with about 2,663 located within city limits. The marketing group's nonprofit rate would be approximately \$150 per month, compared with their typical rate of \$450–\$500 per month.

The Board discussed whether city funds should be used for outreach that also reaches residents outside city limits. Members noted concerns about potential confusion for non-city residents and possible impacts on staff time, but also recognized the value of broad tree education and the efficiency of using an existing outreach program.

Members agreed that the program could serve as one component of a larger public outreach strategy and discussed the importance of evaluating its effectiveness before making a long-term commitment.

Motion

Tanya Travis made a motion to conduct a three-month trial of the welcome package program and monitor results, including public response and any impacts on staff time. If August is unavailable, the trial will begin in September. Dan Komlo seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Yes – 6 No - 0

Rob and Cameron will develop a brief script for the representatives delivering the welcome packages.

2026 Licensed Contractor Day of Service

Rob reported that discussions had taken place with Tom Ziola regarding another Licensed Contractor Day of Service in 2026. The current plan is to hold the event at Sherwood Park to continue improvement efforts in that area, although a date has not yet been selected.

Board members expressed support for following the same format as the previous year's event, noting that it had been successful and generated positive feedback. Staff indicated they were tentatively considering September.

IRA Irrigation Grant

Rob Davis and Tanya Travis will coordinate outreach to potential participants, including reviewing the list of interested property owners from the previous year and conducting additional neighborhood outreach as needed. Kamie Long offered to assist with outreach if needed.

Kamie Long reported that the next round of grant applications will open at the end of the month. While federal agency restructuring is ongoing, there have been no indications that the grant funding will be withdrawn. The program is now being referred to as the Urban and Community Forestry (UCF) grant rather than the IRA grant.

Market on Main Starts Tonight

Board members reviewed preparations for the first event. Molly, Tanya, and Jermaine were assigned to staff the booth, with setup scheduled for 4:45 p.m. at the storage facility before the event begins at 5:30 p.m. Staff discussed booth logistics, including equipment, the misting fan, water station access, and volunteer support. Members emphasized the importance of adequate setup assistance and agreed to evaluate the first event to identify any needed improvements for future markets.

Four Canyons Parkway

Rob Davis provided an update on the Four Corners Parkway/25 Road project, noting concerns with tree protection, project coordination, and the loss of several trees. He is working with the City's

Transportation Engineering and Parks and Recreation departments to improve tree protection practices and ensure forestry staff are involved earlier in future projects.

Rob Davis discussed opportunities to restore canopy by planting additional trees in nearby city right-of-way and emphasized the need for better maintenance of young trees. He also highlighted the potential value of a dedicated young tree maintenance crew and trained volunteers to support pruning and long-term tree care.

Other Items to Discuss

Rob Davis invited Kamie Long to participate in the Grand Junction Fire Department's strategic planning process, pending scheduling availability.

Rob Davis reported that CMU revised plans for its Lincoln Park Barn project to preserve more existing trees and reroute utilities to reduce tree impacts. Due to seasonal concerns, staff recommended replacing trees removed for construction with mitigation plantings rather than relocating mature trees during summer. Rob Davis commended CMU for its collaborative approach to tree preservation.

The meeting adjourned by acclamation at 10:12am.

Next Meeting – August 6 at 8:30 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Anna Wirth