

CALL TO ORDER: 6:03PM

COMMISSIONERS:

Present: Larry Burns, Elizabeth Pool, Mike Poort, Georgette Sass

Absent: John Williams

CITY LIAISON: Doug Lang and Derek Gajdos

APPROVAL OF AGENDA: Burns motioned to request to speak after the presenters but before the question-and-answer time. Poort Second; approved 3 to 1.

PUBLIC COMMENT: *Members of the audience may address the Commission on any item, whether on the agenda or not. Those addressing the Commission are asked to provide their name and address and will be limited to three minutes of speaking time. Council will hear all comments for future consideration but may not have a response at this time.*

APPROVAL OF JANUARY 2ND, 2024 MINUTES: Motion by Burns to approve; second Poort; approved.

AGENDA

NEW BUSINESS:

- A **Invited Speaker** – The Duncan Park Commission utilized a rank choice approach to identify priority stewardship goals for 2024. (Results were presented at the November 21, 2023 DPC meeting, posted as [Priorities – Results Rank Choice](#) on the Google Drive and sent with the January 16, 2024 agenda). The top priority was the establishment of a contractual relationship with a professional for forest management in Duncan Park. To this end, the scope of work to be requested was identified. However, it became clear after initial conversations with potential candidates that professional managers would also need the DPC to identify both short-term and long-term objectives. Dr. Ali Locher of GVSU has been an essential partner and consultant to the DPC on forestry management in Duncan Park. She has agreed to provide an overview of work, carried out in collaboration with Rob Larson, that has generated a detailed scientific/ecological understanding of the urban forest in Duncan Park and the surrounding city property. **Outcome** – The DPC, having been provided with current best practices (also with consideration of information from a previous presentation by Natalie Bekins and Cheryl Nelson at the November 21, 2023 DPC meeting) along with forest health data from GVSU, will identify management objectives to be followed by persons working within Duncan Park and/or contractually engaged with DPC.

Amendment: Speaker: Larry Burns to speak after the guest speakers but before questions.

Burns declined to speak before questions.

Dr. Locher and Rob Larson presented collected data pertaining to tree health and forest insults. The presentation is available on [Facebook](#).

The summary of the presentation is as follows:

Report from Dr. Ali Locher (Professor, Grand Valley State University) and Rob Larson (Affiliate Professor, Grand Valley State University) “Grand Haven Forests: Summary of data guiding conservation & management”.

1. Introduction:

Grand Haven Forests represent vital ecosystems within the city, providing numerous ecosystem services such as stormwater retention and carbon absorption. Effective conservation and management strategies are crucial to maintain the health and resilience of these forests in the face of various threats.

2. Review of Current Management Recommendations:

The city-approved management recommendations outline strategies for preserving the integrity of Grand Haven Forests. These recommendations serve as a foundational framework for addressing threats within the context of an adaptive management strategy.

3. Integration of New Data:

Recent data collection efforts have provided valuable insights into the composition and health of Grand Haven Forests. Tree cover analysis reveals a composition with Hemlock, Oak, Beech, White Pine, and Red Pine being dominant species. This data informs adaptive management strategies to address specific threats and challenges facing these forests.

4. Identified Threats and Addressed Specific Issues:

a. Hemlock: The Hemlock population is facing threats from invasive species and diseases. The current Imidacloprid treatment is nearing its effectiveness, necessitating monitoring and potential re-treatment. Consider a holistic approach and assess infection in other areas within Grand Haven, including Dewey Hill. (Note: Our local Cooperative Invasive Species Management team (CISMA) advises against widespread re-treatment at this time though selective treatment of individual trees at DPC discretion is an option).

b. Beech: Beech trees are susceptible to disease and are impacted by scale infestation. Adaptive management recommendations include maintaining intact beech systems, monitoring disease severity, and considering removal of dead trees for safety while preserving mast production.

c. Oak: Oak trees are threatened by oak wilt and require strategic management interventions. Mapping epicenters, inventorying oak locations, and treating with propiconazole fungicide are essential strategies. Avoiding disruptive activities like vibra-plowing is crucial to maintain dune stability.

d. Seedlings: Regeneration of seedlings is essential for the long-term stability of the urban forest system. Adaptive management recommendations include monitoring regeneration, assessing herbivory impact, and implementing fencing in vulnerable areas to promote regeneration.

5. Conclusion:

Incorporating current data into an adaptive management framework is essential for effectively conserving and managing Grand Haven Forests. By addressing specific threats and implementing targeted management strategies, we can ensure the resilience and sustainability of these valuable ecosystems for future generations.

6. Recommendations for Future Action:

- Continuously monitor forest health and adapt management strategies accordingly.
- Collaborate with stakeholders and experts to implement best practices for conservation.
- Before implementing tree removal, ensuring forest regeneration and management of invasive species is a priority.
- Conduct regular assessments to evaluate the effectiveness of management interventions.
- Educate the community about the importance of forest conservation and their role in stewardship.

Moving forward, we (GVSU collaborators) will continue collecting tree inventory data, monitoring tree health and disease, and mapping aspects of Grand Haven dune ecosystems using technology such as LiDAR and drone imagery.

Requested clarifications provided via email correspondence on February 19, 2024 were as follows:

R. Larson

Looking at the topography and the relationship to how oak wilt has spread through system, the recommendation was to stop girdling and felling of infected trees because the location of the initial epicenters is at a higher elevation in the system. It is possible that the spread of infection in the system can be contributed to mishandling of management and treatment of oak wilt in these critical dune systems. We have a plan to measure and delineate these epicenters at the start of the growing season 2024 before any treatment is conducted. We are also willing to work with the city to evaluate this further.

The overall recommendation was to halt any removal of infected trees (beech or oak) until other issues were addressed such as dune stability and lack of regeneration. The caution conveyed in our presentation was that this system is unique because it can't be about looking at individual trees, but it has to be looked at from a system approach. Any management that does not take a look at the system as a whole (soils, vegetation, topography, etc.) could have consequences that are irreversible to the system.

A. Locher

Beech management:

Recommendations for canopy management should proceed with caution. In the January 16th presentation, our adaptive management recommendations were to 1) maintain intact beech for now, 2) monitor for decreased production and remove trees for safety, 3) monitor for Nectria fungus. As Rob stated, any tree removal cannot occur unless there is a plan in place for promoting and maintaining regeneration (NOT nursery stock planting) and maintaining dune stabilization. Hence, the recommendation to leave trees intact until a feasible plan is in place. It is possible with creative collaboration that a feasible plan can be in place this year. In the meantime, we are working with students to finish the 100% inventory and develop a web app to allow you all to access data and statistics.

Oak management:

Recommendations for oak management in the Jan 16th presentation were to 1) continue monitoring and mapping oak wilt, 2) treat with propiconazole, 3) do not vibra plow on dunes, 4) keep oaks intact for dune stabilization. Once again, we are not recommending to leave the spore producers in place to spread oak wilt. As Georgette stated, it is likely that the spread of oak wilt may have increased in Mulligan's by felling and leaving the infected tree. With our recommendation, we once again were emphasizing that a plan must be in place for promoting and maintaining regeneration and dune stabilization. This should be a priority! Removal of trees within epicenters on the steep slopes will be detrimental to the dune systems, which we portrayed with the 3D models of the topography and images depicting oak root grafts and substrate stabilization. THUS, it is imperative that a plan is in place for removing the insults inflicted on regenerating trees before the saws are brought in. Without action to promote regeneration, the outcomes of removing diseased trees or not removing diseased trees will be the same: you will have no recruitment and therefore no future overstory to stabilize the dunes.

A clear plan to promote regeneration of native plants (remove invasives), and maintain the dune structure prior to any tree removal recommendations is imperative. The logic behind these recommendations was to avoid the cost and consequences of a larger clean-up effort if the dune structure was damaged by clearing vegetation without any regeneration.

Motion by Sass to move remainder of the agenda to the February 6 meeting. Second Poort; approved.

- B Discussion** – The need for community outreach as both an educational endeavor as well as an opportunity for fund-raising exposure has been a longstanding goal of the DPC. Scheduling of summer 2024 events will be presented. **Outcome** – DPC will identify specific events and vote on action to be taken.
- C Discussion** – We have reached the point where 50% of our fiscal year has been completed. Prioritization of the remaining 2023-2024 fiscal expenditures will be discussed. **Outcome** – DPC will identify and vote on formal prioritizations of remaining expenditures.

COMMISSIONER'S REPORTS:

OLD BUSINESS:

CITY LIAISON REPORT:

TREASURER REPORT: Financial reports for 2023 have been shared in their entirety on Google Drive.

PUBLIC COMMENT: *PUBLIC COMMENTS WERE IN THE FORM OF QUESTIONS FOR DR LOCHER AND DR LARSON.*

ADJOURNMENT: 7:55PM

NEXT MEETING: February 6, 2024 @6pm

DRAFT MINUTES RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED BY:

ELIZABETH POOL

ELIZABETH A POOL

DUNCAN PARK COMMISSION, SECRETARY