



PAROWAN CITY SHADE TREE COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
AUGUST 6, 2026 – 6:00 P.M.
PAROWAN CITY OFFICES - 35 E 100 N, PAROWAN, UT 84761

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: Heidi Toia (Chair), Vern Fridley, Ron Roth, Jordan Hirschi

ABSENT/EXCUSED: Councilmember Lyle Barton, Justin Dalley, Bryce Mineer

ADMINISTRATION AND STAFF PRESENT: Mollie Halterman, Mayor; Dan Jessen, City Manager; Callie Bassett, City Recorder

PUBLIC PRESENT: Ryan Johnson

1. Call to Order

Chair Heidi Toia called the meeting to order at 5:58 PM on Thursday, August 6, 2026.

2. Public Comments (if any)

Mayor Halterman used this time to recognize outgoing Heidi Toia for her contributions to the Shade Tree Commission since January 2025. Mayor Halterman presented Heidi with a stewardship award that had been intended for the Arbor Day celebration. The Committee acknowledged that this would be Heidi's final meeting, as she is stepping away to focus on her growing sourdough cottage business.

3. Approval of Meeting Minutes from April 2, 2026

Vern Fridley offered two corrections to the April 2, 2026 minutes: references to a "state vehicle" and "state truck" on page 2 should be corrected to reflect that it was Ryan Johnson's personal vehicle, and the name "Bruce" listed as absent should be corrected to "Bryce."

A motion to approve the minutes from April 2, 2026, as amended, was made and seconded. The motion carried.

4. Introduction of New Shade Tree Committee Member Jordan Hirschi

Jordan Hirschi was introduced to the Committee. She is 26 years old, has lived in Parowan for approximately four years, and works for the state investigating child abuse. Committee members and staff introduced themselves in turn.

5. Discussion Regarding City and Property Owner Responsibility for Trees in the Right of Way

City Manager Dan Jessen led a structured presentation outlining the ongoing challenge of determining financial and maintenance responsibility for city-owned trees located in the public right of way adjacent to private properties. He provided background on a prior City Council discussion, noting that the current ordinance places routine maintenance responsibility on adjacent property owners, while the city retains discretionary authority to act on dead or hazardous trees.

Dan outlined four general policy options for the Committee's consideration:

Option 1 – Status Quo: Maintain the current ordinance. Property owners remain responsible for routine maintenance; the city addresses dead or hazardous trees. No new funding required, but the existing inequities and concerns about fairness persist.

Option 2 – Full City Responsibility: The city assumes all tree maintenance, funded through a new utility fee, special assessment, or property tax. Dan noted this would require significant new revenue—previously, bids to address only 10% of the city's trees approached \$200,000—and would impose administrative burdens. Mayor Halterman confirmed that when this approach was explored previously, it was estimated to take 8–10 years to address the backlog at that level of funding.

Option 3 – Property Owner Opt-Out: Homeowners who no longer wish to maintain a right-of-way tree could petition the city for its removal, with required mitigation such as a replacement planting elsewhere or a financial contribution. Vern Fridley expressed strong opposition to giving property owners unilateral authority to remove healthy, mature trees, citing specific examples of valuable catalpa trees on Center Street. Jordan Hirschi echoed this concern, arguing that financial incentive alone would lead many property owners to simply choose removal.

Option 4 – Hybrid Approach (Staff Recommendation): Dan characterized this as the most practical compromise. Under this model, property owners would remain responsible for ground-level routine maintenance and watering, while the city would formally commit—in policy or code—to responding to public safety concerns including dead or dying trees, hazardous hanging limbs, structurally compromised trees, and emergency storm damage. Dan acknowledged a gap in this approach: trees that are neither a safety hazard nor easily maintained from the ground would not be addressed by either party until a safety condition developed. He noted this option would require no new funding and would resolve the most pressing concerns.

Ryan Johnson, State Forester, informed the Committee that a federal urban forestry grant had recently been confirmed, which could potentially fund one-time costs such as initial maintenance, tree infrastructure, or personnel training. He noted the grant is typically structured as a match and that pruning and tree care would likely qualify. Vern Fridley cautioned that grant funding would not constitute a sustainable long-term solution, describing it as useful for a pilot project rather than a systemic fix.

Jordan Hirschi raised concern that the hybrid model could recreate the same ambiguities that currently exist, particularly around discretionary determinations of what constitutes a safety hazard. She argued that full city responsibility, if financially feasible, would provide the clearest and most equitable standard. She also suggested that the initial cost would be highest in year one due to years of deferred maintenance, and that ongoing costs would likely decrease significantly once the tree canopy is brought to a maintained state. She proposed that distributing costs across multiple departmental budgets—parks, public works, and the electric fund—could make full city responsibility more financially viable, and requested a line-item budget to explore that possibility further. Dan agreed to provide it.

Mayor Halterman noted that only two other cities in Utah have the city bear full responsibility for right-of-way trees, and both have significantly larger budgets than Parowan. The Committee also discussed the importance of terminology, agreeing that any revised ordinance language should refer to "property owners" rather than "homeowners" to ensure institutions such as the school district are included.

The discussion also touched on the city's ash tree population, which constitutes an estimated 20–30% of the urban forest and faces a long-term threat from the emerald ash borer. Ryan Johnson recommended

proactively planting diverse replacement species in areas with heavy ash tree concentrations rather than investing heavily in pruning ash trees that may eventually be lost.

No formal recommendation was made at this meeting. The item will be placed on the next meeting agenda for a committee recommendation to be forwarded to the City Council. The Committee also noted that a chair election will need to be placed on the next agenda following Heidi's departure, as the tree committee selects its own chair per city code. Anyone with recommendations for new committee members was asked to contact Mayor Halterman.

6. Member Reports

Vern Fridley reported that he has been personally watering the trees planted at Memorial Arbor Day near the Meeks cabin, but that the physical demands of doing so weekly are becoming difficult. He inquired about purchasing a hose timer for an automated watering system and asked how to process reimbursement through the city. Dan Jessen indicated there are existing budget line items for tree maintenance and tree purchases, and that the purchase could likely be accommodated. Ron Roth offered to take over watering the two Kentucky coffee trees at Meeks Park in the near term, as he lives across the street and is already watering other trees nearby. He acknowledged a more permanent automated solution should still be pursued.

Dan Jessen raised a pending commitment to plant evergreen trees along the boundary between the new pickleball courts at the Valentine Peak Sports Complex and adjacent properties, intended as a sound barrier. Resident Rex Burton has offered to purchase trees for the portion behind his property. Dan noted the city still needs to install a drip irrigation system before planting can proceed, and asked the Committee for species recommendations. Ryan Johnson suggested Arborvitae, Juniper, Spruce, or Fir as suitable sound-barrier evergreens given the well-drained, gravelly site conditions, and noted he would provide a species list. Vern Fridley suggested weeping white spruce as an additional option. Lombardy poplars, which historically lined Parowan streets, were specifically discussed and ruled out due to their height, non-evergreen nature, and short lifespan.

Ron Roth also reported on the spring Arbor Day events. A kids' assembly was held on Friday, May 1st, with approximately 220 elementary school students in attendance. Presentations were given by Vern Fridley, Ron Roth, Ryan Johnson, Mayor Halterman, and Heidi Toia. A public community event followed on Saturday, May 2nd.

Ron additionally raised concern about Meeks Pond turning brown due to silt-laden water entering from the canal. Dan clarified that the discolored water originates from the canal company's irrigation system backing up inadvertently, not from any city action. He noted a long-term solution is planned involving a pressurized irrigation connection that would allow the city to fill the pond on its own schedule with clean water, potentially incorporating an aerating fountain. He indicated conversations with the reservoir company president are ongoing and that the solution would be implemented in conjunction with upcoming weir adjustments.

7. Adjourn

A motion to adjourn was made by Ron Roth and seconded. All were in favor. The meeting was adjourned.

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PAROWAN CITY CORPORATION



Callie Bassett, City Recorder

Date Approved: 9/03/2026