



PAROWAN CITY SHADE TREE COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
SEPTEMBER 3, 2026 – 6:00 P.M.
PAROWAN CITY OFFICES - 35 E 100 N, PAROWAN, UT 84761

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: Vern Fridley, Ron Roth, Jordan Hirschi, Councilmember Lyle Barton

ABSENT/EXCUSED: Justin Dalley, Bryce Mineer, Dan Jessen

ADMINISTRATION AND STAFF PRESENT: Mollie Halterman, Mayor; Aldo Biasi, Public Works Superintendent; Callie Bassett, City Recorder

PUBLIC PRESENT: Brandon Allen, Tyrell Crofts

1. Select Chair Pro Tem

A motion was made by Ron Roth and seconded by Lyle Barton to select Vern Fridley as Chair Pro Tem for the meeting. The motion carried unanimously.

2. Call to Order

Chair Vern Fridley called the Parowan City Shade Tree Committee Meeting to order at 6:05 p.m.

3. Public Comments (if any)

Vern invited public comments at the opening of the meeting. No public comments were offered at that time.

4. Any Conflict of Interest with Agenda Items by Any Committee Members

Vern asked all committee members to disclose any financial or other vested interests related to agenda items. No conflicts of interest were declared.

5. Approval of Meeting Minutes from August 6, 2026

Vern confirmed that all board members present had reviewed the minutes from the August 6, 2026 meeting. A motion was made to approve the minutes as presented.

Motion to approve the minutes of the August 6, 2026 meeting was made by Lyle Barton and seconded by Ron Roth. The motion carried unanimously with no opposition or abstentions.

6. Discussion Regarding Board Member Attendance

Vern Fridley raised the issue of board member attendance, noting that consistent participation is critical given the importance of the committee's work in advising the city council. He recalled that the committee had once maintained an informal standard whereby members who missed three meetings without a compelling reason would be asked about their continued interest in serving. He expressed concern that this standard had fallen by the wayside and asked for comments from board members.

Council Member Lyle Barton agreed that the committee needed members with genuine passion and availability. He noted that from the city's perspective, Public Works had generally been able to send a representative and that Aldo Biasi was present that evening as an example of that. The discussion concluded with a general consensus that the attendance conversation itself would serve as a useful reminder of the commitment expected of board members.

7. Discussion on Street Tree Maintenance Alternatives

This item generated the most substantive discussion of the evening. Vern Fridley introduced the topic by noting that the question of who is responsible for maintaining Parowan's urban forest has persisted for nearly thirty years and that the committee's role is to research options and deliver a recommendation to the city council.

Input from Public Works Director Aldo Biasi

Vern invited Public Works Director Aldo Biasi to speak to the city's capacity to address tree maintenance. Aldo explained that tree maintenance has historically been reactive rather than proactive — the city tends to respond to complaints or visible hazards rather than following a systematic schedule. He noted that trees, much like sidewalks, tend to be deprioritized until something goes wrong. He also flagged the intersection of tree and sidewalk maintenance, pointing out that root damage to sidewalk panels raises questions about whether to grind roots, risking tree loss, or remove the tree outright.

Aldo was candid about staffing constraints, noting that a proper tree trimming operation requires a minimum of three to four personnel — including traffic control and a lift operator — and that Public Works is not currently staffed at a level that allows for routine tree work. He emphasized that the level of service question ultimately rests with the city council, who must decide how to prioritize trees against other municipal needs such as water, sewer, streets, and parks.

He suggested that a defined master plan — specifying which blocks or areas are to be addressed each year, and in which season — would make it far easier to schedule and commit resources. He referenced a recent effort in which his crew took down seven or eight trees in succession by moving from location to location efficiently, and noted that this model could work if the committee identified and directed the priority work.

Vern Fridley's Proposed Alternative (Model 5 / Model 2 Hybrid)

Vern presented a written alternative he had developed based on feedback from constituents. The proposal centered on contracting tree maintenance to a private firm on a multi-year basis, funded by a dedicated city budget line item. Key features included the city identifying priority trees, issuing a well-crafted request for proposals to local and regional tree care companies, and allowing the selected contractor to perform priority pruning and removal on a schedule that fits their operations. Property owners would retain the ability to hire other tree care firms independently.

Vern outlined the advantages: reduced city liability on right-of-way trees, relief of workload on the short-staffed Public Works crew, the professional expertise of specialized contractors, potentially lower bids if companies can count on off-season work, and a gradual improvement in community pride in a well-maintained urban forest. He acknowledged challenges including competition for budget funds, the complexity of multi-year agreements, the time required to achieve citywide results, and the possibility of local tree care companies perceiving city overreach. He also noted that the proposal would not address the separate but related issue of tree watering.

Vern noted that Aldo's willingness to dedicate a week or two of crew time made the previously distributed "Alternative 2" more viable than he had initially thought.

Public Comment — Brandon Allen

Resident Brandon Allen shared research he had conducted during a prior city council meeting on how Utah cities of similar size handle tree maintenance. He reported that among Utah cities with populations of 20,000 or fewer, only Moab and Santa Clara maintain dedicated forestry departments. All other

comparable cities follow a policy similar to Parowan's current approach, whereby homeowners are responsible for maintaining trees to seven feet in height, and the city addresses hazards, dead trees, and trees interfering with power lines.

Brandon noted that Santa Clara's forestry investment is driven by the civic importance of their iconic, tree-lined main street. He also suggested that volunteer programs — engaging youth groups, church organizations such as elders quorums, or other community members — could accomplish meaningful work with modest city support, pointing to the community's demonstrated willingness to help as seen in the pool situation. He proposed focusing initial efforts on Main Street, where a number of dead trees are visible, and working through it in blocks over successive years.

Public Comment — Jennelle Zajac

Jennelle Zajac, a former shade tree committee member, stated that the problems facing the committee are essentially unchanged from when she served approximately eleven years ago. She expressed support for Vern's proposal and offered a specific funding mechanism: a utility bill surcharge of \$7 per month. Based on approximately 1,600 utility customers, she calculated this would generate roughly \$134,000 per year — sufficient to fund a contracted tree trimming service. She proposed accountability measures as part of any contract, including regular reporting to citizens on what work was being done and where.

Jennelle also suggested tiered participation options, such as a \$10 or \$15 per month surcharge for those willing and able to pay more, which would effectively subsidize lower-income or senior residents who could not afford the base surcharge. She noted personally that she would likely opt for the \$15 tier if it meant being prouder of the city's trees. She offered to share her spreadsheet analysis with any interested committee members following the meeting.

Public Comment — Tyrell Crofts

Tyrell Crofts informed the committee that grant funding is available but must be actively pursued. He identified a U.S. Forest Service grant with an awarded ceiling of \$750,000 and a floor of \$200,000, which he said could currently be applied for. He also noted that the Utah Division of Forestry, Fire and State Lands has a grant program, though it is highly competitive. Tyrell suggested that grant funding might serve as a strong starting point — funding an initial effort to address the backlog of problem trees — after which ongoing maintenance by city crews would be more manageable. He also raised the idea of a 501(c)(3) account as a potential fundraising tool, noting that other county organizations use this structure to support specific funding efforts.

Mayor Halterman confirmed that she had previously contacted grant sources and received a response indicating that one grant required the city to demonstrate that material trimmed or removed could generate economic product. She noted that she was continuing to explore that requirement. She also cautioned that grants are valuable but do not solve the ongoing maintenance challenge — referencing a past grant that funded tree cleanup near the school, the effects of which have since been erased by years of neglect.

Vern Fridley offered a general caution that most grants are designed for innovation, training, or one-time projects rather than ongoing maintenance programs, and encouraged the committee not to over-rely on grant funding as a long-term strategy.

Discussion on Tree Inventory Data

Committee Member Jordan Hirschi raised the question of scope — specifically, whether the committee should focus only on trees not already covered by other departments, such as the Electric Department,

which is responsible for trees in power line corridors. She noted that based on a 2011 tree inventory she had reviewed, the majority of trees requiring maintenance at that time were in power line areas. She observed that this data is now fifteen years old and suggested that an updated inventory would be essential before any meaningful cost or scope estimates could be developed.

Aldo mentioned that at one time the city had GPS data on many of its trees, and Vern confirmed that a comprehensive survey had been conducted around 2008–2009, recording each tree by street address, condition, age, and species. He noted that a subsequent state survey was not useful because it was organized block by block without the ability to aggregate data. Aldo committed to working with city GIS staff to locate the older data and update it, which would allow the committee to develop a master plan with realistic cost projections and grant targets.

Committee Consensus

Lyle Barton summarized the committee's position: before a formal recommendation can be delivered to the city council, the committee needs a functioning full board, updated tree inventory data, a clearer picture of the Electric Department's capacity and budget for tree work, and at minimum another meeting for new members to get up to speed and contribute research. He recommended that any recommendation be deferred until those conditions are met. Vern Fridley and other members agreed.

8. Update on Pickleball Field Plantings 44:07

Vern reported that earlier in the week he had met at the sports complex with Ron Roth and City Manager Dan Jessen to review a planting plan for the pickleball and tennis facility on 200 North. The plan involves planting approximately 50 to 60 trees along the property boundary to serve as a sound and light barrier for neighboring properties, with a long-range vision of attracting tournaments to Parowan.

Vern outlined the proposed steps: finalizing the planting plan, preparing the site, ordering planting stock, laying main water lines in the fall and winter, auguring tree holes in early spring, and installing individual drip irrigation lines for each tree. He noted that Big Trees Nursery had offered to plant the trees for an additional 50% of the tree purchase price, which he viewed as a reasonable option given crew constraints.

He stated that Dan believed county funding could cover most of the project, potentially in two phases. The committee would develop a refined map and a rough budget to bring to the city council for authorization.

Mayor Halterman noted that the Electric Department had reported strong progress in clearing branches from power lines during the prior season and expressed openness to directional guidance from the committee.

Aldo noted that the master plan for the complex still needs refinement, including the location of a central pipeline running through the project area and a planned restroom facility. He confirmed that while Public Works has several large projects underway — including a water project and a trail project — he could redirect one or two staff members to assist. He also noted that timing is critical given the seasonal nature of planting and construction in the area.

Ron Roth offered historical context, noting that the old structure on the site — known locally as "the bunker" — dates to the 1930s Civilian Conservation Corps era, when it served as sleeping quarters, washrooms, and a cooking facility before later being used by Iron County for equipment storage.

9. Discussion on Potential New Committee Members to Fill Vacancies 51:18

Callie Bassett clarified that the Shade Tree Committee is a seven-member board consisting of the city manager, a city council member, and five public members. She noted that the committee currently has four members, three of whom attend regularly, creating one clear vacancy and a potential second vacancy depending on whether a current non-attending member is released.

Mayor Halterman identified Bryce Minear as a member who had agreed to serve given his professional expertise with equipment and cost estimation, but whose schedule — heavily occupied with fire crew responsibilities — had made regular attendance very difficult. She noted that he had intended to attend this meeting but was unable to. She also identified Heidi Toia as having recently departed the committee, leaving that seat open.

Mayor Halterman expressed support for inviting Jennelle Zajac and Brandon Allen to join the committee, noting the interest and expertise both had demonstrated during the meeting. Council Member Barton made a motion to that effect.

Motion to recommend to the City Council that Brandon Allen be appointed to fill the position vacated by Bryce Minear, and that Jennelle Zajac be appointed to fill the remaining open position, was made by Council Member Lyle Barton and seconded Ron Roth. The motion carried.

Callie noted that both appointments are subject to formal approval by the City Council, and that she would place the items on the agenda for the next council meeting.

10. Member Reports

Ron Roth, who maintains the trees at Meeks Park, reported that two White Ash trees planted approximately 20–25 years ago are showing signs of decline, potentially due to lilac borer infestation. He expressed a desire to prolong the life of the trees through dead branch removal and application of a lilac borer treatment product, and shared photographs with the committee. Vern Fridley noted that removing dead branches would improve appearance but may not materially extend the trees' lives, and asked whether watering was adequate. The member confirmed that all trees in the park are watered regularly. Council Member Barton remarked, with some levity, that six inches of wet snow on Mother's Day trims trees better than anything, and encouraged everyone to pray for snow.

11. Adjourn

Mayor Halterman took a moment before adjournment to thank Vern for his persistence in bringing this issue forward, acknowledging that urban forest management has been a long-standing challenge that consumes significant city bandwidth and deserves resolution.

Motion to adjourn was made by Council Member Lyle Barton and seconded by Ron Roth. The motion carried unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 7:03 p.m.

PAROWAN CITY CORPORATION


Callie Bassett, City Recorder

Date Approved: 10-01-2026