

The monthly meeting of the Town of Highland Tree Board will be held at 7:00 PM, Thursday, March 16, 2023 at Town Hall. There will be no Zoom access to this meeting.

Richard Underkofler
Secretary

**Highland Tree Board Agenda for Regular Meeting
Thursday, March 16, 2022 – 7 PM**

Roll Call:

Board Members: James Colias, Elizabeth Herrejon, Ron Jackowski, Joan Roback, Blane Roberts, Richard Underkofler, Bernie Zemen.

Invited Town Staff: Mark Herak, Clerk/Treasurer; Mark Knesek, Public Works Director; Tim Gembala, Public Works Operations Director; Alex Brown, Superintendent, Parks & Recreation Department; Trever Kinley, Parks Director.

Others: webupdates@theideafactory.us.com c/o Theresa Badovich; Doug Van Ramshorst, Highland Community Foundation; Heather Oaks, Teacher/Sponsor Highland High School Sustainability Club; T. Hillegonds, Teacher/Sponsor Highland Middle School Science Club; Drew Hart, USDA, Forest Service; Samuel Vergara, The Student Conservation Association; Jennifer Birchfield, NIRPC; Rebecca Koetz, Lake County Extension Agent; Connie Wachala & Jean Bernius, Highland Neighbors for Sustainability

Minutes: Request for a motion to approve minutes of the last meeting held February 16, 2023.

Old Business:

a. Board Member Terms: On 1/27/23, Council President Tom Black appointed Jim Colias Board Chairperson on recommendation of the board. Although Natalie Stromberg of the High School Sustainability Club expressed interest, her application to the board has not been received. Teacher/Sponsor Heather Oaks was asked to recruit another sophomore or junior student. Elizabeth Herrejon serves until her successor is appointed.

b. CommuniTree Spring 2023 Plantings: Funding for the CommuniTree Grant Program is made possible through a Great Lakes Restoration Initiative Grant awarded to the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission by the USDA Forest Service. On 2/28/23, Highland's application for twenty Spring 2023 tree plantings was submitted to NIRPC – 50% low growing and 50% medium growing species. Included were planting locations in Brentwood Subdivision identified by Blane Roberts where homeowners pledged to plant and water trees in their front yards where there are utility conflicts or insufficient space in parkways. A tree planting & care workshop and tree pick up date will be determined April 2023.

c. Transplanting Trees: The weather is now too cold to transplant more Jackowski nursery trees. We will plan to replace dead trees in parkways, street medians, Merkley School; and plant new trees requested by Elizabeth Herrejon and Bernie Zemen in the Spring.

d. Tree Health Seminar: A March 29 at 6:30 pm session is scheduled at Highland Library for a presentation by Arborist Sharon Anderson about "Preparing your trees for Spring and Drought Recovery." Following the presentation, Sharon will be available for questions regarding tree care. Registration is required because space is limited. Contact the Library at 219-838-2394 to reserve your seat. *On the date this agenda was prepared, notice of this seminar had not been posted on the tree board's page on Town's website.*

e. Tree classes for Elementary Students: Jim Colias is coordinating with Rebecca Koetz, Purdue Lake County Extension Educator, to lead classes on a single day at Our Lady of Grace and Highland Christian School.

f. 2022 Tree City USA Application: On 3/6/2023, the Town of Highland received recognition for the fourth consecutive year. A 4'x6' flag, a 2022 Brass Maple Leaf for the plaque in the Town Council Chambers and two "4 Years" Sign Stickers were received.

g. 2023 Arbor Day Event: Jim Colias will report on work in progress for Highland's April 28, 2023 Arbor Day Event at Highland Christian School. State Representative Mike Andrade and Council President Tom Black accepted a speaker invitations, a proclamation has been prepared by Clerk-Treasurer Mark Herak, the Indiana Department of Forestry Nursery offered to provide a Shingle Oak Tree for campus planting and Pecan seedlings for distribution to the 3rd graders.

New Business:

a. Update Board Action Plan: The Board will review, change and potentially approve the Draft 2023 Action Plan.

January 2023 – December 2023

1. Seek Town Council appointments to update expiring Board Member terms – Done 1/23/23.
2. Become a member of the Indiana Arborist Association and participate in the IAA Annual Conference – Done 1/24/23 by Jackowski and Underkofler.
3. Cancel Board Meetings in July and December - Done 2/16/23.
4. Update Unapproved / Approved Species List with photos of recommended tree species – Assigned to Jackowski (Last done for unapproved species 9/6/22).
5. From the approximately dozen Jackowski nursery trees, secure utility locates and replace dead trees at Merkley School, in parkways and street medians; plant new trees in yard locations requested by Elizabeth Herrejon and Bernie Zemen - Assigned to a weekend crew consisting of Jackowski, Underkofler, Roberts, Zemen and Colias with truck.
6. Identify streets where there are open planting sites due to removal of dead trees; then survey the homeowners to inquire if they are willing to water and care for a replacement tree – Assigned to Roberts as lead with Roback for survey.
7. Decide on events in which we will participate to acquaint the community of our endeavors, identify homeowner planting sites, recruit volunteers: Park Pride Day, Farmer's Market, Fourth of July Festival, Fall Festival - Assigned to Roback as Lead.
8. Maintain community partnerships with Parks, Public Works, Schools, Town Council, NIRPC, NIPSCO, Chamber of Commerce & Highland Businesses – Assigned to Roberts as Lead.
9. Apply for available grants and keep a running tally of trees that we procure – Assigned to Underkofler.
10. Update the tree inventory for tree removals, pruning and new plantings. See Underkofler's Federal Inflation Reduction Act Funding Proposal.
11. Renew Arbor Day Foundation membership and share new ideas from this participation – Underkofler's membership expires 8/1/23.
12. Organize, in participation with local organizations, an annual Arbor Day Observance - Assigned to Colias at Highland Christian School.
13. Post a Tree of the Month & Tree Care Tips on the Board's Facebook Site - Assigned to Colias.
14. Periodic review of ordinances that need updating – Assigned to Underkofler
15. Secure 1-2 speakers per year for educational sessions on pertinent topics – Assigned to Colias.
16. Annual idea sharing, new ideas to keep Board moving forward – All Board Members.
17. Establish a list of goals/accomplishments/key facts and publish in a media release to Gazebo Express, NWI Times and WJOB – Assigned to Underkofler.
18. Review the Action Plan and make any adjustments to assure commitment to goals and objectives of plan for the next year – Assigned to Underkofler.
19. Renew application for Tree City USA before December 31 – Assigned to Underkofler.

b. Endorse Grant Applications of Highland Neighbors for Sustainability and Highland Community Foundation: Jean Bernius (Cell 715-240-0444) is writing two grant applications. One is a \$5,000 NIPSCO Environmental Action Grant to acquire native seeds; the other is a \$50,000 T-Mobile Small Town Beautification Grant to fund a native prairie engineering firm, Stantec, to drill the seeds into the thatch after the town prepares project sites along the Erie Lackawanna Bike Trail. An attached email provides an executive summary.

Discussion Topics: Comments from Board Members, the Public and/or Visitors: This item of business is confined to announcements of intention to bring a future action, or requests for the preparation of administrative work product for future consideration. In no instance may a matter for final action be taken up under this item of business.

Next Meeting: April 20, 2023.

Adjournment