

**Meeting Minutes**  
**Town of Highland Tree Board**  
**April 20, 2023**

1. Time and Place of Meeting: Chair Jim Colias called the monthly meeting of the Tree Board to order at 7 PM in the second-floor meeting room at Town Hall.
2. Roll Call:  
Present: Board Members Jim Colias, Ron Jackowski, Joan Roback, Blane Roberts, Richard Underkofler, Prospective Board Member Sarah Beagle.  
Absent: Board Members Bernie Zemen, Elizabeth Herrejon, other invited employees of the Town and agencies.
3. General substance of matters proposed, discussed, or decided - record of all votes taken by individual members if there is a roll call:
  - Minutes: Jim Colias made a motion to approve minutes of the meeting held March 16, 2023. Joan Roback seconded the motion; approved by unanimous consent of the members present.
4. Old Business:
  - a. Board Member Terms: Elizabeth Herrejon serves until her successor is appointed. An invitation was sent to Sarah Beagle to apply for succeeding Elizabeth. Sarah helped Arborist Sharon Anderson with the March 29 Library community presentation, "Preparing your trees for Spring and Drought Recovery".
  - b. Board Suggestions to Park Place Townhome Homeowners Association: Joe Keefnir, President of the HOA attended the last meeting asking for suggestions about issues along the 5th Street side of the Townhomes. Shade trees are impairing healthy lawn growth, and the roots prevent replacement of the irrigation system so that piping has been installed above ground. A tree service suggested removing the trees and replacing them with narrow columnar trees. Chair Jim Colias visited the site and put his thoughts into an email which he sent to Kyle Daniel, the Nursery & Landscape Specialist at Purdue University - Lafayette, who supplemented the review. Comments were emailed to Keefnir, who was invited, but declined to participate in this meeting's discussion. The Board concluded it would be too expensive to remove the trees and stumps. Soil testing, aerating, over-seeding and fertilizing the lawn was suggested. Consider planting ground cover. Potential groundcovers include: lirioppe, creeping juniper (*Juniperus conferta* is very salt tolerant), bearberry, ice plant, creeping thyme, creeping phlox or pachysandra. All of these should do well in this area.
  - c. 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 April 18th, Ron Jackowski, Blane Roberts, Ellen Drennan and Underkofler attended a tree care & planting workshop led by NIRPC's Jen Birchfield, NIPSCO's Andrea Nichols and Drew Hart of the Forest Service. After a 3-hour session, Kevin Rudy and a colleague picked up 20 trees: Yellow Birch (2), River Birch (2), Pagoda Dogwood (5), Sweet Bay Magnolia (5), Black Gum Tupelo (1) and Chinquapin Oak (5). Roberts sent a subsequent email requesting a Magnolia at 8842 Branton and a Chinquapin Oak for Jamie & Tim Paul at 8838 Branton.

d. Transplanting Trees: On Sunday, April 2, a crew consisting of Jackowski, Underkofler, Roberts, and Colias with a truck assisted by Donna Zemen, Connie Wachala, Carlos Alberto, Jean Bernius and 6 other members of Highland Neighbors for Sustainability worked for 3 hours transplanting four trees from the Jackowski nursery. Dead trees were replaced at the Merkley and Warren Schools, in the Parish Avenue Median and in the Parkway on the southside of Highway Avenue near the intersection of Parish Avenue. Subsequently, Ron Jackowski solely replaced dead trees at White Oak Park and in the Boulevard Estates Median on 44th Street. Next are two more trees requested at the Herrejon and Zemen homes.

e. 2023 Arbor Day Event (After Action Report): The event began at 2:30 pm, April 28, 2023 on the front lawn at Highland Christian School. State Senator Dan Dernulc, State Representative Mike Andrade and Town Council President Tom Black accepted speaker invitations. A proclamation prepared by Clerk-Treasurer Mark Herak was read by Tom Black. Rebecca Koetz, Purdue Lake County Extension Educator, spoke about Urban Agriculture & Home Horticulture Services provided by Purdue Extension Services. Terry Krooswyk donated a nice 7' American Oak Tree for campus planting on short notice when a tree sent by the Indiana Department of Forestry Nursery was unacceptable. There were two student grades outside for the program - Kindergarten and 1st Grade. The 1st graders deposited soil in the planting hole after it was dug by Ron Jackowski, Jim Colias and Carlos Alberto. Seedlings donated by the state nursery to Rep. Andrade were distributed to the students and their parents May 1 together with NIPSCO "Right Tree, Right Place, Right Way" pamphlets and a Forest Service "Tree Owner's Manual".

New Business: Blane Roberts left the meeting for another commitment prior to consideration of the following topics.

a. Park Pride Day (After Action Report): Jim Colias, Ron Jackowski and Blane Roberts participated in this event at Main Square Park, Saturday, April 22 from 9-11 am.

b. Board Action Plan: The Board reviewed and updated its 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. Secure 1-2 speakers per year for educational sessions on pertinent topics. Assigned to Colias. The first community presentation was held at Highland Library 3/29/23.
5. From the approximately 13 Jackowski nursery trees, secure utility locates and replace dead trees at the Merkley and Warren Schools, 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 with help from Highland Neighbors for Sustainability. 11 trees completed by 4/2/23; remaining 2 to be planted in May or Fall 2023.
6. Decide on events in which we will participate to acquaint the community of our endeavors, identify homeowner planting sites, recruit volunteers: Farmer's Market, Fourth of July Festival, Fall Festival. Assigned to Roback as Lead. Park Pride Day completed 4/22/23.

7. Organize an annual Arbor Day Observance - Assigned to Colias at Highland Christian School. Completed 4/28/23.
8. Update Unapproved / Approved Species List with photos of recommended tree species. Assigned to Jackowski (Last done for unapproved species 9/6/22).
9. 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.
10. Maintain community partnerships with Parks, Public Works, Schools, Town Council, NIRPC, NIPSCO, Chamber of Commerce & Highland Businesses. Assigned to Roberts as Lead.
11. Apply for available grants and keep a running tally of trees that we procure. Assigned to Underkofler.
12. Update the tree inventory for tree removals, pruning and new plantings. See Underkofler's Federal Inflation Reduction Act Funding Proposal. Due 6/1/23.
13. Renew Arbor Day Foundation membership and share new ideas from this participation. Underkofler's membership expires 8/1/23.
14. Post a Tree of the Month & Tree Care Tips on the Board's Facebook Site. Assigned to Colias.
15. Periodic review of ordinances that need updating. Assigned to Underkofler
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.

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.

a. Project Organization: If Highland Neighbors for Sustainability will be asked to volunteer again, its suggested projects be better organized to efficiently utilize the assistance.

b. Prospective Board Member Sarah Beagle: Members replied to questions Sharon had about the Board's endeavors and expressed hope that she will apply to become a member.

Next Meeting: May 18, 2023.

Adjournment:

- The meeting ended at 7:55 PM on a motion of Roback, second by Jackowski and approved by unanimous consent of the members in attendance.

Respectfully submitted,



Richard Underkofler, Secretary