

The monthly meeting of the Town of Highland Tree Board will be held at 7:00 PM, Thursday, May 18, 2023 in the second-floor meeting room at Town Hall. The meeting may be joined remotely in Microsoft Teams on your computer or mobile app by clicking the link shown below.

Richard Underkofler
Secretary

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**Highland Tree Board Agenda for Regular Meeting
Thursday, May 18, 2022 – 7 PM**

Roll Call:

Board Members: James Colias, Elizabeth Herrejon, Ron Jackowski, Joan Roback, Blane Roberts, Richard Underkofler, Bernie Zemen, Sarah Beagle, Prospective Board Member (sarah.e.brack@gmail.com)

Invited Town Staff: Tom Black, Council President; Mark Herak, Clerk/Treasurer; Mark Knesek, Public Works Director; Tim Gembala, Public Works Operations Director; Alex Brown, Superintendent, Parks & Recreation Department; Trevor 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; Drew Hart, USDA, Forest Service; Samuel Vergara, The Student Conservation Association; Jennifer Birchfield, NIRPC; Rebecca Koetz, Lake County Extension Agent; Connie Wachala & Carlos Alberto, Highland Neighbors for Sustainability; Mélina Blanc & Lucas Chamberlain, Delta Institute.

Public Presentation: Mélina Blanc and Lucas Chamberlain Delta Institute's proposed Lake County Tree Planting Consortium and Memorandum of Understanding with Town Council. See attachments.

Minutes: Request for a motion to approve minutes of the last meeting held April 20, 2023.

Old Business:

a. **Board Member Terms:** Elizabeth Herrejon serves until her successor is appointed. An invitation has been extended 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. **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. A table presenting planting locations of 20 trees is attached.

c. Federal Inflation Reduction Act Funds Appropriated to Forest Service: We intended to apply via the Northwest Indiana Regional Planning Commission's CommuniTree Program for \$529,000 federal IRA funds. See the February 2023 Tree Board Minutes on the Town Website for the project scope over a 5-year term. We were awaiting a decision whether NIRPC will seek these funds on behalf of the region's local governments. If not, the Tree Board will apply for a Highland specific project. On 5/4/23, Jennifer Birchfield sent this email, "NIRPC will be very supportive of a proposal from Highland and will be happy to partner and provide a letter of support and language to reference that you are a long-term and vital partner in CommuniTree. Unfortunately, we do not have the capacity to apply on behalf of all of our many region communities. Best of luck with your proposal." The application must be submitted by 6/1/23. ***It will require a pledge from the Town Council to match 50% of the project cost.***

New Business:

- a. Fall 2023 Distribution of Trees: Since we are experiencing difficulty identifying homeowners willing to request street parkway trees, consider a well-publicized tree distribution at the public works yard for homeowners to collect and plant in their yards to improve the town's tree canopy on private property. This was suggested by Tim Gembala, Public Works Operations Director, and approved by Mark Knesek, Public Works Director. It's been successful in other Tree City USA communities.
- b. Transplanting Trees: Schedule a mutually acceptable date to plant the 2 remaining Jackowski nursery trees at the homes of Elizabeth Herrejon and Bernie Zemen.
- c. Farmers Market: Consider whether the Board will staff a pop-up tent to acquaint the community of our endeavors, identify homeowner planting sites and recruit volunteers on one or more of these dates; Thursdays, June 1-Oct. 26, 4-9pm at the Municipal Parking Lot, Highway & Kennedy Avenue.
- d. Update Board Action Plan: The Board may review, change and update the 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 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.

Next Meeting: June 15, 2023.

Adjournment