

The monthly meeting of the Town of Highland Tree Board will be held at 7:00 PM, Thursday, September 21, 2023 in the second-floor meeting room at Town Hall. The meeting may not be joined remotely.

Richard Underkofler  
Secretary

**Highland Tree Board Agenda for Regular Meeting  
Thursday, September 21, 2022 – 7 PM**

**Roll Call:**

**Board Members:** Jim Colias, Ron Jackowski, Joan Roback, Blane Roberts, Richard Underkofler, Bernie Zemen.

**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; Trever Kinley, Parks Director; Maria Becerra, Redevelopment Director

**Others:** webupdates@theideafactory.us.com c/o Theresa Badovich; Doug Van Ramshorst, Highland Community Foundation; Drew Hart, USDA, Forest Service; Jennifer Birchfield, NIRPC; Rebecca Koetz, Lake County Purdue Extension Educator; Connie Wachala, Highland Neighbors for Sustainability; Mélina Blanc, Delta Institute; Mary Ann Brunt, Prospective new Board Member; Nina Brown & Monica Kurz, Teacher/Co-Sponsors High School Sustainability Club.

**Minutes:** Request for a motion to approve minutes of the last meeting held June 19, 2023. The board does not meet in July. The August meeting was canceled for lack of a quorum when board members Colias, Jackowski and Roberts were absent.

**Old Business:**

a. Board Member Terms: Elizabeth Herrejon serves until her successor is appointed. Natalie Stromberg of the High School Sustainability Club was appointed to succeed Elizabeth, but she failed to apply. Mary Ann Brunt, nominated by Highland Neighbors for Sustainability, is a prospective new Board Member, whose appointment is scheduled to be considered by the Town Council on September 25<sup>th</sup>.

b. Transplanting Trees: Schedule an acceptable date to transplant sugar maple nursery trees from the home of Ron Jackowski at the homes of Elizabeth Herrejon and Bernie Zemen.

c. Federal Inflation Reduction Act Funds Appropriated to Forest Service: According to Drew Hart, EVERY local government that applied got funded for its TOTAL request. The Indiana Department IRA Grant will be allocated to nonprofit organizations, rather than local governments. The Tree Board's proposal was not submitted because the Town wouldn't pledge a 50% cash match for a \$541,000 project over five years.

d. CommuniTree Spring Inventory. On 7/5/23 Board members Colias, Jackowski, Roback and Underkofler planted a yellow birch tree on the northwest side of the office of Attorney Kerry C. Connor, 8320 Kennedy Avenue.

e. Thursday Market: Colias, Jackowski, Roback and Underkofler staffed a pop-up tent June 22 at the Municipal Parking Lot, Highway & Kennedy Avenue. This was intended to acquaint the community of our endeavors, identify homeowner planting sites and recruit volunteers for our board, tree planting and care projects. Decide if there was sufficient return on investment to staff another market and, if so whether a banner will be acquired to identify the Tree Board.

f. Invasive Species: Rebecca Koetz reported that she would ask Mandi Glanz, a Regional Specialist Serving Northwest Indiana of the State Cooperative Invasives Management Entity to conduct a site visit to identify invasive species at sites in Highland. Rebecca wrote Mandi has a great report system to prioritize invasive plant control.

g. Lake County Tree Planting Consortium: Ron Jackowski participated in an inaugural remote consortium meeting held June 20, 2023. Another meeting was held September 12, 2023 for which a PowerPoint presentation is attached to this agenda. The next Consortium meeting will be held Tuesday, November 14th @ 1pm CST. Board members will receive a Microsoft Teams invitation (to avoid technical issues the group had with Zoom). Underkofler was requested to compile reports to document funds needed to match a Forest Service grant that is underwriting the Consortium. Tree related expenses Highland has incurred, and trees planted excluding the CommuniTree program, will be included as matching funds in a proposed Memorandum of Understanding, which Council President Tom Black will be asked to sign. *Decide whether the proposed MOU shall be approved. Another copy is attached to this agenda.*

#### **New Business:**

a. CommuniTree Fall 2023 Plantings: Highland Neighbors for Sustainability requested fall plantings in the embankment area on the hillside south and west of the Municipal Parking Lot at Highway & Kennedy Avenue, but the cover species requested were unavailable from the nurseries. 18 trees were received for homeowner distribution from the Public Works Yard. Highland's In-Kind Contribution and Homeowner Planting Location Reports are attached to this agenda.

b. Community Educational Session: Another community presentation at Highland Library led by Arborist Sharon Anderson on 9/27/23 was canceled by Anderson due to insufficient registrations. The title of the program was to be "**How to Prepare your Trees and Shrubs for Winter**".

c. Bagworm Infestation: Jim Colias and Park Director Trever Kinley received emails from Arborist Sharon Anderson reporting "a severely advanced population of Bagworm Infestation around the Middle and High School grounds and also along the walking/bike trail". Anderson reported "if an intervention is not applied before the next 2 weeks Highland will see a numerous death rate in the town's evergreen trees". Colias consulted with Kyle Daniel at Purdue West Lafayette, who reported, "It's too late for much effective control this year. I recommend waiting until late spring. The Purdue Plant Doctor has specific recommendations on application timing and product selection at <https://purdueplantdoctor.com/factsheet/tree-124>." On 9/16/23 Park Director Trever Kinley and park employees manually collected bagworms on a sign, tree and bush branches that had bagworms along the bike trail. Trevor reported the bagworms, and the infested branches will be burned 9/18/23 at the Public Works Yard. School Town Superintendent Brian Smith replied he would get on it with the person that does the grounds work for our school district."

d. High School Sustainability Club: Special Education Teachers Nina Brown [nbrown@highland.k12.in.us] and Monica Kurz [mkurz@highland.k12.in.us] will be taking over as club sponsors but have not officially started anything quite yet as they are both new to it this year.

e. Update Board Action Plan: The Board may review, change and update its 2023 Action Plan.

#### **January – 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. Organize an annual Arbor Day Observance - Assigned to Colias at Highland Christian School. Completed 4/28/23.
5. 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; another was scheduled 9/27/23 but canceled due to insufficient registrations.
6. From the approximately 13 Jackowski nursery maple 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 two to be planted in Fall 2023.
7. Decide on events in which we will participate to acquaint the community of our endeavors, identify homeowner planting sites, and recruit volunteers: Assigned to Roback as Lead. Park Pride Day completed 4/22/23; Thursday Market completed 6/22/23.
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 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.
13. Renew Arbor Day Foundation membership and share new ideas from this participation. Underkofler's membership renewed 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 monthly board review.
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:** October 19, 2023.

**Adjournment**