

Meeting Minutes
Town of Highland Tree Board
September 21, 2023

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.

Roll Call:

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

Guest: Mary Ann Brunt, Prospective new Board Member.

Absent: Other invited employees of the Town and agencies.

General substance of matters proposed, discussed, or decided - record of all votes taken by individual members if there is a roll call:

- Minutes: Bernie Zemen made a motion to approve minutes of the meeting held June 9, 2023. Joan Roback seconded the motion; approved by unanimous consent of the members present. 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: 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.

***PostScript:** At a Town Council meeting held September 25th, Mary Ann was nominated by Bernie Zemen, approved by a 4 to 1 vote of the members (Mark Schocke dissenting) and appointed by Council President Tom Black.*

b. Transplanting Trees: Sunday, October 8th was scheduled to transplant two sugar maple nursery trees at the homes of Elizabeth Herrejon and Bernie Zemen. Meet at the home of Ron Jackowski at noon to collect and transport the trees.

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 of Forestry IRA Grant will be allocated to nonprofit organizations, rather than local governments. The Tree Board's proposal was not submitted because the Town Council wouldn't pledge a 50% cash match for a \$541,000 project over five years.

d. Remaining CommuniTree Spring Inventory: On 7/5/23 Board members Colias, Jackowski 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. The board decided there was insufficient return on investment to staff another market.

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. Mary Ann Brunt reported this may be delayed due to maternity leave of Ms. Glanz.

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 was distributed with the agenda. The next Consortium meeting will be held Tuesday, November 14th at 1pm. 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. ***PostScript***: *Council President Tom Black postponed consideration of the MOU until the full Town Council can consider it. He asked Underkofler to put together a presentation for a Council study session to be held Monday, October 2nd. A Letter of Support for the grant signed 9/15/2020 by then Council President Mark Schocke and PowerPoint presentations sent by Programs Lead Mélina Blanc were forwarded 9/26/23 to the Council Members and the Clerk Treasurer.*

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 \$3,392.81 In-Kind Grant Matching Contribution and Homeowner Planting Location Reports were distributed with the 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." Kyle forwarded 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 would 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 succeeding Heather Oaks and 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 reviewed and made these updates to 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; another scheduled 9/27/23 was canceled due to insufficient registrations.
5. From the Jackowski nursery trees, secure utility locations 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; remainder to be planted 10/7/2023.
6. 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.
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 Chamber of Commerce and 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. The Tree Board's proposal was not submitted because the Town Council wouldn't pledge a 50% cash match for a \$541,000 project over five years.
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. Colias posting monthly.
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.
- 20.

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.

- Mary Ann Brunt reported Highland Neighbors for Sustainability will be planting cover species grown by its members at the Municipal Parking Lot at Highway & Kennedy Avenue beginning at 6 p.m. Friday, 9/29/23. This is a demonstration to determine if plantings will survive there.
- Mary Ann volunteered to identify an elementary school to be scheduled for a 2024 Arbor Day Event and to secure pledges from the principal and maintenance staff to water and care for a tree.

Next Meeting: October 19, 2023.

Adjournment:

- The meeting ended at 8:00 PM on a motion of Zemen, second by Roberts and approved by unanimous consent of the members in attendance.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Richard Underkofler". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "R" and "U".

Richard Underkofler, Secretary