

Meeting Minutes
Town of Highland Tree Board
October 19, 2023

Time and Place of Meeting: Vice Chair Ron Jackowski called the monthly meeting of the Tree Board to order at 8 PM in Room #108 at the Lincoln Center. The meeting began after a Highland Historical Society presentation by Sam Van Til that began at 7:00 PM at the Lincoln Center.

Roll Call:

Present: Board Members Mary Ann Brunt, Ron Jackowski, Joan Roback, Richard Underkofler.

Absent: Board Members Jim Colias, Blane Roberts, Bernie Zemen; 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: Joan Roback made a motion to approve minutes of the meeting held September 21, 2023. Mary Ann Brunt seconded the motion; approved by unanimous consent of the members present.

Old Business:

- a. Board Member Terms: The appointment of Mary Ann Brunt was approved by the Town Council September 25, 2023. Her term will expire in January 2026. An updated Directory for board member contact information and terms was emailed with the agenda. Mary Ann reported her phone number should be changed to 219-477-7712, her mobile number.
- b. Transplanting Trees: On Sunday, October 8, 2023, Jackowski, Underkofler and Zemen transplanted two sugar maple trees at 8505 Juniper Trail and 2736 43rd Street from the Jackowski backyard nursery.
- c. 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 Ms. Glanz' maternity leave.
- d. Lake County Tree Planting Consortium: The next meeting will be held 11/14/23 at 1 PM. Board members will receive a Microsoft Teams invitation for which the MS Teams application must be uploaded on computers or mobile devices to enable participation. Underkofler was requested to compile reports to document funds needed to match the Forest Service grant that is underwriting the Consortium. Excluding the CommuniTree program, tree related expenses Highland has incurred, and trees planted will be included as matching funds in a proposed Memorandum of Understanding that Council President Tom Black was asked to sign. Black postponed consideration of the MOU until the entire Town Council could consider it. He asked Underkofler to put together a presentation for a study session held 10/2/23. The MOU was withdrawn from the Council's next meeting agenda because there were concerns about the \$70/hour reported for the time contributed by board members and volunteers; whether the Town would be required to contribute cash; and the lack of a project identified for Highland. Another Council study session was held October 16 at which these issues were discussed. Mélina Blanc sent an email reporting the Town's contribution "is a non-cash match so this is not an expense for Highland, the city will not have to spend anything or report more than the spreadsheet that Underkofler already sent." *Postscript: The MOU appeared on the agenda of the October 23, 2023 Town Council meeting and was unanimously approved.*

e. Approved/Unapproved Tree Species: Ron Jackowski handed out and emailed board members an updated copy of our list of approved/unapproved trees with photos of recommended species. He reported, "The tree names are hyperlinked to various web sites that describe the tree. It's most useful as an online PDF document so that the links are active." Underkofler forwarded it to leaders of Public Works, the Building, Parks and Recreation Departments, the Office of the Clerk Treasurer and the Highland Neighbors for Sustainability Organization with this transmittal, "You may receive inquiries about tree species approved and unapproved for Highland plantings. Please save the attachment and forward it for reference in replying to persons with such questions." Ron said he spent eleven hours on the list.

New Business:

- a. Highland Neighbors for Sustainability Plantings: On 9/29/23, five HNS members planted 60 cover species seedlings grown by its members at the Municipal Parking Lot at Highway & Kennedy Avenue. On 10/5/23, seven HNS members prepared another area for plantings in the parking lot. This is a demonstration to determine if plantings will survive there.
- b. 2024 Arbor Day Event: Mary Ann Blunt 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. She made an inquiry to Amy Harrington, Johnston School Principal.
- c. Update Board Action Plan: The Board reviewed and made these updates to 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 Jim Colias at Highland Christian School. Completed 4/28/23; Mary Ann Blunt initiated an inquiry to Johnston Elementary School for the 2024 Event.
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; 2 remaining were planted 10/8/23.
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 - Completed 10/19/23.
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. Renew Arbor Day Foundation membership and share new ideas from this participation. Underkofler's membership renewed 8/1/23.
13. Update the tree inventory for tree removals, pruning and new plantings. See Underkofler's Federal Inflation Reduction Act Funding Proposal.
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.

- Mary Ann Brunt volunteered to take minutes of the November meeting when Underkofler will be out of town participating in an Elkhart Rotary District meeting.
- Mary Ann volunteered to follow-up with Amy Harrington, Johnston School Principal, to inquire if Johnston School will host an April 26, 2024 Arbor Day Event and pledge its maintenance/custodial staff to water and care for a newly planted campus tree.

Next Meeting: November 16, 2023.

Adjournment:

- The meeting ended at 8:30 PM on a motion of Robuck, second by Brunt and approved by unanimous consent of the members in attendance.

Respectfully submitted,



Richard Underkofler, Secretary