

Highland Tree Board Agenda for Regular Meeting

Thursday, November 16, 2023 – 7 PM

Roll Call:

Board Members: Mary Ann Brunt, Jim

Colias, Ron Jackowski, Joan Roback, Blane Roberts, 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; Nina Brown
& Monica Kurz, Teacher/Co-Sponsors High School Sustainability Club.

Minutes: Request for a motion to approve minutes of the last meeting held
October 19, 2023.

Old Business:

- a. NWI Tree Planting Consortium: A Memorandum of Understanding with Delta
Institute appeared on the agenda of the 10/23/23 Town Council meeting and
was unanimously approved. The next Consortium remote meeting has been
rescheduled to be held Tuesday, 11/21/23 at 1 PM for which Board members
have received a Microsoft Teams invitation. Meeting ID: 249 417 461 329
Passcode: YYMJuf.

- b. Tree Pruning Workshop: On 11/6/23, the Tree Planting Consortium and CommuniTree Program hosted a Tree Pruning Workshop led by Arborist Jerome Delbridge, Tree-Centric Solutions of Indianapolis. The program consisted of an educational lecture, then hands-on pruning of trees at Deep River Lake County Park in Hobart. Underkofler gave Jim Colias some excellent handouts for distribution to board members, including a “Tree Board Handbook”, Arbor Day Foundation. It’s a comprehensive guide to help board members understand their role and how they can best contribute to the board. Underkofler asked Delbridge to send a template for a Request for Proposals to retain a qualified arborist consultant firm to undertake the town’s pruning services. The RFP would contain specifications for a scope of services, a schedule for a multi-year project by geographical area, budget by year and method of compensation. Underkofler wrote he is hoping Highland pruning work could start in Fall 2024 after leaves have fallen.

- c. 2024 Arbor Day Event: Mary Ann Blunt volunteered to identify an elementary school to be scheduled for an 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, Principal Johnston School. The Indiana DNR Division of Forestry’s Community and Urban Forestry program is sponsoring an Arbor Day Poster contest for 5th grade students and teachers next year. The theme for 2024 is Oak Trees: Superheroes of the Forest. The student who creates the winning poster will receive a gift card, a book for continuing their exploration of trees, and an Indiana native tree planting at their school. The winning student’s teacher will receive a kit of educational materials to support their class’s further engagement with Indiana trees, forests, and forestry, as well as a full scholarship to the Natural Resources Teacher Institute. DNR is also looking for volunteers to help with judging. If you are interested, email Racheal Stenger at rstenger@dnr.IN.gov.

New Business:

- a. 2024 Indiana Arborist Association Conference: This annual conference will be held Tue Jan 23rd 2024, 8:00 am - Thu -Jan 25th 2024, 3:00 pm EST. Indiana Tree City USA communities will receive a 50% Discount off of Urban Forestry Day on January 23rd, 2024. The discount code is UF2024. Ron Jackowski and Underkofler participated in this conference in 2023 and found it quite interesting.

- b. 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 Jim Colias at Highland Christian School. Completed 4/28/23. Mary Ann Blunt initiated an inquiry to Johnston School for a 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. Maintain community partnerships with Chamber of Commerce & Highland Businesses. Assigned to Roberts as Lead.

10. Apply for available grants and keep a running tally of trees that we procure. Assigned to Underkofler.
11. Renew Arbor Day Foundation membership and share new ideas from this participation. Underkofler's membership renewed 8/1/23.
12. Post a Tree of the Month & Tree Care Tips on the Board's Facebook Site. Assigned to Colias.
13. Annual idea sharing, new ideas to keep Board moving forward. All Board Members.
14. Establish a list of goals/accomplishments/key facts and publish in a media release to Gazebo Express, NWI Times and WJOB. Assigned to Underkofler.
15. 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.
16. 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: Thursday, January 18, 2024. The Board does not meet in December.

Adjournment