

The monthly meeting of the Town of Highland Tree Board will begin at 7:00 PM, Thursday, August 15, 2024 at Town Hall in an upstairs meeting room. No Zoom meeting this month.

Richard Underkofler Secretary

**Highland Tree Board Agenda for Regular Meeting
Thursday, August 15, 2024 – 7 PM**

Roll Call:

Board Members: Mary Ann Brunt, Jim Colias, Ron Jackowski, John (JT) Mackey, Blane Roberts, Arleen Sandrick, Richard Underkofler. Alex Robertson is the Town Council's Tree Board Liaison. webupdates@theideafactory.us.com c/o Theresa Badovich & Robin Carlascio.

Invited Town Staff: Philip Scheeringa, 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: Doug Van Ramshorst, Highland Community Foundation; Drew Hart, USDA, Forest Service; Jennifer Birchfield, NIRPC; Rebecca Koetz, Lake County Purdue Extension Educator; Connie Wachala & Cathy Perrin, Highland Neighbors for Sustainability; Mélina Blanc, Delta Institute; Phil Graf, Great Lakes Urban Forest Management; Nina Brown & Monica Kurz, Teacher/Co-Sponsors Highland High School Sustainability Club.

Minutes: A motion is requested to approve the minutes of the last meeting held June 24, 2024. The Board does not meet in July.

Old Business:

- a. **IAA Apprenticeship Program:** On 6/27/24, Jackowski and Underkofler participated in a meeting at the Lakefront Pavilion in Portage for those who desired to learn more about becoming a participating employer for an Arborist Apprentice. We learned Highland won't qualify because the Town does not employ a Certified Arborist.
- b. **CommuniTree Grant Trees:** An 8/7/24 email from NIRPC reported the Forest Service Great Lakes Restoration Initiative Grant will not be finalized in time to offer a Fall 2024 tree distribution. NIRPC's Jennifer Birchfield anticipates tree distributions in Spring and Fall of 2025. Notice will be given to homeowners who were expecting a Fall distribution.
- c. **Mature Tree Maintenance Training:** On 8/9/24, Jackowski and Underkofler participated in a Whiting session hosted by Delta Institute for the NWI Tree Consortium. Aren Flint of Davey Resource Group led the training. She desires to receive our RFP for Tree Removal and Pruning Services. She said the arborist staff in Davey Offices in Chicago and South Bend provide these services. Aren offered to train Tree Board Members and our volunteers how to prune small diameter trees. Mélina Blanc said she would inquire if Delta Institute's Forest Service Grant may be able to fund the expense of bringing Aren to Highland for this training.

- d. **State Grant for Tree Removal & Pruning Services:** On 8/12/24, The Town Council passed Resolution 2024-20 approving up to a 50% match from the General Fund for a State CUFA Grant to remove and prune trees identified as hazardous located in the downtown, parks, at the public works garage, other municipal properties and areas obstructing sight at intersections. Underkofler will apply for a \$25,000 grant to be managed by the Public Works Department.

New Business:

- a. **Tree Steward Training:** NIRPC is hosting a Tree Steward training workshop on September 12 and 13 from 9 am to 3 pm at its offices at 6100 Southport Rd, Portage. Jackowski and Underkofler participated in the Tree Steward Program several years ago. Register if you can at: <https://forms.office.com/g/whWBqrUHCv?origin=IprLink>.
- b. **Partners in Community Forestry Conference:** This year's Arbor Day Foundation Conference will be held at the Palmer House Hotel in Chicago November 20-21, 2024. Notice and the agenda was forwarded to Board Members 8/13/24. Register through August 19 before prices increase.

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.

- a. **Meet with Merrillville and Valparaiso Forestry Staff:** Ron Jackowski reported he will meet with Merrillville Storm Water Manager Matt Lake and Valparaiso Arborist Matt McBain to secure answers to questions he identified about their community forestry operations.
- b. **Action Plan:** The Board may review, change and update its 2024 Action Plan.
1. Monthly idea sharing of new ideas to keep the Board moving forward - All Board Members.
 2. Become a member of the Indiana Arborist Association and participate in the IAA Annual Conference. Completed 1/23/24 by Jackowski and Underkofler.
 3. Seek Town Council appointments to expiring Board Member terms. Completed 3/11/24.
 4. Cancel Board Meetings in July and December – Decided 4-18-2024.
 5. Participate in Park Pride Day – Completed 4/20/24.
 6. Organize an annual Arbor Day Observance – Assigned to Underkofler; completed 4/26/24.
 7. Resume Zoom Meetings - Ed Dabrowski offered to set them up 5-16-24.
 8. Post a Tree of the Month and Tree Care Tips on the Board's Facebook Site - Assigned to Colias.
 9. Secure 1-2 speakers per year for educational sessions on pertinent topics - Assigned to Colias. A first session about Cicada Information occurred 5/21/24.
 10. Attend Chamber of Commerce lunch meetings to establish community partnerships and sponsorships. Assigned to Sandrick.
 11. Review whether the Approved / Unapproved Species List needs an update. Assigned to Jackowski.
 12. Secure utility clearance and transplant Jackowski nursery trees. Assigned to Jackowski. Fall 2024 Requests received: Bernie Zemen, 2736 43rd Street.
 13. Participate in the Fourth of July Parade with Highland Neighbors for Sustainability. Completed.

14. Formulate an RFP for a tree care contractor to provide tree removal and pruning services that would contain specifications, a schedule for a multi-year project by geographical area, budget by year and method of compensation. Assigned to Underkofler for Town Council Budget Request. On 8/12/24 the Council approved up to a 50% match from the General Fund for a State CUFA Grant application due 9/4/24.
15. Renew Arbor Day Foundation membership – Completed by Underkofler 8/10/24.
16. Renew application for 2024 Tree City USA recognition before December 31. Assigned to Underkofler.
17. Establish a list of 2024 accomplishments/key facts and publish an Annual Report for a media release to the Gazebo Express, NWI Times and WJOB. Assigned to Underkofler.

Next Meeting: September 19, 2024

Adjournment