

The monthly meeting of the Town of Highland Tree Board will begin at 7:00 PM, Thursday, September 19, 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; Joe Moore <joe@ecsontime.com>, Flint Aren aren.flint@davey.com; drepay@littlecolumetriverbasin.org.

Minutes: A motion is requested to approve the minutes of the last meeting held August 15, 2024.

Old Business:

- a. **Tree Steward Training:** Board Member Arleen Sandrick participated in a State CUFA Tree Steward training workshop September 12 and 13 at the NIRPC offices in Portage. She met an Arborist there and invited him to this meeting.

- b. **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 intended to apply for a \$25,000 grant for a \$50,000 project to be managed by the Public Works Department. However, the application was not submitted by the due date because town officials declined to appoint an “Assistant Project Coordinator” who had access to the Town’s accounting system to email copies of paid invoices, receipts, purchase orders, claim vouchers, canceled checks and bank statements to document all expenditures of grant reimbursable expense for transmittal to the state grant managers.

New Business:

- a. **Seedling Donation:** On 9/19/24 from 11:30 to 13:00, Arborist Aren Flint of the Davey Resource Group will meet with Connie Wachala, Cathy Perrin, Arleen Sandrick, Ron Jackowski and Rich Underkofler to formulate a planting plan for seedlings along the southside of the Little Calumet River South Watershed. The group will meet in the parking lot of the Rookery on Liable Road and survey the area by the path atop the river levee from the parking lot west to Kennedy Avenue, even though the planting will be done about 20 feet below. It's harder to walk to the lower elevation especially if it's wet. The plantings may not occur on the bank of the levee to protect it from erosion. There is a large storm sewer project underway in the area of the ballfields east of Kennedy Avenue.

Joe of Siltworm, Inc., a Merrillville company focused on an effective, eco-friendly solution to EPA regulated erosion control will donate and purchase seedlings in bundles of 100 of the same species from the State Nursery, will pre-dig the holes and handle the seedling delivery in Spring 2025. Delta Institute will assist with logistics funding the planting plan by Aren Flint with its Forest Service grant, but the planting, watering, and maintenance must be managed by our team. We propose that volunteers from our Tree Board and the Highland Neighbors for Sustainability coordinate volunteer endeavors for the planting and watering. Arbor Day 2025 (the last Friday of April) was suggested as a date for a community-wide volunteer planting endeavor of students and service clubs.

We'll need to coordinate and seek approval of the planting plan by the leaders of the Little Calumet River Commission, the Highland Park and Public Works Departments. After the planting plan is completed and approved, Underkofler intends to ask Executive Director Dan Repay of the Little Calumet River Commission for a grant to enable the Town to acquire a trailer to hold water for irrigating trees (like the one SCA uses); and irrigation bags for the seedlings.

- 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.

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 and Valparaiso Arborists 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. Post a Tree of the Month and Tree Care Tips on the Board's Facebook Site - Assigned to Colias.
8. 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.
9. Attend Chamber of Commerce lunch meetings to establish community partnerships and sponsorships. Assigned to Sandrick.
10. Review whether the Approved / Unapproved Species List needs an update. Assigned to Jackowski.
11. Secure utility clearance and transplant Jackowski nursery trees. Assigned to Jackowski. Fall 2024 Requests received: Bernie Zemen, 2736 43rd Street.
12. Participate in the Fourth of July Parade with Highland Neighbors for Sustainability. Completed.
13. Renew Arbor Day Foundation membership.
14. Recruit new Board Members to succeed Blane Roberts and Richard Underkofler.
15. Renew application for 2024 Tree City USA recognition before December 31. Assigned to Underkofler.
16. Establish a list of 2024 accomplishments/key facts and publish an Annual Report for a media release to the Town Council, Gazebo Express, NWI Times and WJOB. Assigned to Underkofler.

Next Meeting: October 17, 2024

Adjournment