

Meeting Minutes
Town of Highland Tree Board
Thursday, September 19, 2024

Time and Place of Meeting: Secretary Rich Underkofler called the monthly meeting of the Tree Board to order at 7 PM at Town Hall in an Upstairs Meeting Room.

Roll Call:

Present: Board Members Mary Ann Brunt, Arleen Sandrick, J.T. Mackey, Richard Underkofler.

Absent: Jim Colias, Ron Jackowski, Blane Roberts, Alex Robertson and other invited employees of the Town and Agencies.

Guests: Scott Polster, Certified Arborist, Forever Green Plant Health Care;

(arborist@forevergreenlc.com); Aren Flint, Certified Arborist, Municipal Specialist, Davey Resource Group, Inc. (aren.flint@davey.com)

Guest Introductions:

Scott Polster was invited to our meeting by Arleen Sandrick, who met him at a Tree Steward Training workshop held September 12 and 13 at the NIRPC offices in Portage. Scott is a graduate of Highland Schools and a long-term Highland resident who resides at 3536 LaPorte Street. Scott is an Arborist with **Forever Green Lawn Care**, which offers fertilization, weed/crabgrass control, aeration, grub/turf insect control, and irrigation services from an office in Crown Point; and **Forever Green Landscape Center** in Cedar Lake, which offers landscape design services and items for landscape and gardening needs. Scott is a graduate of the Purdue Forestry Program. He is interested in working for Highland, perhaps as a member of the Tree Board when a vacancy occurs.

Aren Flint has been retained by Delta Institute for projects of the **NWI Tree Consortium**. She is Senior Associate Consultant & Urban Forestry Team Leader at **Davey Resource Group, Inc.** Her skills encompass tree identification, arboriculture, risk assessment, planting and pruning methods, community forest program planning, tree preservation, and leveraging GIS/GPS technologies for data collection. With over 19 years of experience, she has managed and contributed to more than 100 tree inventories across the United States and Canada. Since 2009, she's supported numerous Indiana urban and community forestry programs. Her services include inventory management, planning, benefit assessment, canopy analysis, ordinance development, grant writing and staffing support. She is a graduate of Purdue Natural Resource Management Program and current Chair of the Indiana Community Forestry Council.

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

- Minutes: Mary Ann Brunt made a motion to approve minutes of the meeting held August 15, 2024. Arleen Sandrick seconded the motion. Approved by unanimous consent of the members present.

Old Business:

- a. **Tree Steward Training:** Arleen Sandrick gave a brief report on her Tree Steward training.
- 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 of the agenda was forwarded to Board Members 8/13/24.

- c. **2024 Urban Forestry Symposium, Dec. 3-4:** Notice of the agenda was mailed to Board Members 9/18/24 of how to register for the Symposium of the Indiana Community Forestry Council (IN-CFC) and DNR Community and Urban Forestry. This symposium is open to anyone interested in urban forestry in Indiana, including representatives of tree boards, local municipalities, and volunteers. This symposium is a great way to network with other individuals involved with urban forestry, from Indiana and regionally. Thanks to sponsors, this year's event is FREE to attend, with snacks provided on the first day and breakfast and lunch served on the second. This year's symposium will be at Crown Hill National Cemetery and Arboretum, 700 38th St., Indianapolis, IN, 46208. With more than 11,000 inventoried trees and 137 unique species, the arboretum is accredited by the Arboretum Accreditation Program for achieving particular standards of professional practices deemed important for arboreta. This massive inventory of trees serves as the architectural backbone of this beautiful urban green space, providing shade for the historic structures and shelter for a variety of wildlife.

New Business:

- a. **Seedling Donation:** On 9/19/24 from 11:30 to 13:00, Arborist Aren Flint and Jacob Lovett from the Davey Resource Group met with Cathy Perrin, Arleen Sandrick, Ron Jackowski and Underkofler to formulate a planting plan for donated seedlings along the southside of the Little Calumet River. The group surveyed the area by walking the path atop the river levee from the Liable Road parking lot west to Kennedy Avenue. The plantings may not occur on the bank of the levee to protect it from erosion. Joe Moore of Siltworm, Inc., a Merrillville company focused on an effective, eco-friendly solution to EPA regulated erosion control, will donate and purchase the seedlings from the State Nursery, will pre-dig the holes and handle the seedling delivery in Spring 2025. Delta Institute is assisting the planting plan by the Davey Resource Group with its Forest Service grant. The planting, watering, and maintenance must be managed by our team. We proposed that volunteers from our Tree Board and the Highland Neighbors for Sustainability will 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.

To assist elderly volunteers to water the newly planted seedlings, Underkofler asked Park & Recreation Superintendent Alex Brown if the Park Board would consider an appropriation to acquire a trailer to hold water for irrigating trees (like the one the Student Conservation Association uses); and irrigation bags for the seedlings. Alex asked "who would be pulling the trailer, how often will it be needed, what would be the size of the trailer water reservoir? Underkofler replied, "The water trailer would be used along the path on the levee once per week to fill seedling irrigation bags for up to 3 years during drought conditions; asked Board Chair Jim Colias if he would volunteer a truck to pull the trailer to mitigate labor expense of a park employee; and asked for the specifications of the SCA water trailer. He suggested the trailer may also be used for watering parks and street trees. Alex reported he would need to check with the Town's insurance carrier about a volunteer pulling a town-owned trailer, both for insurance and liability standpoint.

Postscripts:

On 9/20/2024, Connie Wachala, Highland Neighbors for Sustainability, sent this email, "I met with Mike Repay, Lake County Commissioner, today, and mentioned the 500 trees Highland will be getting. He asked to attend the October Tree Board meeting. Will you please put him on the email list to receive the meeting notice and the agenda? I've copied him in so you'll have his email address." mikerepay@gmail.com

On 9/21/24, Board Member Arleen Sandrick requested a special meeting of our board to talk about the project, "I feel like we all have some good thoughts and input, and it might be a good idea to hash out everyone's thoughts after the walkthrough with Aren." **7:30 pm on Thursday, September 26** has been tentatively scheduled for a special meeting when a quorum has been confirmed. Arleen reported that she is not pleased with the suggested Wildlife Packet Species Selection: American Plum, Black Cherry, Blackgum, Chinkapin Oak, Elderberry, Gray Dogwood, Hazelnut, Silky Dogwood, PawPaw, Persimmon, Red Oak, Shagbark Hickory, Black Oak, Shingle Oak and Chestnut Oak.

On 9/23/24, Mélina Blanc, Delta Institute sent this email to Aren Flint, Connie Wachala, Cathy Perrin, Arleen Sandrick, Ron Jackowski and Underkofler, "I confirm that we can donate up to 600 seedlings through TPC for planting on Arbor Day 2025. Aren, could you please provide the mapping plans so we can place our order for the appropriate seedlings by October 1st? Rich, can you confirm that you've secured all the authorizations and that the Tree Board will be able to organize the planting event. We're happy to assist with logistics with Delta and Siltworm. Also please confirm that there's a plan in place for watering and maintaining the seedlings afterward." Underkofler replied, "We won't confirm anything until we've reviewed the species planting plan. See the attached draft Tree Board September meeting minutes for more information about our watering plan."

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. **Master Plan Update:** J.T. Mackey suggested the Board should submit input for the update currently underway to the Town's Master Plan, especially landscaping "incentives" along Indianapolis Boulevard and Kenndy Avenue.
- b. **Benefits of Trees Community Presentation:** In response to an inquiry, Mary Ann Brunt asked Aren Flint about advocacy videos related to trees, their benefits, and maintenance issues. Aren mentioned a few organizations for resource material: Vibrant City Labs; International Society of Arborists; Indiana Arborist Association; Arbor Day Foundation; Lucy @ Green Latinos; Nicki Myka, Chief of Staff, North Township Trustee. Davey Resource Group is rolling out a new application that uses artificial intelligence for community tree inventories called "Smart Tree Inventory". She subsequently sent this email, "I overlooked the valuable resources available through Davey. If you search for "Talking Trees Davey" on YouTube, you'll find over 20 informative videos. Here's a direct link to one of them: <https://youtu.be/ungk6x3OfNs?si=mancTYgZA951kdZQ>.
- c. **Nursery Land Offer:** Mary Ann Brunt reported at recent meeting of Highland Neighbors for Sustainability a representative of St. Timothy's Episcopal Church at 1115 N Cline Ave in Griffith offered a large tract of land behind the church that could be used for a tree or plant nursery. The land was reported to have an irrigation water source.

- d. **Meet with Valparaiso Forestry Staff:** Since Ron Jackowski was absent, no report was submitted about answers to questions he identified about their community forestry operations.
- e. **Action Plan:** The Board did not have sufficient members present to review and update its 2024 Action Plan.

Next Meeting: Thursday, October 17, 2024.

Adjournment: The meeting ended at 8:10 PM on a motion of Blunt, second by Sandrick and approved by unanimous consent of the members in attendance.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Richard Underkofler', written in a cursive style.

Richard Underkofler, Secretary