

Highland Tree Board
Agenda for Rescheduled Meeting
Monday, December 2, 2024 – 7 PM
Upstairs at Town Hall, 3333 Ridge Road

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 & Laura Oltmanns, 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, Erosion Construction Services; Arborist Scott Polster; Dan Repay, Little Calumet River Basin Commission; Mike Repay, Lake County Commissioner; Tim Skimina, St. Timothy's Griffith Episcopal Church.

Guest Introductions:

Highland Arborist Scott Polster: We are recruiting Scott to become a board member for a 3-year term beginning January 2025. Phone (219) 365-6778; Email: arborscott@sbcglobal.net

Tim Skimina, St. Timothy's Episcopal Church: Tim Skimina sent a 11/13/24 email reporting he and another representative of St. Timothy's plan to attend this meeting to discuss a potential community garden and tree nursery on church property at 1115 N Cline Avenue in Griffith. On 11/2/24, Ron Jackowski, Arleen Sandrick and Rich Underkofler met with Skimina, toured and took photos of the site. Jackowski used a shovel to dig holes at various locations to determine soil characteristics and the water table. The surface is fairly uneven and covered by very coarse grass. The far east end is a raised, crowned extension of unextended Harvey Street. Skimina reported discussion occurred at an earlier meeting of Highland Neighbors for Sustainability for a community garden when it was reported the site of an existing community garden east of Fire Station #1 may be lost if the building is expanded. The front yard of the church was a former site of a community garden, but it has been abandoned. Underkofler reported the Tree Board may have interest in planting seedlings from the state nursery that would be subsequently transplanted by volunteers to sites in Highland and Griffith. The sites could be irrigated with Griffith municipal water. Church representatives desire to sell some plantings to offset water expenses and to provide revenue for the church. Joe Moore reported State nursery seedlings may not be resold for profit. A zoning use permit may be necessary from the Town of Griffith. **Shall we proceed?**

Laura Oltmanns, Highland Neighbors for Sustainability Steering Committee: Laura requested a discussion whether the tree board desires to participate in the acquisition of native trees from the DNR state nursery in bundles of 100 for \$39 per bundle for community plantings. Her email of 11/14/24 is distributed with this agenda. This is the source of seedlings to be donated by Joe Moore d/b/a Erosion Construction Services for the proposed Little Calumet River South Watershed Project and our Arbor Day Events. Since neither the Tree Board nor Highland Neighbors for Sustainability has funding from the Town, a project of this character would be dependent upon volunteer contributions.

Minutes: A motion is requested to approve minutes of the regular meeting held October 17, 2024. A copy is distributed with this agenda.

Old Business:

- a. **Update Tree Inventory:** Lake County Commissioner Mike Repay is willing to give the Town a grant (with no match required) to update our 2017 Tree Inventory. The funds must be encumbered by the end of this year, but the project may be implemented and completed during winter months of 2024 and 2025. The scope of the work will include trees in all areas covered in the Graf 2017 inventory – parkways, parks, schools and other real estate owned by the local government. Phil Graf was asked to submit a unit price but not to exceed lump sum contract proposal so it can be considered at this meeting. **A motion is requested to support the contract and forward it to the Town Council for approval, execution and administration by the Public Works Department.**

- b. **Little Calumet River South Watershed Seedling Project:** This undertaking has been delayed pending a decision whether the Little Calumet River Basin Commission will approve a grant for the Town to retain a contractor to plant and water them. There was no objection at the Board's October meeting to Secretary Underkofler's recommendation to propose Joe Moore d/b/a Erosion Construction Services (ECS) as the contractor for the project since Joe offered to donate state nursery seedlings and dig holes for the project. Six pages of species planting plans from Davey Resource Group were received 11/12/24 from Aren Flint and forwarded to Board Members and Joe Moore for review. They are attached with this agenda. The plantings are scheduled to occur during the week of Arbor Day 2025 from April 19 to April 25, when we hope to have photo opportunities and assistance from school student volunteers.
 - 1) Arleen Sandrick requested photos and more information on the characteristics of species suggested on the planting plans. Ron Jackowski sent a 11/14/2024 email providing links to species not identified in the Board's Approved/Unapproved Species Worksheet. See attachment. **A motion is requested to select planting areas on the east side for the project and the species shown on pages 4, 5 and 6, except the prunus serotina (black cherry) species, which is not approved.** *Ron Jackowski suggests Bald Cypress, Tulip, Linden, Sycamore, Honey Locust or Shingle Scarlet White Oak would be good substitutes for Black Cherry.*
 - 2) ECS submitted quotes for planting seedlings and watering them. Both quotes presented a \$2,040 price for a (3) Person Crew for one (8) hour day to plant 200 seedlings. \$2,350 was quoted per visit to water trees during drought conditions. Joe Moore reported his planting experience in Michigan City on Trail Creek had a 90% seedling survival rate with no irrigation (verified by a reference from Paul Vicari, LaPorte County MS4 Coordinator). **A motion is**

requested to ask Dan Repay at the Little Calumet River Basin Commission for a grant up to \$18,790 to Highland Public Works for a contract with ECS to plant 200 seedlings including \$300 for species not available from the state nursery and a \$16,450 contingency for 7 watering visits during drought conditions over two seasons. $(2,350 \times 7 + 2,040 + 300 = 18,790)$.

New Business:

- a. **IAA Annual Conference:** Agenda and registration links for the Indiana Arborist Association Annual Conference in Indianapolis were mailed 11/15/24 to board members. Tree City USA communities will receive a 50% discount of the registration fee for Urban Forestry Day on 1/21/2025.
- b. **Tree Planting:** Select a date and time for volunteers to transplant Jackowski nursery trees at homeowner yards of Bernie Zemen, 2736 43rd Street and Chuck Haber, 8417 Cottage Grove Avenue.
- c. **Crown Point & Merrillville Tree Board Operations:** Ron Jackowski will report to the board on a meeting planned with Matthew Lake (who is a member of the Crown Point Tree Board and employed by Merrillville Public Works) about questions he identified about their community forestry operations. Phone: (219) 472-8668; E-mail: mlake@merrillville.in.gov.

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.

Action Plan: An update to the Board's Action Plan will not occur due to the length of this agenda.

Next Meeting: January 16, 2025.

Adjournment