

Meeting Minutes
Town of Highland Tree Board
Monday, December 2, 2024

Time and Place of Meeting: Chair Jim Colias called a rescheduled meeting of the Tree Board to order at 7 PM at Town Hall in an Upstairs Meeting Room. The November 21st regular monthly meeting was postponed due to inclement weather.

Roll Call:

Present: Board Members Mary Ann Brunt, Jim Colias, Ron Jackowski, J.T. Mackey, Blane Roberts, Arleen Sandrick, Richard Underkofler.

Absent: Alex Robertson and other invited employees of the Town and other agencies,

Guests: Tim Skimina, St. Timothy's Episcopal Church; Laura Oltmanns, Highland Neighbors for Sustainability; Phil Graf, Great Lakes Urban Forestry.

Guest Introductions:

Tim Skimina, St. Timothy's Episcopal Church: Tim Skimina participated in 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 Underkofler met with Skimina, toured and took photos of the site. Jackowski used a shovel to dig holes at various locations to find good loam soil characteristics and a low water table, but Skimina reported water will pond on the site after storms. The surface is fairly uneven and covered by coarse grass. The far east end may be an easement for a future Harvey Street extension. 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. A zoning use permit may be necessary from the Town of Griffith. Tim Diamond is the Chair of the Griffith Park Board. The members desire to proceed with more investigation. Underkofler contacted Daniel Perez of the Griffith Tree Consortium and Park Board (daniel.perez@griffith.in.gov) to inquire whether a collaboration would be supported. Tim said he will bring up the topic at 12/09/24 meetings.

Laura Oltmanns, Highland Neighbors for Sustainability: Laura requested a discussion whether the Tree Board desires to participate in the acquisition of native trees from the DNR state nursery for up to five bundles of 100 at \$39 per bundle for community plantings. Laura said Highland Neighbors for Sustainability (HNS) has funding for the acquisitions. Members responded they would help distribute surplus seedlings.

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 regular meeting held October 17th. Arleen Sandrick seconded the motion. Approved by unanimous consent of the members

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. Mike desires the funds to 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, other real estate owned by the town, Cady Marsh and Hart Ditch. Phil Graf presented a unit price but not to exceed \$55,000 contract proposal.
 - Blane Roberts made a motion to support the contract and forward it to the Town Council for approval, execution and administration by the Public Works Department. Arleen Sandrick seconded the motion. Approved by unanimous consent of the members.
- b. **Little Calumet River South Watershed Seedling Project:** This undertaking was 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. 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.
 - Blane Roberts made a motion 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 suggested Bald Cypress, Tulip, Linden, Sycamore, Honey Locust or Shingle Scarlet White Oak would be good substitutes for Black Cherry. Arleen Sandrick seconded the motion. Approved by unanimous consent of the members.
 - 2) Erosion Construction Services (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 favorable reference from Paul Vicari, LaPorte County MS4 Coordinator).

- Mary Ann Brunt made motion to ask Dan Repay at the Little Calumet River Basin Commission for a grant up to \$18,790 to enable Highland Public Works to award 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. $(2,350 \times 7 + 2,040 + 300 = 18,790)$. The motion was seconded by Blane Roberts and approved by a 6 to 1 vote. Six members voted yes; one dissented, who favors different species like cherry trees that would grow smaller.

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. Ron Jackowski and Blane Roberts said they plan to attend
- b. **Tree Planting:** 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 will be scheduled for next spring.

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. **Crown Point & Merrillville Tree Board Operations:** A report from Ron Jackowski 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 was postponed.
- b. **Board Vacancies:** Terms of Richard Underkofler and Blane Roberts expire in January. Underkofler will not seek another term. Roberts said he will ask to be re-appointed, but he might not serve a full three-year term. Highland Arborist Scott Polster has applied to succeed Underkofler.
- c. **Action Plan:** An update to the Board's Action Plan did not occur due to the length of the agenda.

Next Meeting: January 16, 2025.

Adjournment: The meeting ended at 8:30 PM on a motion of Mary Ann Brunt, second by Arleen Sandrick and approved by unanimous consent.

Respectfully submitted,



Richard Underkofler, Secretary