

Meeting Minutes
Town of Highland Tree Board
Thursday, January 16, 2025

Time and Place of Meeting: Chair Jim Colias called the monthly meeting of the Tree Board to order at 7:13 PM at Town Hall in an Upstairs Meeting Room.

Roll Call:

Present: Board Members Jim Colias, Ron Jackowski, J.T. Mackey, Blane Roberts, Richard Underkofler.

Absent: Mary Ann Brunt, Arleen Sandrick, Alex Robertson and other invited employees of the Town and other agencies.

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

- Minutes: J.T. Mackey made a motion to approve minutes of a rescheduled meeting held December 2, 2024. Blane Roberts seconded the motion. Approved by unanimous consent of the members present.

Board Member Appointments: The terms of Blane Roberts and Richard Underkofler have ended. Roberts seeks reappointment; Underkofler does not. Members serve until a successor is appointed. Highland Arborist Scott Polster (Email: arborscott@sbcglobal.net; Phone 219-365-6778) has applied for the vacant position. The Town Council is scheduled to nominate, and the new Council President is scheduled to appoint two members at its 1/27/2025 meeting.

Appointment of 2025 Officers:

When a new Town Council President is selected, he is scheduled to appoint a chairperson from the board members at its 1/27/25 meeting. When appointed, the Chair will make a motion to appoint a Vice Chair and Secretary at the February meeting of the board. J.T. Mackey expressed interest in the Secretary position, if Underkofler will assist with the transition.

Old Business:

- a. **Tree Inventory:** At its 12/9/2024 meeting, the Town Council approved and authorized the Public Works Director to sign a professional services contract for a tree inventory update with Great Lakes Urban Forestry, Inc. for a fee not to exceed \$55,000. This project will be funded by a grant from Lake County initiated by Commissioner Mike Repay with no outlay required from the Town. The work should be underway in February.
- b. **Little Calumet River South Watershed Seedling Project:** Seedlings are scheduled to be planted during the week of Arbor Day 2025 from April 19 to April 25, when we hope to have photo opportunities and assistance from volunteers from schools and Highland Neighbors Sustainability. Dan Repay reported the Little Calumet River Basin Commission approved a \$15,000 reimbursable grant for Highland Public Works to contract with Erosion Construction Services (ECS) to plant 200 seedlings and to water them during drought conditions. ECS has ordered the seedlings, will call for the utility locations and will arrive a few days before planting to pre-dig the holes. Rich Underkofler will be on-site to ensure the holes are dug in the appropriate locations and will be the point of contact for coordinating with volunteers.

- c. **2024 Tree City USA:** Highland's application for consecutive 6-year recognition has been approved; a new flag and plaque should be received by April.
- d. **Spring 2025 CommuniTree Grant:** On January 8th, a draft copy of the application for 20 trees was submitted to all board members. If acceptable, it will be submitted to NIRPC. A tree planting/care workshop and tree pickup date will occur at NIRPC, Thursday, April 10th; Board distribution to homeowners at the Public Works Yard, Saturday, April 19th, 9 to 11 AM.

New Business:

a. **IAA Annual Conference:** Agenda and registration links for the Indiana Arborist Association Annual Conference in Indianapolis were mailed to board members on 11/15/24 and again 1/13/2025. 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 plan to participate.

b. **Tree Planting:** A date and time will be scheduled at a future meeting 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:** At a future meeting, 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.

- a. **NWI Urban Waters Partnership:** Arleen Sandrick volunteered to serve as Highland's representative to this group and participated in a 1/23/2015 meeting. The Northwest Indiana (NWI) Urban Waters Federal Partnership (UWFP) focuses on the Lake Michigan Watershed of northern Lake, Porter and LaPort Counties, Indiana. The UWFP works to connect urban communities with their waterways by improving coordination among federal agencies and state and local partners. The goals are to improve the water systems and to promote their economic, environmental and social benefits.
- b. **Action Plan:** Underkofler was asked to submit a template for an update to the Board's 2025 Action Plan for consideration on the agenda for the February meeting.
- c. **NIPSCO Environmental Action Grant:** Underkofler will inquire if Highland Community Foundation will apply and pledge a match for a 2025 Arbor Day Foundation Community Canopy / Energy Saving Trees Grant.

Adjournment: The meeting ended at 7:45 PM on a motion of Blane Roberts, second by J.T Mackey and approved by unanimous consent of the members present.

Respectfully submitted,



Richard Underkofler, Secretary
Highland Tree Board Minutes