

**Highland Tree Board Agenda for Regular Meeting
Thursday, March 20, 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: George Georgeff, 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: Arborist Scott Polster; 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; Joe Moore, Seedling Planting/Watering Contractor, Erosion Control Services <joe@ecsontime.com>, drepay@littlecolumetriverbasin.org; mikerepay@gmail.com;

Interim Secretary: Request for a volunteer to take minutes of this meeting in the absence of Richard Underkofler, who will be out of town.

Minutes: A motion is requested to approve minutes of the regular meeting held February 20, 2025. A copy is distributed with this agenda.

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.

Appointment of 2025 Officers: The Town Council President will appoint a chairperson from the appointed board members. Jim Colias reported he is willing to serve another year. When appointed, the chairperson will make a motion to appoint a Vice Chairperson and Secretary. J.T. Mackey expressed interest in the Secretary position, if Underkofler will assist in the transition.

Old Business:

a. Update Tree Inventory: Inventory Contractor Phil Graf may attend this meeting for a status report on work in progress.

b. New Invasive Tree Replacement Program: NIRPC and Indiana DNR Community & Urban Forestry are offering a 2025 Invasive Tree Replacement program. Property owners who show proof of removal of an approved invasive tree on their property are eligible to receive one free native tree. Acceptable species for removal are Callery/Bradford Pear and Tree of Heaven. A DNR survey/application form must be submitted by **Wednesday, April 9**, to reserve a tree. A follow-up email will confirm a time slot for the distribution event. Visit NIRPC's CommuniTree website for full details.

c. Spring 2025 CommuniTree Grant: A tree planting/care workshop and tree pickup date will occur at NIRPC, Thursday, April 10th. The board member distribution to homeowners at the Public Works Yard is scheduled for **Saturday, April 12th** from 9 to 11 AM. Blane Roberts requested one of the 20 trees.

d. **NWI Urban Waters Federal Partnership:** Arleen Sandrick volunteered to represent the Tree Board. The next session is a Zoom Meeting on **Thursday, April 24, 2025**, 9:30 AM-11:30 AM. Upcoming 2025 meetings are scheduled for Thursday, July 24 and Thursday, October 23.

d. **Little Calumet River South Watershed Seedling Project:** A Council President Arbor Day Proclamation has been signed. Notice of the event was published in the March Gazebo Express. Joe Moore reported “We are anticipating the week of Arbor Day but are at the mercy of the state nursery in terms of when they release the trees. I will touch base when I have an exact date. We have it tentatively scheduled for **April 25.**” This information was forwarded to Catherine Perrin for reaching out for elementary school planting volunteers and Dr. Kris Huysken of IUN, who has a student who desires to gather and coordinate college students for the plantings.

e. **Park Cleanup Day:** Board members have historically helped with this event. This year it will occur from 9 to 11:30 a.m. on **Saturday, April 26th**. A volunteer is requested to register persons from our group who will participate for park assignments, T-Shirt orders and a lunch at Main Square Park. Call the Lincoln Center, Phone (219) 838-0114.

f. **Arbor Day Poster Contest for 5th Grade Students:** Mary Ann Brunt contacted all six schools and emailed the Indiana DNR Community & Urban Forestry Flyer to all the fifth-grade teachers, but she received no confirmation of participation.

g. **Potential nursery and community garden at St Timothy’s Episcopal Church:** Follow up Report from Mary Ann Brunt on whether the Griffith Tree Consortium & Park Board will collaborate.

h. **2024 Tree City Recognition:** Materials delivered to Jim Colias for which he may need assistance include a Press Release Template; Tree City USA Flag; a Plaque Addition and 2024 Emblem to be placed in the Town Council Chambers; and two 2024 Decals to be placed on North and South Kennedy Avenue Metal Tree City Recognition Signs.

New Business: No topics identified.

Discussion Topics:

Comments from Board Members, the Public and/or Visitors: This item of business is confined to announcements of intention to bring 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: The Board may review, change and update its 2025 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 1/21/25 by Jackowski and Roberts.
3. Update the Approved / Unapproved Species List - Completed by Jackowski 1-29-2025.
4. Cancel Board Meetings in July and December – Decided 2/20/25.
5. Seek Town Council appointments to expiring Board Member terms.
6. Seek Board Chair, Vice Chair and Secretary appointments.
7. Board member distribution of CommuniTree Grant Trees to homeowners at the Public Works Yard. Scheduled for Saturday, April 12th from 9 to 11 AM.
8. Organize an annual Arbor Day Week Observance – Scheduled April 25. Assigned to Underkofler.
9. Participate in Park Cleanup Day – April 26.

10. Participate in the Independence Day Parade – Assigned to Mary Ann Brunt.
11. Post a Tree of the Month and Tree Care Tips on the Board's Facebook Site - Assigned to Colias.
12. Secure speakers for educational sessions on pertinent topics - Assigned to Colias.
13. Attend Chamber of Commerce and NWI Urban Waters Partnership Meetings to establish community partnerships and sponsorships. Assigned to Sandrick.
14. Secure utility clearance and transplant Jackowski nursery trees. Scheduled Spring 2025. Requests received: Bernie Zemen, 2736 43rd Street and Chuck Haber, 8417 Cottage Grove Avenue.
15. Establish a list of 2025 accomplishments/key facts and publish an Annual Report for a media release to the Town Council, Gazebo Express, NWI Times and WJOB.
16. Renew application for 2025 Tree City USA recognition before December 31.
17. Recruit new Board Members for terms expiring in January 2026.

Next Meeting: Thursday, April 17, 2025

Adjournment