

Meeting Minutes
Town of Highland Tree Board
Thursday, March 20, 2025

Time and Place of Meeting: Chair Jim Colias called the monthly meeting of the Tree Board to order at 7:05 PM at Town Hall in an Upstairs Meeting Room.

Roll Call:

Present: Board Members Mary Ann Brunt, Jim Colias, Ron Jackowski, John (JT) Mackey, Scott Polster, Blane Roberts, Arleen Sandrick

Absent: Richard Underkofler, Council Liaison 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:** Blane Roberts made a motion to approve the minutes of the regular meeting held February 20, 2025. Scott Polster seconded the motion. Approved by unanimous consent of members present.

Board Member Appointments. At the Town Council's Business Meeting held on February 24, 2025, the Council nominated the reappointment of Blane Roberts and the appointment of Scott Polster to the Tree Board. The Town Council Vice-President serving as municipal executive announced their reappointment and appointment for 3-year terms until a successor is appointed.

Appointment of Officers. Jim Colias as Chair appointed Ron Jackowski as Vice Chair and J.T. Mackey as Secretary.

Old Business:

- a. **Update Tree Inventory:** Phil Graf on behalf of Great Lakes Urban Forestry provided a written update report of the status of updating Highland's Tree Inventory. The report indicates the team has been working for the past two months and approximately 67% are done with street trees. So far, they collected 8,152 points including 4,689 active trees, 3,182 open planting spaces and 101 stumps. He concluded based on the 2017 inventory; the project is 55% complete. The Tree Board will invite Phil Graf to an upcoming meeting to learn more.
- b. **New Invasive Tree Replacement Program.** The Tree Board reviewed the program information. Jim Colias will disseminate with the community via a post on the Board's Facebook site.
- 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 Saturday, April 12th from 9 to 11 AM.
- d. **NWI Urban Waters Federal Partnership.** Arleen Sandrick has attended previous meetings and shared her perspective on the group's information. She will join upcoming session scheduled for April 24, 2025 via Zoom from 9:30 – 11:30 AM.
- e. **Little Calumet River South Watershed Seedling Project:** Rich Underkofler requested a Council President Arbor Day Proclamation from Mark Herak. The event is tentatively scheduled for April 25 but is dependent on the weather and when the nursery releases the trees. Underkofler will meet with Delta Institute in a MS Teams remote meeting on April 4 to further coordinate.
- f. **Park Cleanup Day.** Mary Ann Brunt volunteered to participate on behalf of the Tree Board.

- g. **Arbor Day Poster Contest.** Mary Ann Brunt contacted all six schools and shared the Indiana DNR Community & Urban Forestry Flyer to all fifth-grade teachers.
- h. **Potential nursery and community garden at St. Timothy's Episcopal Church.** Conversations with the church and interested groups continues. Mary Ann Brunt will continue to engage.
- i. **2024 Tree City Recognition.** Jim Colias is in possession of the Tree City USA materials and will share with town officials.

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 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. **Tree Planting:** Ron Jackowski will select a date to transplant trees to homeowner yards of Bernie Zemen, 2736 43rd Street and Chuck Haber, 8417 Cottage Grove Avenue.
- b. **Approved/Unapproved Species List:** Scott Polster expressed interest in reviewing the list. It is attached.
- c. **Neighbor Tree List:** J.T. Mackey would like to find ways to develop a list of neighbors wanting parkway trees, so the Tree Board is prepared for future grant opportunities.
- d. **Town Tree Removal.** Blane Roberts invited Mark Herak to share information with the Board regarding the Town's Tree Removal contract and funding.
- e. **Action Plan:** The Board plans to review its 2025 Action Plan at its next meeting
 - 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. Seek Town Council appointments to expiring Board Member and Chair terms. Completed 2-24-2025.
 - 5. Vice Chair Jackowski and Secretary Mackey appointments. Completed 3-20-25.
 - 6. Cancel Board Meetings in July and December.
 - 7. Participate in Park Pride Day. Assigned to Mary Ann Brunt 4-26-2025.
 - 8. Board member distribution of CommuniTree Grant Trees to homeowners at the Public Works Yard. Scheduled for Saturday, April 12th from 9 to 11 AM.
 - 9. Organize an annual Arbor Day Week Observance – Scheduled week of April 20 to April 25. Assigned to Underkofler.
 - 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. Recruit new Board Members for Colias and Jackowski terms expiring in January 2026.
16. Renew application for 2025 Tree City USA recognition before December 31.
Assigned to Secretary.
17. 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.
Assigned to Secretary.

Next Meeting: Thursday, April 17, 2025

Respectfully submitted,

John (JT) Mackey

John (JT) Mackey, Secretary