

Meeting Minutes
Town of Highland Tree Board
Thursday, June 19, 2025

The agenda for this meeting listed the Board Members, whether they are executive or legislative appointments and their terms of office as required by a new state statute.

Roll Call

Present: Board Members Mary Ann Brunt, Chair Jim Colias, Vice Chair Ron Jackowski, Scott Polster and Blane Roberts. Former Secretary Richard Underkofler took the minutes in the absence of Secretary Mackey.

Absent: Board Members John (JT) Mackey and Arlene Sandrick. Town Council Liaison Alex Robertson, other invited personnel of the Town and other agencies.

General substance of matters proposed, discussed, or decided – record of all votes taken if there is a roll call.

- Blane Roberts made a motion to approve the minutes of the meeting held May 15, 2025. Mary Ann Brunt seconded the motion. Approved by unanimous consent of the members present.

Old Business

- a. **Tree Inventory:** Prior to the meeting, Phil Graf sent emails. In response to the 2025 Tree Inventory Report that Underkofler forwarded to Board Members, Alex Brown, Trever Kinley, Tim Diamond (*tdiamond@highland.in.gov., successor to Alex*) and an Underkofler inquiry, “The tree data is housed on the Town's ArcGIS account. The map was posted up last week. I am meeting with Mark Knesek tomorrow morning at 10 am to show him how it functions. It will be up to you to decide who will get access to the map. I strongly recommend having only a small group (even one person) granted access to a version of the map for editing. We can create a read-only map for distribution to others so that the information is readily available. I had a two-hour training session with Mark and Kim Webb today at Public Works about using the tree inventory data. I will not make the drive back to Highland tonight. As to the town’s ArcGIS map Arlene Sandrick, sent an email, “I agree only one person should have edit access, ideally a town council member or park board executive. I am hoping this map will be available for public view on the town website. It has so much valuable information! I think it would help inform and educate interested community residents. I am unable to attend tonight’s meeting but want to express my thanks to Phil Graf and the town on the tree inventory project! Awesome!”
- b. **Little Calumet River South Watershed Seedling Project:** On the day of this meeting, Jim Colias walked along the bike trail. He reported most hickory seedlings are gone. Members

speculated that a nearby homeowner may have mowed them or deer have consumed them. Ron Jackowski said the plum seedlings are thriving. *Underkofler will remind Joe Moore of Erosion Control Services to water those left during the drought conditions.*

- c. **Duluth & Parish Street Sanitary District Tree Planting:** A copy of Phil Graf's report of April 25, 2025, identifying design issues, planting issues, mitigation and remediation recommendations accompanied minutes of the May Board Meeting. Ron Jackowski said three trees in the parkway along Duluth Street east of Grace Street have not been relocated. They are likely to grow into the overhead powerline. Since Mark Knesek and Alex Robertson were absent from this meeting, there was no report explaining why the contractor had not replaced all deficient trees identified in Phil Graf's report. Nor has Mark Knesek reported if he is willing to update the Standard Specifications for contracts dealing with stump removal and tree planting to comply with ANSI and standards of the International Society of Arboriculture (ISA).
- d. **Highland Twilight Parade:** Blane Roberts volunteered to join Mary Ann Brunt and Arlene Sandrick to walk along with the Highland Neighbors for Sustainability float. The parade steps off July 3 at 6:00 pm from the parking lot of St. James Church.
- e. **Review Approved/Unapproved Tree Species:** Links to an updated IDNR Tree Selection Guide and Tree Species List were provided on the meeting agenda. Phil Graf spoke with Scott Polster regarding the species list. Both have been busy, so little progress has been made to make the list more "user friendly." A discussion occurred between Scott and Ron Jackowski whether shrubs should be approved for planting in parkways.
- f. **Spring 2025 CommuniTree Planting Grant:** Blane Roberts volunteered to conduct a Monday, June 23rd survey of the health of the trees planted by homeowners. Ron Jackowski may have joined him.
- g. **Delta Institute Great Lakes Basin Tree Planting Consortium:** Secretary Mackey submitted a letter of support on behalf of the Tree Board on an application to the Day Break Fund that would enable Delta Institute to extend its services to more communities.
- h. **Fiber Optic Parkway Cable Locates:** Ron Jackowski reported "**Surf Internet**" is the provider flagging locations when 811 requests are made.
- i. **Postscript Arbor Day Trees:** Jim Colias reported the tree at Highland Christian School is healthy, the tree at Warren School is gone.

Discussion Topics

- a. **2025 Tree Inventory Report Special Meeting – July 17:** The board members desire to invite Phil Graf, Lake County Commissioner Mike Repay, Town Council Liaison Alex Robertson, Public Works Director Mark Knesek, Assistant PW Director Kim Webb, Parks Director Trever Kinley and new Parks and Recreation Superintendent Tim Diamond to a special meeting in July to discuss the report, demonstrate tree data and how it functions on the Town's ArcGIS

account. Formulating a Risk Assessment Policy, budgets for the removal of dead and poor condition trees are proposed for discussion at this meeting.

- b. **Action Plan:** The members updated the Board's 2025 Action Plan:
1. Monthly idea sharing of ideas to keep the Board moving forward. **All Board Members.**
 2. Become a member of the Indiana Arborist Association and participate in the 2025 IAA Annual Conference. **Completed 1/21/25 by Jackowski and Roberts.**
 3. Town Council appointments to expiring Board Member Terms. **Completed 2/24/25.**
 4. Board Chair, Vice Chair and Secretary Appointments. **Completed 2/24/25.**
 5. Board member distribution of 20 CommuniTree Grant trees to homeowners at the Public Works Yard. **Completed 4/12/25.**
 6. Update the Approved /Unapproved Species List. **Completed by Jackowski 4/24/25, but consideration delayed for a more "user friendly" document by Scott Polster, Phil Graf, and Jackowski.**
 7. Organize an annual Arbor Day Event. **Completed 4/25/2025.**
 8. Participate in Park Pride Day. **Completed 4/26/25.**
 9. Secure utility clearance and transplant three Jackowski nursery trees to yards of Chuck Haber (8417 Cottage Grove Ave) and Bernie Zemen (2736 43rd St). **Completed 5/19/25.**
 10. Post a Tree of the Month and/or Tree Care Tips on the Board's Facebook Site and the Tree Board Page on the Town of Highland Website. **Assigned to Colias.**
 11. Secure 1 or 2 expert speakers per year for community educational sessions on pertinent topics. **Assigned to Colias.**
 12. Attend meetings of the Chamber of Commerce and NWI Urban Waters Partnership to maintain community relations and become aware of urban forestry grants. **Assigned to Sandrick.**
 13. Recruit new Board Members for terms ending in January 2026. **All Board Members.**
 14. Renew application for Tree City USA recognition before December 31. **Assigned to Secretary.**
 15. Identify 2025 accomplishments, key facts and publish in an Annual Report for a media release to the Town Council, Gazebo Express, NWI Times and WJOB. **Assigned to Secretary.**

Next Regular Monthly Meeting: Thursday, August 21, 2025.

Adjournment: Blane Roberts made a motion to adjourn at 8:25 pm. Mary Ann Brunt seconded the motion. Approved by unanimous consent of the members present.

Respectfully submitted,
Richard Underkofler, Former Secretary