

**Highland Tree Board
Agenda for Regular Meeting
Thursday, August 21, 2025 – 7 PM
Town Hall, 3333 Ridge Road**

Roll Call:

Board Members:

Chair Jim Colias	Executive Appointment	1/1/2023 – 1/1/2026
Vice Chair Ron Jackowski	Executive Appointment	1/1/2023 – 1/1/2026
Secretary JT Mackey	Executive Appointment	1/1/2024 – 1/1/2027
Mary Ann Brunt	Executive Appointment	1/1/2024 – 1/1/2027
Scott Polster	Executive Appointment	1/1/2025 – 1/1/2028
Blane Roberts	Executive Appointment	1/1/2025 – 1/1/2028
Arlene Sandrick	Executive Appointment	1/1/2025 -1/1/2028
Alex Robertson	Town Council’s Board Liaison	1/1/2025 – 1/1/2026

Invited Town Staff: George Georgeff, Council President; Mark Herak, Clerk/Treasurer; Mark Kneseck, Public Works Director; Tim Gembala, Public Works Operations Director; Tim Diamond, Superintendent, Parks & Recreation Department; Trever Kinley, Parks Director; Maria Becerra, Redevelopment Director; Webupdates@theideafactory.us.com c/o Theresa Badovich & Robin Carlascio.

Others: Richard Underkofler, 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, Erosion Construction Services; Dan Repay, Little Calumet River Basin Commission; Mike Repay, Lake County Commissioner;

Minutes: A motion is requested to approve the minutes of a meeting held June 19, 2025. A copy is distributed with this agenda.

Old Business:

- a. **Tree Inventory:** The Tree Board is coordinating with Phil Graf to provide a read-only version of the ArcGIS Tree Inventory for distribution to Tree Board members and to share publicly on the Town’s website. Phil is on vacation through August 18 and has been invited to an upcoming meeting to demonstrate the tree inventory data, how it functions on the Town's ArcGIS account, formulating a Risk Assessment Policy and budgets for the removal of dead and poor condition trees.
- b. **Little Calumet River South Watershed Seedling Project.** Jim Colias and Ron Jackowski previously reported on the condition of the remaining seedlings with most of the hickory seedlings no longer present and the plum seedlings thriving. Underkofler intended to remind Joe remind Joe Moore of Erosion Control Services to water those left during the drought conditions.
- c. **Duluth & Parrish Street Sanitary District Tree Planting:** Phil Graf provided a tree evaluation and arborist report providing an assessment of the planting along Duluth Street following a infrastructure rebuild project. Derek Snyder, the Town’s Arborist Engineer of NIES Engineering disagreed with some of the recommendations. Alex Roberston previously

shared work may be in progress for replacing some, but not all of the deficient trees. Board members seek an update on the status of replacing trees and plans to update future contracts dealing with stump removal.

- d. **Review Approved/Unapproved Tree Species.** Scott Polster, Phil Graf and Ron Jackowski continue working together to make the document more "user friendly." Indiana DNR has released an updated Tree Selection Guide and Tree Species list.
 - i. [Tree Selection Guide](#)
 - ii. [Tree Species List](#)
- e. **Arbor Day Foundation Trees** – Rich Underkofler has ordered 10 eastern redbud trees for planting around November 2025.
- f. **NIRPC Invasive Tree Replacement Program** – Property Owners can receive a native tree to replace Callery/Bradford Pear trees, Tree of Heaven, or other non-native invasive trees. More information available here: [Program Information](#).
- g. **DNR Big Tree Tour – Sept 6.** - DNR will be partnering with CommuniTree to host a Northwest Indiana Big Tree Tour on Sept. 6. We will be visiting two state champions and a nature preserve on this bus and walking tour. [Register](#).
- h. **DNR Tree Stewards Workshops** - the mission of the Tree Stewards program is to: Educate participants on proper tree care, biology, and urban forestry practices; Empower participants to advocate for community and urban forestry in their neighborhood, community, and state, and; Connect participants to local volunteer opportunities.
 - i. Sept. 11 & 12 Goshen ([agenda](#)) ([registration](#))
 - ii. Oct. 11 & 18 Muncie ([agenda](#)) ([registration](#))
 - iii. Nov. 6 & 7 Evansville ([agenda](#)) ([registration](#))
- i. **2025 Indiana Community and Urban Forestry Symposium** - Dec. 9 & 10 at Switchyard Pavilion in Bloomington, IN ([agenda](#)) ([registration](#)) The Indiana Community Forestry Council (IN-CFC) and DNR Community and Urban Forestry work together to host the Indiana Community and Urban Forestry Symposium each year. This symposium is open to tree board members, municipal staff, nonprofits, university faculty and staff, students, arborists, utility representatives, passionate volunteers, and anyone else with an interest in urban forestry.
- j. **Highland Twilight Parade** – Mary Ann Brunt, Arleen Sandrick, and Blane Roberts participated in the July 3rd Parade and shared a float with the Highland Neighbors for Sustainability.

New Business:

- a. **Bird Migration Festival** – Mary Ann Brunt and Arleen Sandrick will staff a table at the second annual bird migration festival at the Highland Rookery on September 13 from 10 AM – 12 PM The event is sponsored by the Highland Neighbors for Sustainability.

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. Action Plan: The Board may adopt a 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 Meeting: Thursday, September 18, 2025.

Adjournment