

**Meeting Minutes**  
**Town of Highland Tree Board**  
**Thursday, October 16, 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.*

**Time and Place of Meeting:** Chair Jim Colias called the monthly meeting of the Tree Board to order at 7:02 PM in the Town Hall main meeting room and was recorded for availability on town's Facebook page.

**Roll Call**

Present: Board Members: Mary Ann Brunt, Chair Jim Colias, Vice Chair Ron Jackowski, Secretary JT Mackey, Scott Polster, Blane Roberts, Arlene Sandrick, and Town Council Liaison Alex Robertson.

Absent: 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.**

- Mary Ann Brunt made a motion to approve the minutes of the meeting held August 21, 2025. Blane Roberts seconded the motion. Approved by unanimous consent of the members present.

**Old Business:**

- a. **Tree Inventory:** The results of the Tree Inventory sparked a dialogue among Board Members regarding the future role of the Tree Board. Themes discussed include participating in Town Council meetings, playing an advisory role on tree plantings, meeting regularly with Parks and Recreation and Public Works, reviewing tree removal contract, and publicizing recommended tree species. **Board Member Arlene Sandick to synthesize the points made by the Tree Board for review at a later meeting with intent of sharing ideas with Town Council.**
- b. **Little Calumet River South Watershed Seedling Project:** Ron Jackowski met with Tim Diamond to discuss the success or failure of the seedling project. Email correspondence indicated that Joe Moore may be open to replanting the seedling project. Tree Board would like to invite Joe Moore to future meeting to discuss his offer and how to make a future planting successful. **Chair Jim Colias to invite Joe Moore to future meeting to learn more.**
  - Board Member Blane Roberts made a motion to postpone indefinitely the discussion until a later meeting. Scott Polster seconded the motion. Approved by unanimous vote.
- c. **Duluth & Parrish Street Sanitary District Tree Planting.** The experience of tree planting on Duluth & Parrish Streets generated discussion on how to improve future contracts to ensure

future tree plantings are improved. Liaison Alex Robertson provided an update on the status of the trees planted as part of that project. Board members discussed potential options of changing town regulations and allowing tree board to review projects. **Board Member Blane Roberts to review town regulations regarding planting standards.**

- d. **Review Approved/Unapproved Tree Species.** Scott Polster and Ron Jackowski will connect to update Highland's Approved/Unapproved Tree Species list.
- e. **Arbor Day Foundation Trees.** Board members would like to learn more about the tree donation from Rich Underkofler and a potential spring distribution. **Vice Chair Ron Jackowski to follow up with Rich regarding Arbor Day Foundation trees and look into steps necessary for a spring tree distribution.**
- f. **NIRPC Invasive Tree Replacement Program.** Board Member Blane Roberts shared his experience with the program.

**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. Board Member Comments

- Scott Polster shared he recently visited Orchard Park and noticed several memorial trees were showing signs of damage from landscaping practices.
- Blane Roberts followed up on Scott's comment that this is an opportunity to work together to educate about proper tree care and find a solution.
- Mary Ann Brunt shared about her experience at the Monarch Festival in East Chicago and the opportunity for the Tree Board to participate in future years and promote trees.
- J.T. Mackey commented on the need to identify grant opportunities to bring trees to the community and build a list of community members who would like to plant a tree
- Ron shared his desire to review removal contracts.
- Arlene asked Alex to follow up on the trees removed on 5<sup>th</sup> Street.

b. 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 43<sup>rd</sup> 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, November 20, 2025.

**Adjournment:** Blane Roberts made a motion to adjourn at 8:12 pm. Mary Ann Brunt seconded the motion. Approved by unanimous consent of the members present.

Respectfully submitted,  
J.T. Mackey, Secretary