

**Highland Tree Board
Agenda for Regular Meeting
Thursday, January 15, 2026 – 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 Knesek, 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 November 20, 2025. A copy is distributed with this agenda.

Board Member Appointments: The terms of Jim Colias and Ron Jackowski have ended. Jackowski seeks reappointment; Colias does not. The members of the board serve until a successor is appointed. The Town Council is scheduled to meet on 1/26/26 where they may nominate and appoint new members and appoint a chairperson. Once appointed, the Chairperson may motion to appoint a Vice Chairperson and Secretary.

Old Business:

- **Little Calumet River South Watershed Seedling Project.** Tree Board members would like to have a conversation with Joe Moore to understand offer to replant project and steps to ensure project more successful. Vice Chair Ron Jackowski followed up with Joe Moore to schedule a virtual meeting on December 10 but an insufficient number of Board members were able to participate. The board would like to make a decision at the January meeting. Chair Jim Colias to follow up with Mark Knesak regarding remaining grant funding from 2025 project.

- **Duluth & Parrish Street Sanitary District Tree Planting:** Following discussion with Liaison Alex Robertson, Board Member Blane Roberts volunteered to review town regulations regarding planting standards and report back to the Board for further consideration.
- **Review Approved/Unapproved Tree Species.** Board Members Scott Polster and Ron Jackowski agreed to connect and draft an update to Highland’s Approved/Unapproved Tree Species list.
- **Role of Highland Tree Board Committee.** Blane Roberts made a motion at the November 2025 meeting to form a committee of at least three Board Members to meet to review the role and purpose of the Tree Board and report back to the full Board for further consideration.

New Business:

- a. Arbor Day Celebration.
 - a. Tree City USA communities must hold a public Arbor Day observance. To qualify it requires a signed and dated proclamation. The observance can include things like tree planting events, tree care activities, education on community trees, and programming that raises awareness of the importance and value of trees. Past Arbor Days have included events like the Rookery tree planting and a tree planting and sapling giveaway at the Lincoln Center. The Tree Board shall consider how to celebrate Arbor Day this year.
- b. **CUF Symposium.** DNR Division of Forestry held the 2025 Indiana Community and Urban Forestry Symposium in Bloomington. Topics included urban forestry preservation through ordinances and planning, best management practices regarding tree care and placement, urban forestry advocacy and more. Recordings of the sessions are available on the [DNR YouTube channel](#).
- c. **Arbor Day Poster Contest.** DNR will be holding a Fifth Grade Arbor Day Poster Contest. The first, second and third place winners will receive an Indiana 529 scholarship. The first-place winner will also receive a tree planting at their school. More information including teacher resources are available at [DNR’s website](#).
- d. **IAA Conference.** The Indiana Arborist Association Annual Conference will be held in Noblesville on Jan 20-22. [Registration information is available here](#).
- e. **2026 Indiana Tree City Forum** - The Community & Urban Forestry program will be hosting a forum for recipients of the Arbor Day Foundations Tree City family of programs (Tree City USA, Tree Campus K-12/Higher Ed/Healthcare and Tree Line USA). This is a free event for those individuals affiliated with groups that have received recognition from the Arbor Day Foundation. The event will be March 11, 2026 from 10 am – 3 pm in Terre Haute. [Registration information here](#).

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 2026 Action Plan:
 1. Monthly 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 2026 IAA Annual Conference.
3. Town Council appointments to expiring Board Member Terms.
4. Board Chair, Vice Chair and Secretary Appointments.
5. Update the Approved /Unapproved Species List.
6. Organize an annual Arbor Day Event.
7. Participate in Park Pride Day.
8. 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.
9. Secure 1 or 2 expert speakers per year for community educational sessions on pertinent topics.
10. Attend meetings of the Chamber of Commerce and NWI Urban Waters Partnership to maintain community relations and become aware of urban forestry grants.
11. Recruit new Board Members for terms ending in January 2027.
12. Renew application for Tree City USA recognition before December 31.

Next Meeting: Thursday, February 19, 2026.

Adjournment