

Meeting Minutes
Town of Highland Tree Board
Thursday, November 20, 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 7:00 PM in the Town Hall main meeting room.

Roll Call

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

Absent: Board Member Scott Polster and 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 October 16, 2025. Mary Ann Brunt seconded the motion. Approved by unanimous consent of the members present.

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 to follow up with Joe Moore to schedule a virtual meeting in early December to learn more. Board would like to make a decision at 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. Alex provided a synopsis of the existing municipal code.
- **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.

- **Arbor Day Foundation Trees** – Rich Underkofler has ordered 10 eastern redbud trees for planting around November 2025. Vice Chair Ron Jackowski to follow up with Rich regarding Arbor Day Foundation trees for planting in nursery for future distribution.

New Business:

- a. **Role of Highland Tree Board.** Board Member Arlene Sandrick drafted the following outline to clarify the role of the Tree Board and opportunities for Board Members to carry out our work.

The board is comprised of seven voting members, each appointed by the Town Council to serve a 4-year term. Meetings are held at 7 pm on the third Thursday of every month in the council chambers, 3333 Ridge Rd. Highland, In. 46322.

Currently we are an advisory board with duties to study, investigate, counsel, develop and advise the town on the care, preservation, pruning, planting, replanting, removal of trees and shrubs in parks, alleys, along streets as well and in public areas. A written plan, if needed, could be created and presented to the town council every four years for acceptance and approval to constitute an official comprehensive tree plan goal for Highland.

1. One suggestion is to develop a 50/50 program, similar to the town’s sidewalk program which would apply to Highland homeowners.
 2. Develop a shaded greenway path for biking and walking along the Little Calumet River and the rookery.
 4. Appoint a town arborist for professional tree care practices, proper placement and maintenance standards as outlined in Highland’s tree ordinance Jan. 2025.
 5. Participate in Arbor Day, Tree City, school and community events to beautify Highland.
 6. Create and provide information and educational pamphlets, develop relationships to exchange information and ideas with neighboring towns/cities, Indiana DNR and federal forestry programs.
- Blane Roberts made a motion 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. Arlene Sandrick seconded the motion. Approved by unanimous consent of the members present.
 - Blane Roberts made a motion to recognize former Board Secretary Richard Underkofler for his years of service to the Tree Board and Highland Community and recommend formal recognition by the Town Council. Seconded by Mary Ann Brunt. Approved by unanimous consent of the members present.

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, January 15, 2026.

Adjournment: Blane Roberts made a motion to adjourn at 8:16 pm. Ron Jackowski seconded the motion. Approved by unanimous consent of the members present.

Respectfully submitted,
J.T. Mackey, Secretary