

**Meeting Minutes**  
**Town of Highland Tree Board**  
**Monday, March 16, 2026**

*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 Blane Roberts called the monthly meeting of the Tree Board to order at 6:31 PM in a meeting room at the Lincoln Community Center.

**Roll Call**

Present: Board Members: Mary Ann Brunt, Teresa Lekan, Secretary JT Mackey, Scott Polster, Chair Blane Roberts, Arlene Sandrick, David Taylor and Town Council Liaison Alex Robertson.

Additional guests present: Ron Jackowski; Rich Underkofler; and Joe Moore (virtually)

Absent: Town Council Liaison Alex Robertson 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 February 19, 2026. Scott Polster seconded the motion. Approved by unanimous consent of the members present.

**Old Business:**

- **Role of Highland Tree Board Committee.** The Committee met on February 26 and shared minutes with Board Members. The Committee discussed the role of the Board and acceptable plants as defined in the municipal code. Scott Polster reviewed the following minutes with members of Tree Board:
  - i. The role of the Highland Tree Board, as outlined in HMC 8.25.020.
  - ii. Where can Board members find the Urban Forest Mgt Plan (UFMP), as identified in 8.25.010? Ron presented his copy, It was determined that the Board serves as stewards, advocates, and advisors of the UFMP. 8.25.080 Duties also were discussed, in which the Board is further tasked with UFMP and Forestry consultants to the Public Works and Parks/Rec Depts.
  - iii. The Board also discussed CH 18.75 Landscape Regulations. 18.75.060 Recommended and Unacceptable Plant Lists (Tables 8 thru 17). The Board agreed that this section is outdated, inconsistent and inaccurate. The following examples were presented: European alder is listed as an Invasive plant, yet it is on recommended lists; likewise, Callery Pear. Quaking Aspen is listed as a recommended tree but is also on the Unacceptable List as a member of the poplar family. Poison Hemlock is becoming established in

Highland, yet it fails to make the Invasive List. Maples are on the Acceptable Lists, yet the family and genus are now strongly overrepresented in the Highland tree inventory; we need to promote diversity.

- iv. It was agreed that instead of modifying the tables, they should be replaced with a current list of Recommended and Unacceptable Tree Lists. The only exception would be Table 17 - Invasive Plant Species. This list could be modified with a link to the official Indiana List (similar to the Griffith list).

Tree Board Members considered whether the lists should be removed from code and housed with the Tree Board like other communities do. Others suggested referencing the Indiana DNR list in the code, so the list remains evergreen.

Tree Board Members will review lists to be circulated and consider what recommendation the Tree Board would like to make to the Town Council.

- **Little Calumet River South Watershed Seedling Project.** Tree Board continues to discuss opportunity to replant the seedling project after unsuccessful 2025 planting. Joe Moore who served as the contractor for 2025 planting, joined the meeting around 6:45 to answer questions and discuss opportunities for redoing the project. From Joe's perspective the seedlings were removed by wildlife. Joe Moore is willing to reorder trees from the state nursery. He recommends reconvening in late 2026 to order trees from the nursery for planting in 2027.

Tree Board Members to visit site to continue consideration of redoing project.

- **Review Approved/Unapproved Tree Species.** Combined with Role of Tree Board item.
- **Arbor Day/ Park Pride Celebration.** Tree Board plans to celebrate Arbor Day as part of the Park Clean Up Day. Following clean up activities, the Tree Board will host a tree planting to honor Rich Underkofler and feature a tree care discussion with an arborist from Great Lakes Uran Forestry. Mary Ann Brunt sent Indiana DNR poster contest information to area schools. Blane working with Tim Diamond to identify location and tree for planting.
- **CommuniTree-Spring 2026 Community Tree Grant Program.** The Highland Tree Board received interest from 4 community members to plant a tree along their parkway. The Tree Board requested a grant for 10 trees and will need to find additional planting locations if the grant is approved. A blurb was drafted for inclusion in the next Gazebo express to help build a roster of interested residents for future grant opportunities.

**New Business:**

- a. No topics identified.

**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.

Arlene Sandrick asked for any updates on usage of the 2025 Tree Inventory. Arlene also shared her plan to attend upcoming Little Calumet River Basin Development Commission meeting.

- 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. **Completed 1-15-26 via Scott Polster.**
  3. Town Council appointments to expiring Board Member Terms. **Completed 2-9-26**
  4. Board Chair, Vice Chair and Secretary Appointments. **Completed 1-26-26**
  5. Update the Approved /Unapproved Species List.
  6. Organize an annual Arbor Day Event.
  7. Participate in Park Pride Day.
  8. Participate in Town Twilight Parade.
  9. 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.
  10. Secure 1 or 2 expert speakers per year for community educational sessions on pertinent topics.
  11. Attend meetings of the Chamber of Commerce and NWI Urban Waters Partnership to maintain community relations and become aware of urban forestry grants.
  12. Recruit new Board Members for terms ending in January 2027.
  13. Renew application for Tree City USA recognition before December 31, 2026.

**Next Meeting:** Monday, April 20, 2026.

**Adjournment:** Arlene Sandrick made a motion to adjourn at 7:27 pm. Teresa Lekan seconded the motion. Approved by unanimous consent of the members present.

Respectfully submitted,  
J.T. Mackey, Secretary