

**Highland Tree Board
Agenda for Regular Meeting
Monday, April 20, 2026 – 6:30 PM
Lincoln Center, 2450 Lincoln St**

Roll Call:

Board Members:

Chair Blane Roberts	Executive Appointment	1/1/2025 – 1/1/2028
Secretary JT Mackey	Executive Appointment	1/1/2024 – 1/1/2027
Mary Ann Brunt	Executive Appointment	1/1/2024 – 1/1/2027
Teresa Lekan	Executive Appointment	1/1/2026 – 1/1/2029
Scott Polster	Executive Appointment	1/1/2025 – 1/1/2028
Arlene Sandrick	Executive Appointment	1/1/2025 -1/1/2028
David Taylor	Executive Appointment	1/1/2026 - 1/1/2029
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, Ron Jackowski, 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 March 16, 2026. A copy is distributed with this agenda.

Old Business:

- **Role of Highland Tree Board Committee.** The Committee met on February 26 and shared minutes with Board members. At the March 16 Tree Board meeting, members expressed interest in reviewing the list of approved and unapproved lists in order to make a recommendation to the Town Council. Blane Roberts shared an existing list via email on March 31st. Ron sent an email on 4/4 with a summary comparison of the different lists and considerations for the Board. The Tree Board shall review and make recommendations.
- **Little Calumet River South Watershed Seedling Project (20 Minutes).** Joe Moore virtually joined the March 16 Tree Board meeting. He committed to replanting the project in 2027. He recommended placing an order with the state nursery in October 2026 to secure desired and oldest seedlings. Some Tree Board members walked the site on March 23rd. Tree Board to consider whether or not to move forward with replanting and next steps.
- **Arbor Day/ Park Pride Celebration (7 minutes).** The Tree Board will organize Arbor Day celebration during Park Clean Up Day. Following Clean Up activities, there will be a tree

planting to honor Rich Underkofler and a discussion with an arborist from Great Lakes Urban Forestry. The Board shall consider additional planning for the day. Blane and Arlene will share an update. Blane working with Tim Diamond to identify location and tree for planting. Town Council provided proclamation to celebrate Arbor Day.

- **CommuniTree-Spring 2026 Community Tree Grant Program (2 minutes).** 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. The Tree Board's application has been found favorable by the Communitree review committee. However, for the first time in the program's 10-year history, they have a shortage of trees. We will learn soon what quantity and species we have been awarded. The Tree Board will need to participate in a planting workshop on April 20th in the morning and receive the trees and schedule a tree pick up time for residents.

New Business:

- a. **Faith in Place's Tree Canopy & Workforce Community Grant.** Informational webinar was held on April 14th. Applications can be submitted through May 7th. Grants for up to \$30,000. Priority project locations include low-income census tracts and areas with low to moderate tree canopy cover. Entities limited to Houses of Worship and nonprofits.

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. **Completed 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. 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, 2026.

Next Meeting: Monday, May 18, 2026.

Adjournment