

Meeting Minutes
Town of Highland Tree Board
February 16, 2023

1. Time and Place of Meeting: Chair Jim Colias called the monthly meeting of the Tree Board to order at 7:05 PM at Town Hall.
2. Roll Call:
Present: Board Members Jim Colias, Ron Jackowski, Joan Roback, Blane Roberts, Richard Underkofler, Bernie Zemen.
Absent: Board Member Elizabeth Herrejon, other invited employees of the Town and agencies.
3. General substance of matters proposed, discussed, or decided - record of all votes taken by individual members if there is a roll call:
 - Joan Roback moved to approve minutes of the meeting held January 19, 2023, seconded by Bernie Zemen and approved by unanimous consent of the members in attendance.
4. Old Business:
 - a. Board Member Terms: On January 23, 2023, the Town Council nominated and President Tom Black reappointed Jim Colias and Ron Jackowski to 3-year terms expiring the first Monday in January 2026. Although Natalie Stromberg of the High School Sustainability Club expressed interest, her application to the board had not been received. Teacher/Sponsor Heather Oaks was asked to recruit another sophomore or junior student. Council President Tom Black postponed action on a chairperson appointment awaiting a recommendation of the board. The board members recommended reappointment of Jim Colias as chair.
 - b. CommuniTree 2022 Plantings: Funding for the CommuniTree Grant Program is made possible through a Great Lakes Restoration Initiative grant awarded to the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission by the USDA Forest Service. NIRPC is now accepting applications for Spring 2023 tree planting. Applications are due March 10th. Doris Bauer requested replacement of four trees on a corner lot at 10032 Wildwood Lane; Jim Sweeney requested replacement of one tree at 10020 Wildwood Lane. Blane Roberts volunteered to identify planting locations in Brentwood Subdivision where homeowners will pledge to plant and water trees in their front yards where there are utility conflicts or insufficient space in parkways. Jim Colias was requested to post notice on our Facebook site that homeowner requests will be received by Public Works Operations Director Tim Gembala.
 - c. Transplanting Trees: The weather is now too cold to transplant more Jackowski nursery trees. We will plan to plant them in 2023; replacing dead trees at Merkley School, in parkways, and street medians; and planting new trees in yard locations requested by Elizabeth Herrejon and Bernie Zemen.
 - d. Tree Health Seminar: An October 19, 2022 session scheduled at Highland Library for a presentation by Arborist Sharon Anderson about how to help trees survive drought conditions was postponed due to a death in the Anderson family. Jim Colias reported the session will be rescheduled March 29 with notice in the Gazebo Newsletter and the Board's Facebook site.
 - e. Tree classes for Elementary Students: Jim Colias is coordinating with Rebecca Koetz, Purdue Lake County Extension Educator, to lead classes on a single day at Our Lady of Grace and Highland Christian School.
 - f. 2022 Tree City USA Application: The Town of Highland's application was submitted December 30, 2022. Notice should be received by Arbor Day whether the application has been approved.

- g. Indiana Arborist Association Conference: Jackowski and Underkofler reported on their participation on the first day of the Urban Forestry Program at the IAA Annual Conference Jan 24, 2023 in Indianapolis. Both became 2023 members of the Association. Takeaways: (1) Improved tree canopy improves physical and mental health and reduces summer temperature; (2) Plant trees on private property to increase canopy; (3) Contact Heather Gregory [mail: hannah@canopybloomington.org] for information about how to organize a new 501(c) nonprofit corporation to receive tax deductible contributions and learn about partnerships with schools.
- h. 2023 Arbor Day Event: Colias reported on work in progress for Highland's April 28, 2023 Arbor Day Event at Highland Christian School. Underkofler will ask NIPSCO to provide a speaker and donate a tree; and attempt to order free seedlings for student distribution on behalf of Principal Kyle Weener from Pam at the Jasper-Pulaski IDNR Nursery, Phone: 219-843-4827 or e-mail JasperNursery@dnr.IN.gov.
4. New Business:
- a. Federal Inflation Reduction Act Funding: By request of NIRPC's Jennifer Birchfield, Underkofler submitted a Letter of Support & Proposal to Indiana DNR State Forester John Seifert for a Community Forestry Project. Highland would retain a consultant firm to update Highland's Urban Forest Management & Reforestation Plan. The plan was initially completed in 2017 by Graf Tree Care, now Great Lakes Urban Forestry Management. It needs an update to verify trees removed and planted since 2017 in Highland's ESRI ARC-GIS data management system. The project scope would occur over 5 years. The update would identify invasive species, trees now dead, and those that need substantial pruning together with a reforestation component. Contracted reforestation would include tree acquisition by NIRPC, planting, mulching, watering and miscellaneous maintenance for two years by a tree care contractor. The consultant's technical assistance would include the following tasks:
- Creation of tree removal maps and lists.
 - Creation of tree planting maps and lists.
 - Creation of bid specifications and a RFP for tree removal, pruning and planting.
 - Assistance in selecting qualified contractors for the forgoing services.
 - Inspection and oversight of contractors.
 - Updating of the tree inventory Highland's ESRI ARC-GIS data management system for each of four geographic zones after tree removal, pruning and planting is complete.

The Purdue Lake County Extension Service and Lake County Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area would be collaborative partners for replacing invasive species with native species from NIRPC's CommuniTree Acquisitions. Volunteers from Highland Community Foundation, the Highland Neighbors for Sustainability Organization, students from the High School Sustainability Club and Middle School Science Club would be asked to participate in the project for educational training. **Page 5 presents the letter of support, a proposed project schedule and budget.**

b. Board 2023 Action Plan: The Board discussed an update to its plan approved November 2019.

January 2023 – December 2023

1. Seek Town Council appointments to update expiring Board Member terms – Done 1/23/23.
2. Become a member of the Indiana Arborist Association and participate in the IAA Annual Conference – Done 1/24/23 by Jackowski and Underkofler.
3. Cancel Board Meetings in July and December - Done 2/16/23.
4. Update Unapproved / Approved Species List with photos of recommended tree species – Assigned to Jackowski (Last done for unapproved species 9/6/22).
5. From the approximately dozen Jackowski nursery trees, secure utility locates and replace dead trees at Merkley School, in parkways and street medians; plant new trees in yard locations requested by Elizabeth Herrejon and Bernie Zemen - Assigned to a weekend crew consisting of Jackowski, Underkofler, Roberts, Zemen and Colias with truck.
6. Identify streets where there are open planting sites due to removal of dead trees; then survey the homeowners to inquire if they are willing to water and care for a replacement tree – Assigned to Roberts as lead with Roback for survey.
7. Decide on events in which we will participate to acquaint the community of our endeavors, identify homeowner planting sites, recruit volunteers: Park Pride Day, Farmer’s Market, Fourth of July Festival, Fall Festival - Assigned to Roback as Lead.
8. Maintain community partnerships with Parks, Public Works, Schools, Town Council, NIRPC, NIPSCO, Chamber of Commerce & Highland Businesses – Assigned to Roberts as Lead.
9. Apply for available grants and keep a running tally of trees that we procure – Assigned to Underkofler.
10. Update the tree inventory for tree removals, pruning and new plantings. See Underkofler’s Federal Inflation Reduction Act Funding Proposal.
11. Renew Arbor Day Foundation membership and share new ideas from this participation – Underkofler’s membership expires 8/1/23.
12. Organize, in participation with local organizations, an annual Arbor Day Observance - Assigned to Colias at Highland Christian School.
13. Post a Tree of the Month & Tree Care Tips on the Board's Facebook Site - Assigned to Colias.
14. Periodic review of ordinances that need updating – Assigned to Underkofler
15. Secure 1-2 speakers per year for educational sessions on pertinent topics – Assigned to Colias.
16. Annual idea sharing, new ideas to keep Board moving forward – All Board Members.
17. Establish a list of goals/accomplishments/key facts and publish in a media release to Gazebo Express, NWI Times and WJOB – Assigned to Underkofler.
18. Review the Action Plan and make any adjustments to assure commitment to goals and objectives of plan for the next year – Assigned to Underkofler.
19. Renew application for Tree City USA before December 31 – Assigned to Underkofler.

5. 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. Jackowski asked to be reminded how to access the ESRI ARC-GIS 2017 Tree Inventory & Reforestation Plan. Go to ARC-GIS; then to Gallery. The User ID is HighlandParksGIS2017, Password: GIS2017HighlandParks.
 - b. Jackowski asked whether a homeowner request for a low growing tree under overhead lines at 3932 Highway Avenue was completed. A Redbud was planted there in Fall 2022.
6. Next Meeting: March 16, 2023. The Board will review, change and potentially approve the Draft 2023 Action Plan.
7. Adjournment:
- The meeting ended at 8:20 PM on a motion of Roberts, second by Roback, approved by unanimous consent of the members in attendance.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Richard Underkofler', written over a horizontal line.

Richard Underkofler, Secretary

January 27, 2023

John Seifert, Indiana State Forester
Indiana Department of Natural Resources
jseifert@dnr.IN.gov
(317) 232-4116

Dear Mr. Seifert,

I am writing to support CommuniTree Northwest Indiana's proposal to the Indiana DNR for the funding appropriated to the USDA Forest Service Urban and Community Forestry (UCF) Program through the Inflation Reduction Act. CommuniTree Northwest Indiana is an alliance of businesses, not-for-profits, universities, government agencies, and volunteers working to create a more diverse, equitable, and sustainable urban forest across Northwest Indiana. Since 2016, CommuniTree has planted and maintained over 10,000 native trees, engaged over 2,500 volunteers, trained 25 youth in urban forestry, worked with over 40 communities, and held over 10 trainings on forestry topics.

Highland is a committed partner in CommuniTree Northwest Indiana. The Town has removed over 500 Emerald Ash Boer (EAB) diseased trees from street parkways and parks. Our planting team members have been replacing these trees with species received from CommuniTree Grant Programs in Spring & Fall 2017, Spring 2018, Spring & Fall 2019, Fall 2021, Spring and Fall 2022.

Highland's proposed project with funding assistance from the Inflation Reduction Act would retain a consultant firm with employees who have certified arborist and municipal specialist credentials to update Highland's Urban Forest Management & Reforestation Plan. The plan was initially completed in 2017 by Graf Tree Care, now Great Lakes Urban Forestry Management, an Indiana business. It needs an update to verify trees removed and planted since then in Highland's ESRI ARC-GIS data management system. The update would identify invasive species, trees now dead, and those that need substantial pruning together with a reforestation component. The project scope would occur over several years. A proposed project budget and schedule is attached. The Purdue Lake County Extension Service and Lake County Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area would be collaborative partners for replacing invasive species with native species from NIRPC's CommuniTree Inventory. Volunteers from Highland Community Foundation, the Highland Neighbors for Sustainability Organization, students from the High School Sustainability Club and Middle School Science Club would be asked to participate in the project for educational training.

The Town of Highland would welcome an endeavor with other local governments in Northwest Indiana for collaborative contracting with an urban forestry management consultant firm and a tree care service firms for a similar scope of services. The proposed project would substantially develop urban forestry capacity for communities in Northwest Indiana.

Sincerely,
Richard Underkofler, Secretary
Tree Board, Town of Highland
Email: runderkofler76@comcast.net
Copy: jbirchfield@nirpc

**PROPOSED BUDGET FOR A COMMUNITY AND URBAN FORESTRY PROJECT
TOWN OF HIGHLAND, INDIANA**

For this project, the Town will be subdivided into 4 geographic zones. The following tasks will be completed over this schedule for each zone to verify trees and invasive species removed and trees added in an update to Highland's tree inventory management system. It's presumed the Town will be pledge a 50% cash match in each year to mitigate expense for in-kind labor, material and equipment.

Year	Task	Time Frame	Budget
2024	Tree Inventory Update Zone 1	Summer	\$ 13,500
	Technical Assistance	Fall	\$ 12,000
		Subtotal	\$ 25,500
2025	Zone 1 Tree Removal	Winter	\$ 60,000
	Zone 1 Tree Pruning	Winter	\$ 29,750
	Zone 1 Reforestation	Spring	\$ 17,000
	Tree Inventory Update Zone 2	Summer	\$ 13,500
	Continued Technical Assistance	Fall	\$ 12,000
		Subtotal	\$ 132,250
2026	Zone 2 Tree Removal	Winter	\$ 60,000
	Zone 2 Tree Pruning	Winter	\$ 29,750
	Zone 2 Reforestation	Spring	\$ 17,000
	Tree Inventory Update Zone 3	Summer	\$ 13,500
	Continued Technical Assistance	Fall	\$ 12,000
		Subtotal	\$ 132,250
2027	Zone 3 Tree Removal	Winter	\$ 60,000
	Zone 3 Tree Pruning	Winter	\$ 29,750
	Zone 3 Reforestation	Spring	\$ 17,000
	Tree Inventory Update Zone 4	Summer	\$ 13,500
	Continued Technical Assistance	Fall	\$ 12,000
		Subtotal	\$ 132,250
2028	Zone 4 Tree Removal	Winter	\$ 60,000
	Zone 4 Tree Pruning	Winter	\$ 29,750
	Zone 4 Reforestation	Spring	\$ 17,000
	Continued Technical Assistance	Spring	\$ 12,000
		Subtotal	\$ 118,750
Project Total			\$ 541,000