

Meeting Minutes
Town of Highland Tree Board
March 16, 2023

1. Time and Place of Meeting: Chair Jim Colias called the monthly meeting of the Tree Board to order at 7 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:
 - Joe Keefnir, President, Park Place Townhome Homeowners Association [mail: jek1202@gmail.com; phone: 708-653-6064] attended the meeting asking for suggestions about issues along the 5th Street side of the townhomes. Presently, the shade of trees impairs healthy lawn growth, and the roots prevent replacement of the irrigation system so that piping has been installed above ground. Brian's Tree Service suggested removing the trees and replacing them with narrow columnar species. Jim Colias and Ron Jackowski will review and offer an independent suggestion to Keefnir by the time of our April meeting.
 - Blane Roberts moved to approve minutes of the meeting held February 16, 2023, seconded by Joan Roback and approved by unanimous consent of the members in attendance.
4. Old Business:
 - a. Board Member Terms: Council President Tom Black appointed Jim Colias for another term as Board Chairperson. Although Natalie Stromberg of the High School Sustainability Club expressed interest, her application to the board has not been received. Teacher/Sponsor Heather Oaks was asked to recruit another sophomore or junior student. Elizabeth Herrejon serves until her successor is appointed. Underkofler will seek to recruit another person in student announcements in consultation with Heather Oaks and High School Principal John Zack.
 - 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. Highland's application was submitted to NIRPC 2/28/23 for 20 spring plantings – 50% low growing and 50% medium growing species. Included were planting locations in Brentwood Subdivision identified by Blane Roberts where homeowners pledged to plant and water trees in their front yards where there are utility conflicts or insufficient space in parkways. Underkofler will invite homeowners who requested trees, Blane Roberts and Tim Gembala to a NIRPC tree planting & care workshop on a date to be determined in April 2023.
 - c. Transplanting Trees: A weekend crew consisting of Jackowski, Underkofler, Roberts, Zemen and Colias with truck was scheduled to plant Jackowski nursery trees Sunday, April 2, 2023 from noon to 4 pm. Saturday, April 22 is an alternate planting date. The crew will replace dead trees at Merkley School, in parkways and street medians; and plant new trees in yard locations requested by Elizabeth Herrejon and Bernie Zemen. Underkofler will seek volunteers to help from the High School Sustainability Club and the Highland Neighbors for Sustainability Organization.

- d. Tree Health Seminar: A Wednesday, March 29 at 6:30 pm to 8:00 pm session is scheduled at Highland Library for a presentation by Arborist Sharon Anderson about "Preparing your trees for Spring and Drought Recovery." Following the presentation, Sharon will be available for questions regarding tree care. Registration is required because space is limited. Reserve your seat by contacting the library at 219-838-2394 or reserve your seat online at lcpln.org/event/8121467. IT Director Edward Dabrowski was asked to post this notice on the Town's Facebook site.
- e. Tree classes for Elementary Students: Jim Colias is still 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: Highland received recognition for the fourth consecutive year. A 4'x6' flag, a 2022 Brass Maple Leaf for the plaque in the Town Council Chambers and two "4 Years" Sign Stickers were received.
- g. 2023 Arbor Day Event: Jim Colias reported on work in progress for Highland's April 28, 2023 Arbor Day Event at Highland Christian School. State Representative Mike Andrade and Council President Tom Black accepted speaker invitations, a proclamation has been prepared by Clerk-Treasurer Mark Herak, the Indiana Department of Forestry Nursery offered to provide a Shingle Oak Tree for campus planting and Pecan seedlings for distribution to the 3rd graders.

New Business: Blane Roberts left the meeting for another commitment prior to consideration of the following topics.

- a. Board Action Plan: The Board reviewed, changed and approved a 2023 Action Plan.

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 Sunday, 4/2/23 to a weekend crew consisting of Jackowski, Underkofler, Roberts, Zemen and Colias with truck. Saturday, April 22 is an alternate planting date.
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. (Roback suggested 5th Street from Homestead Park to Condit Street and the Animal Shelter Road east of Homestead Park).
7. Decide upon events in which we will participate to acquaint the community of our endeavors, identify homeowner planting sites, recruit volunteers: Park Pride Day (4/22/23, 9-11:30 am); Midweek Music & Market (Wednesdays 4-8 pm, Main Square Park, May 10, June 14, July 12, August 9, September 13); 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 –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.
- b. Grant Applications of Highland Neighbors for Sustainability and Highland Community Foundation: Jean Bernius (Cell 715-240-0444) is writing two grant applications. One is a \$5,000 NIPSCO Environmental Action Grant to acquire native seeds; the other is a \$50,000 T-Mobile Small Town Beautification Grant to fund a native prairie engineering firm, Stantec, to drill the seeds into the thatch after the Parks Department prepares project sites along the Erie Lackawanna Bike Trail. An attached email provided an executive summary. The board authorized Underkofler to submit letters of support for these applications.

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.

Next Meeting: April 20, 2023.

Adjournment:

- The meeting ended at 7:53 PM on a motion of Zemen, second by Roback, approved by unanimous consent of the members in attendance.

Respectfully submitted,



Richard Underkofler, Secretary