

The monthly meeting of the Town of Highland Tree Board will be held at about 8:00 PM, Thursday, October 19, 2023 in Room #108 at the Lincoln Center. The meeting will begin after a Highland Historical Society presentation by Sam Van Til that begins at 7:00 PM in Rooms #116-118. See the attached Historical Society invitation.

Richard Underkofler  
Secretary

**Highland Tree Board Agenda for Regular Meeting  
Thursday, October 19, 2023 – 8 PM**

**Roll Call:**

**Board Members:** Mary Ann Brunt, Jim Colias, Ron Jackowski, Joan Roback, Blane Roberts, Richard Underkofler, Bernie Zemen.

**Invited Town Staff:** Tom Black, Council President; Mark Herak, Clerk/Treasurer; Mark Kneseck, Public Works Director; Tim Gembala, Public Works Operations Director; Alex Brown, Superintendent, Parks & Recreation Department; Trevor Kinley, Parks Director; Maria Becerra, Redevelopment Director

**Others:** [webupdates@theideafactory.us.com](mailto:webupdates@theideafactory.us.com) c/o Theresa Badovich; Doug Van Ramshorst, Highland Community Foundation; Drew Hart, USDA, Forest Service; Jennifer Birchfield, NIRPC; Rebecca Koetz, Lake County Purdue Extension Educator; Connie Wachala, Highland Neighbors for Sustainability; Mélina Blanc, Delta Institute; Nina Brown & Monica Kurz, Teacher/Co-Sponsors High School Sustainability Club.

**Minutes:** Request for a motion to approve minutes of the last meeting held September 21, 2023.

**Old Business:**

a. Board Member Terms: The appointment of Mary Ann Brunt was approved by Council Members September 25, 2023. Her term will expire in January 2026. See the attached updated Directory for board member contact information and terms.

b. Transplanting Trees: On Sunday, October 8<sup>th</sup> Jackowski, Underkofler and Zemen transplanted two sugar maple trees at 8505 Juniper Trail and 2736 43rd Street from the Jackowski backyard nursery.

c. Invasive Species: Rebecca Koetz reported that she would ask Mandi Glanz, a Regional Specialist Serving Northwest Indiana of the State Cooperative Invasives Management Entity to conduct a site visit to identify invasive species at sites in Highland. Rebecca wrote Mandi has a great report system to prioritize invasive plant control. Mary Ann Brunt reported this may be delayed due to Ms. Glanz' maternity leave.

d. Lake County Tree Planting Consortium: Ron Jackowski participated in an inaugural remote consortium meeting held June 20, 2023. Another meeting was held September 12, 2023. The next Consortium remote meeting will be held Tuesday, November 14<sup>th</sup> at 1 PM for which Board members will receive a Microsoft Teams invitation. Underkofler was requested to compile reports to document funds needed to match the Forest Service grant that is underwriting the Consortium. Tree related expenses Highland has incurred, and trees planted excluding the CommuniTree program, will be included as matching funds in a proposed Memorandum of Understanding, which Council President Tom Black was asked to sign. Tom Black postponed consideration of the MOU until the entire Town Council could consider it. He asked Underkofler to put together a presentation for a Council study session held Monday, October 2nd. The MOU was withdrawn from the Council's next meeting agenda because there were concerns about the \$70/hour reported for the time contributed by board members and volunteers; whether the Town would be required to contribute cash; and the lack of a project identified for Highland. Another Council study session was held October 16<sup>th</sup> at which these issues were discussed. Mélina Blanc sent an email to Tom Black, Bernie Zemen and Underkofler reporting the Town's

contribution “is a non-cash match so this is not an expense for Highland, the city will not have to spend anything or report more than the spreadsheet that Underkofler already sent.” The MOU is now scheduled to appear on the agenda of the October 23 Town Council meeting.

**New Business:**

- a. Highland Neighbors for Sustainability Plantings: On 9/29/23, five HNS members planted 60 cover species seedlings grown by its members at the Municipal Parking Lot at Highway & Kennedy Avenue. On 10/5/23, seven HNS members prepared another area for plantings in the parking lot. This is a demonstration to determine if plantings will survive there.
- b. 2024 Arbor Day Event: Mary Ann Blunt volunteered to identify an elementary school to be scheduled for a 2024 Arbor Day Event and to secure pledges from the principal and maintenance staff to water and care for a tree. She made an inquiry to Amy Harrington, Principal Johnston School.
- c. Update Board Action Plan: The Board may review, change and update its 2023 Action Plan.

**January – 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. Organize an annual Arbor Day Observance - Assigned to Jim Colias at Highland Christian School. Completed 4/28/23; Mary Ann Blunt initiated an inquiry to Johnston Elementary School.
- 5. Secure 1-2 speakers per year for educational sessions on pertinent topics. Assigned to Colias. The first community presentation was held at Highland Library 3/29/23; another was scheduled 9/27/23 but canceled due to insufficient registrations.
- 6. From the approximately 13 Jackowski nursery maple trees, secure utility locates and replace dead trees at the Merkley and Warren Schools, 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 help from Highland Neighbors for Sustainability. 11 trees completed by 4/2/23; 2 remaining were planted 10/8/23.
- 7. Decide on events in which we will participate to acquaint the community of our endeavors, identify homeowner planting sites, and recruit volunteers: Assigned to Roback as Lead. Park Pride Day completed 4/22/23; Thursday Market completed 6/22/23.
- 8. Update Unapproved / Approved Species List with photos of recommended tree species. Assigned to Jackowski (Last done for unapproved species 9/6/22).
- 9. 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.
- 10. Maintain community partnerships with Chamber of Commerce & Highland Businesses. Assigned to Roberts as Lead.
- 11. Apply for available grants and keep a running tally of trees that we procure. Assigned to Underkofler.
- 12. Renew Arbor Day Foundation membership and share new ideas from this participation. Underkofler’s membership renewed 8/1/23.
- 13. Update the tree inventory for tree removals, pruning and new plantings. See Underkofler’s Federal Inflation Reduction Act Funding Proposal.
- 14. Post a Tree of the Month & Tree Care Tips on the Board's Facebook Site. Assigned to Colias.
- 15. Periodic review of ordinances that need updating. Assigned to Underkofler
- 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 monthly board review.
19. Renew application for Tree City USA before December 31. Assigned to Underkofler.

**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:** October 19, 2023.

**Adjournment**