

The monthly meeting of the Town of Highland Tree Board will begin at 7:00 PM, Thursday, February 15, 2024 at Town Hall in an upstairs meeting room.

Richard Underkofler
Secretary

**Highland Tree Board Agenda for Regular Meeting
Thursday, February 15, 2024 – 7 PM**

Roll Call:

Board Members: Mary Ann Brunt, Jim Colias, Ron Jackowski, Blane Roberts, Alex Robertson, Richard Underkofler. Alex Robertson is the Town Council’s Tree Board Liaison. Town Council President Philip Scheeringa is scheduled to appoint Jim Colias 2024 Board Chair at its February 12, 2024 meeting. Assuming Robertson can be characterized as a board member, one board vacancy presently exists.

Invited Town Staff: Philip Scheeringa, Council President; Mark Herak, Clerk/Treasurer; Mark Knesek, Public Works Director; Tim Gembala, Public Works Operations Director; Alex Brown, Superintendent, Parks & Recreation Department; Trever Kinley, Parks Director; Maria Becerra, Redevelopment Director.

Others: 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 Highland High School Sustainability Club.

Minutes: A motion is requested to approve minutes of the last meeting held November 19, 2023. The board did not meet in December 2023; the January 2024 meeting was canceled due to expiration of three board member terms.

Old Business:

- a. NWI Tree Planting Consortium: A Memorandum of Understanding with Delta Institute appeared on the agenda of the 10/23/23 Town Council meeting and was unanimously approved. The next Consortium meeting be held Tuesday, 2/13/24 at 1 PM as a MS Teams Remote Meeting. Meeting ID: 265 933 720 813 Passcode: a5a9TF.
- b. Pruning Services: Arborist Jerome Delbridge, Tree-Centric Solutions of Indianapolis, has not sent a template for a Request for Proposals to retain a qualified arborist consultant firm to undertake the town’s pruning services. Underkofler intends to formulate an RFP that would contain specifications for a scope of services, a schedule for a multi-year project by geographical area, budget by year and method of compensation. He is hoping Highland pruning work could start in Fall 2024 after leaves have fallen.
- c. Tree Board Handbook: Jim Colias is reminded to bring the Arbor Day Foundation “Tree Board Handbook” to this meeting. It’s a comprehensive guide to help board members understand their role and how they can best contribute to the board.

- d. 2024 Arbor Day Event: Mary Ann Blunt reported there has been no reply from Johnston Elementary School Principal Amy Harrington on our inquiry whether the school and its maintenance staff would host this year's event. Nor has there been a response from Harrington, other School Principals or School Art Teachers in response to an offer by Jim Colias to send a flyer inviting 5th grade students and teachers to participate in the IDNR Community and Urban Forestry Arbor Day Poster contest. **A motion is requested to ask the Parks and Recreation Department to host the celebration Friday, April 26 at 3:30 PM on the grounds of the Lincoln Center.**
- e. 2023 Tree City USA Recognition: An application was submitted, approved by the State Coordinator and is awaiting approval by the Arbor Day Foundation.
- f. 2024 Indiana Arborist Association Conference: Jackowski and Underkofler participated in the Community and Urban Forestry Day of the Indianapolis conference Tuesday, January 23, 2024.
- g. January 2024 Tree Planting Survey: Attached is a tabulation of results received as of January 22. Six homeowners requested Spring trees. Thanks much to Joan Roback and Blane Roberts for assuming responsibility for this! You may find the comments of those who declined a tree interesting. Extensive comments are abbreviated; copies have been retained for review. This is the second survey we've done. The first was along Highway Avenue and in Sandalwood Subdivision. Responses are typical especially those from senior citizens who are physically unable to plant and maintain trees. Some fear roots will elevate sidewalks and others just don't like to rake leaves.
- h. NFWF SGOL Grant: Delta Institute's Méлина Blanc emailed last week that there's a Fish & Wildlife Foundation Grant available from the "Sustain Our Great Lakes Program" for which Pre-Proposals are due 2/16/2024. Individual grant awards will range from \$200,000 to \$1,000,000. It enables acquisition, planting and maintenance of at least 500 trees. On review, it was determined Highland would not be able to submit a competitive application unless a site could be identified in low-income area that could accommodate this many trees and a match up to 50% could be pledged for the project cost whether by cash or in-kind labor.

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. The Board may review, change and update its 2024 Action Plan.

1. Annual idea sharing, new ideas to keep the Board moving forward. All Board Members.
2. Seek Town Council appointments to update expiring Board Member terms. One board vacancy presently exists.
3. Become a member of the Indiana Arborist Association and participate in the IAA Annual Conference. Done 1/23/24 by Jackowski and Underkofler.
4. Confirm whether Board Meetings will be canceled in July and December again.
5. Organize an annual Arbor Day Observance – Assigned to Blunt and Underkofler.
6. Secure 1-2 speakers per year for educational sessions on pertinent topics. Assigned to Colias.

7. Secure utility clearance and transplant Jackowski nursery trees.
8. Decide on events in which we will participate to acquaint the community of our endeavors, identify homeowner planting sites and recruit volunteers:
9. Update Approved / Unapproved Species List. Assigned to Jackowski.
10. Maintain community partnerships with Chamber of Commerce & Highland Businesses. Assigned to Roberts.
11. Apply for available grants and keep a running tally of trees that we procure. Assigned to Underkofler.
12. Renew Arbor Day Foundation membership.
13. Post a Tree of the Month & Tree Care Tips on the Board's Facebook Site. Assigned to Colias.
14. Establish a list of goals/accomplishments/key facts and publish in a media release to Gazebo Express, NWI Times and WJOB. Assigned to Underkofler.
15. 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.
16. Renew application for Tree City USA before December 31. Assigned to Underkofler.

Next Meeting: Thursday, March 21, 2024.

Adjournment