

Meeting Minutes
Town of Highland Tree Board
Monday, April 20, 2026

The agenda for this meeting listed the Board Members, whether they are executive or legislative appointments and their terms of office as required by a new state statute.

Time and Place of Meeting: Chair Blane Roberts called the monthly meeting of the Tree Board to order at 6:31 PM in a meeting room at the Lincoln Community Center.

Roll Call

Present: Board Members: Mary Ann Brunt, Secretary JT Mackey, Chair Blane Roberts, David Taylor and Town Council Liaison Alex Robertson.

Additional guests present: Ron Jackowski

Absent: Teresa Lekan, Scott Polster, Arlene Sandrick, and other agencies.

General substance of matters proposed, discussed, or decided – record of all votes taken if there is a roll call.

- Mary Ann Brunt made a motion to approve the minutes of the meeting held February 19, 2026. Dave Taylor seconded the motion. Approved by unanimous consent of the members present.

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.

Town Council Liaison Robertson recommended revising the list of approved and unapproved tree species to incorporate the categories in the municipal code. By doing so would avoid making substantial changes to the code and ensure existing structure and references remain intact.

Blane volunteered to incorporate the recommendations into existing list.

- **Little Calumet River South Watershed Seedling Project.** Tree Board continues to discuss opportunity to replant the seedling project after unsuccessful 2025 planting. Joe Moore

who served as the contractor for 2025 planting, joined the March meeting around 6:45 to answer questions and discuss opportunities for redoing the project. From Joe's perspective the seedlings were removed by wildlife. Joe Moore is willing to reorder trees from the state nursery. He recommends reconvening in late 2026 to order trees from the nursery for planting in 2027.

Tree Board members expressed interest to walk the project location and continue discussing best trees for planting

- **Arbor Day/ Park Pride Celebration.** Tree Board celebrated Arbor Day as part of the Park Clean Up Day on April 25. Following clean up activities, the Tree Board hosted a tree planting to honor Rich Underkofler and feature a tree care discussion with an arborist from Great Lakes Urban Forestry. Council President Georgeff read a proclamation celebrating Arbor Day and a separate proclamation honoring Rich. Mary Ann Brunt sent Indiana DNR poster contest information to area schools.
- **CommuniTree-Spring 2026 Community Tree Grant Program.** The Tree Board applied for a grant in February and was approved for 10 trees (4 American Hornbeams; 3 Hackberry; 1 Scarlet Oak; 2 Northern Catalpa). The Trees were distributed to 9 community residents the week of April 20. Residents received a Tree Care Manual from USDA and tips for planting. Approximately 10 other residents are interested in receiving a tree.

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. The Board shared information about the grant opportunity for Nonprofits and Houses of Worship.

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.

Arlene Sandrick asked for any updates on usage of the 2025 Tree Inventory. Arlene also shared her plan to attend upcoming Little Calumet River Basin Development Commission meeting.

- 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 **1-15-26 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. **Completed 4-25-26**
7. Participate in Park Pride Day. **Completed 4-25-26**
8. Participate in Town Twilight Parade.
9. 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.
10. Secure 1 or 2 expert speakers per year for community educational sessions on pertinent topics.
11. Attend meetings of the Chamber of Commerce and NWI Urban Waters Partnership to maintain community relations and become aware of urban forestry grants.
12. Recruit new Board Members for terms ending in January 2027.
13. Renew application for Tree City USA recognition before December 31, 2026.

Next Meeting: Monday, May 18, 2026.

Adjournment: Mary Ann Brunt made a motion to adjourn at 7:22 pm. Dave Taylor seconded the motion. Approved by unanimous consent of the members present.

Respectfully submitted,
J.T. Mackey, Secretary