

The monthly meeting of the Town of Highland Tree Board will begin at 7:00 PM, Thursday, November 21, 2024 at Town Hall in an upstairs meeting room. No Zoom meeting this month.

Richard Underkofler Secretary

---

**Highland Tree Board Agenda for Regular Meeting  
Thursday, November 21, 2024 – 7 PM**

**Roll Call:**

**Board Members:** Mary Ann Brunt, Jim Colias, Ron Jackowski, John (JT) Mackey, Blane Roberts, Arleen Sandrick, Richard Underkofler. Alex Robertson is the Town Council's Tree Board Liaison. [webupdates@theideafactory.us.com](mailto:webupdates@theideafactory.us.com) c/o Theresa Badovich & Robin Carlascio.

**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:** Doug Van Ramshorst, Highland Community Foundation; Drew Hart, USDA, Forest Service; Jennifer Birchfield, NIRPC; Rebecca Koetz, Lake County Purdue Extension Educator; Connie Wachala & Cathy Perrin, Highland Neighbors for Sustainability; Mélina Blanc, Delta Institute; Phil Graf, Great Lakes Urban Forest Management; Nina Brown & Monica Kurz, Teacher/Co-Sponsors Highland High School Sustainability Club; Joe Moore <[joe@ecsontime.com](mailto:joe@ecsontime.com)>, Highland Arborist Scott Polster, [arborist@forevergreenlc.co](mailto:arborist@forevergreenlc.co); [aren.flint@davey.com](mailto:aren.flint@davey.com); [drepay@littlecolumetriverbasin.org](mailto:drepay@littlecolumetriverbasin.org); [mikerepay@gmail.com](mailto:mikerepay@gmail.com); [Tim Skimina, St. Timothy's Episcopal Church, cempgarden@jm-eaglegroup.com](#); [Laura Oltmanns <oltmannslau@gmail.com>](mailto:laura.oltmanns@oltmannslau@gmail.com)

**Guest Introductions:**

**Highland Arborist Scott Polster:** We are recruiting Scott to become a board member for a 3-year term beginning January 2025. Phone (219) 365-6778; Email: [arborist@forevergreenlc.com](mailto:arborist@forevergreenlc.com).

**Tim Skimina, St. Timothy's Episcopal Church:** Tim Skimina sent a 11/13/24 email reporting he and another representative of St. Timothy's plan to attend this meeting to discuss a potential community garden and tree nursery on church property at 1115 N Cline Avenue in Griffith. On 11/2/24, Ron Jackowski, Arleen Sandrick and Rich Underkofler met with Skimina, toured and took photos of the site. Jackowski used a shovel to dig holes at various locations to determine soil characteristics and what the water table is like. The surface is fairly uneven and covered by very coarse grass. The far East end is a raised, crowned extension of unextended Harvey Street. Skimina reported discussion occurred at an earlier meeting of Highland Neighbors for Sustainability for a community garden when it was reported the site of an existing community garden east of Fire Station #1 may be lost if the building is expanded. The front yard of the church was a former site of a community garden, but it has been abandoned. Underkofler reported the Tree Board may have interest in planting seedlings from the state nursery that would be subsequently transplanted by volunteers to sites in Highland and Griffith. The sites could be irrigated with Griffith municipal water. Church representatives desire to sell some plantings to offset water expenses and to provide revenue for the church. Joe Moore reported State nursery seedlings may not be resold for profit. A use permit may be necessary from the Town of Griffith. **Shall we proceed?**

**Laura Oltmanns:** Highland Neighbors for Sustainability Steering Committee, requested a discussion whether the tree board desires to participate in the acquisition of native trees from the DNR nursery in bundles of 100 for \$39 per bundle for community plantings. Her email of 11/14/24 is distributed with this agenda. This is the source of seedlings to be donated by Joe Moore d/b/a Erosion Construction Services for the proposed Little Calumet River South Watershed Project and our Arbor Day Events. Since neither the Tree Board nor Highland Neighbors for Sustainability has funding from the Town, a project of this character would be dependent upon volunteer contributions.

**Minutes:** A motion is requested to approve minutes of the regular meeting held October 17, 2024. A copy is distributed with this agenda.

**Old Business:**

**a. Seedling Donation:** The Little Calumet River Watershed Seedling Planting Project has been delayed pending a decision whether the Little Calumet River Basin Commission will approve a grant for the Town to retain a contractor to plant and water them during drought conditions. There was no objection at the Board's October meeting to Secretary Underkofler's recommendation to propose Joe Moore d/b/a Erosion Construction Services as the contractor for the project since Joe has offered to donate state nursery seedlings and dig holes for the project. Species planting plans from Davey Resource Group were received 11/12/24 from Aren Flint and forwarded to Board Members for review. Joe Moore was sent the species planting plans and asked to submit a unit price but not to exceed lump sum contract proposal for planting 200 seedlings and watering them for two years during drought conditions at selected map sites. The plantings are scheduled to occur during the week of Arbor Day 2025 from April 19 to April 25, when we hope to have photo opportunities and assistance from volunteers. A motion is requested selecting desired species based on review of links and the board's Approved/Unapproved Species Worksheet sent 11/14/2024 to board members by Ron Jackowski.

**b. Update Tree Inventory:** Lake County Commissioner Mike Repay is willing to give the Town a grant (with no match required) to update our 2017 Tree Inventory. The funds must be encumbered by the end of this year, but the project may be implemented and completed during winter months of 2024 and 2025. The scope of the work will include trees in all areas covered in the Graf 2017 inventory – parkways, parks, schools and other real estate owned by the local government. Phil Graf has been asked to submit a unit price but not to exceed lump sum contract proposal so it can be considered at this meeting. A motion is requested to support the contract and forward it to the Town Council for approval, execution and administration by the Public Works Department.

**c. NWI Tree Planting Consortium:** Delta Institute asked for a letter supporting an application for a new Forest Service Grant to extend the reach of its endeavors from Lake County to Include Porter and LaPorte Counties. Secretary Underkofler submitted a letter without Board approval because it was required by 11/11/24.

**d. 2024 Urban Forestry Symposium, Dec. 3-4:** Notice of this symposium by the Indiana Community Forestry Council (IN-CFC) and IN DNR, Community & Urban Forestry was emailed to Board Members

via a newsletter 9/18/24. The conference is open to anyone interested in urban forestry in Indiana, including representatives of tree boards, local municipalities and volunteers.

**New Business:**

- a. **IAA Annual Conference:** Agenda and registration links for the Indiana Arborist Association Annual Conference in Indianapolis were mailed 11/15/24 to board members. Tree City USA communities will receive a 50% discount of the registration fee for Urban Forestry Day on 1/21/2025.
- b. **Tree Planting:** Select a date and time for volunteers to transplant Jackowski nursery trees at homeowner yards of Bernie Zemen, 2736 43rd Street and Chuck Haber, 8417 Cottage Grove Avenue.
- c. **Crown Point & Merrillville Tree Board Operations:** Ron Jackowski will report to the board on a meeting planned with Matthew Lake (who is a member of the Crown Point Tree Board and employed by Merrillville Public Works) about questions he identified about their community forestry operations. Phone: (219) 472-8668; E-mail: [mlake@merrillville.in.gov](mailto:mlake@merrillville.in.gov).

**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.

**Action Plan:** An update to the Board's Action Plan will not occur due to the length of this agenda.

**Next Meeting:** **January 16, 2025.** The Tree Board does not meet in December.

**Adjournment**