

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE
MICHIGAN CITY TREE BOARD
FEBRUARY 5, 2020**

The Michigan City Tree Board met in a regular meeting in the Mayor's Conference Room, City Hall Building, 100 East Michigan Boulevard, Michigan City, Indiana, on Wednesday, February 5, 2020, at 6:00 p.m. local time; the date, hour, and place duly established for the holding of said meeting.

CALL TO ORDER

President Mick Wulff called the meeting to order at approximately 6:06 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Members present: Connie Anderson, Barbara Ginther, Laura Henderson, Laura Kalk, Mick Wulff (5)

Members absent:

Johnny Stimley, 1 vacancy (2)

Staff present:

City Forester Jessica Arnett, Planning Department Administrative Assistant Debbie Wilson

Staff absent:

None

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The chair entertained a motion for approval of the January 8, 2020 minutes.

Motion by Mrs. Ginther – seconded by Ms. Henderson approving the minutes of January 8, 2020 as submitted. Voice vote was as follows: (Ayes) Connie Anderson, Barbara Ginther, Laura Henderson, Laura Kalk, Mick Wulff – 5; (Nays) None – 0. With a vote of 5 ayes and 0 nays, the MOTION CARRIED.

SECRETARY/TREASURER'S REPORT

The chair entertained a motion for approval of the financial report ended 01/31/20.

Motion by Mrs. Ginther – seconded by Ms. Kalk approving the financial report ended 01/31/20 as submitted. Voice vote was as follows: (Ayes) Connie Anderson, Barbara Ginther, Laura Henderson, Laura Kalk, Mick Wulff – 5; (Nays) None – 0. With a vote of 5 ayes and 0 nays, the MOTION CARRIED.

CLAIMS

The chair entertained a motion for approval of the claims for February.

Motion by Mrs. Ginther – seconded by Ms. Henderson approving the claims for February as submitted. Voice vote was as follows: (Ayes) Connie Anderson, Barbara Ginther, Laura Henderson, Laura Kalk, Mick Wulff – 5; (Nays) None – 0. With a vote of 5 ayes and 0 nays, the MOTION CARRIED.

COMMUNICATIONS

As a matter of policy for the Tree Board this year, President Wulff announced that any person may provide the Tree Board with a written communication which will be read and addressed under the Communications section of the agenda. Also, under the Public Comments section of the agenda, each person will be allowed 5 minutes of speaking time.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Outreach
(Education)

Mr. Wulff commented that Ms. Arnett gave a presentation to the Common Council enlightening them on the benefit of trees and the condition of Michigan City's tree canopy.

Ms. Arnett stated that she will email a copy of her presentation to members of the Tree Board.

(Gardening/Landscaping)

Ms. Kalk commented that the weather has been either dry or icy. She said she noticed a lot of limbs down from old and dead wood; along with the ice comes the heaviness bringing a lot of that stuff down. She noted the importance of taking care of dead wood within trees, stating that the colder months are good time to take care of it before warmer weather sets in making the trees more susceptible to insects and diseases.

(Public Relations)

Ms. Henderson recalled from the last meeting the environmental extravaganza that Dalia Zygas invited the Tree Board to participate in.

Ms. Arnett confirmed that the event will take place on April 25th from 1:00 p.m.-5:00 p.m. She said in the upcoming months it would be good idea for the Board to think about the materials/literature they would like to have at their table.

Mr. Wulff said this would be a good time for Board members to inventory the materials they have.

Ms. Henderson stated that Arbor Day has this thing which is sort of like a combination of a dichotomous key and a treasure hunt; the children are doing a dichotomous key, but it is as a treasure hunt. She gave an example, stating that she thought it might be fun.

Ms. Arnett suggested having volunteer sign-up sheets at the table. She said she got a call today from someone interested in weeding the raingardens once a week.

Mrs. Anderson recommended placing the volunteer sign-up sheets at the Senior Center as well.

Ms. Arnett stated that she would put together forms along with a waiver.

(Arbor Day)

Ms. Henderson asked Ms. Arnett if there are trees for Arbor Day.

Ms. Arnett replied that she ordered 400 trees from the state nursery.

Ms. Kalk asked Ms. Arnett if she talked to Andrea Nichols from NIPSCO to see if they would again be joining the Tree Board at their Arbor Day event this year. Ms. Kalk commented how in the past they brought their own couple hundred trees to the table; she wondered if they would be doing the tree adoption again as well.

Ms. Arnett indicated that she would ask her when she sees her to finalize the plans for planting in Washington Park.

City Park Trees

Ms. Arnett reported that the tree planting in Washington Park is about ready to go. They have pretty much settled on a date (March 28th pending Park Board approval) for the planting which will include an event as well. They will try to make it volunteer-oriented by utilizing Andrea Nichols' nursery staff for installation and will be reaching out to Carrie Tauscher for possibly utilizing tree stewards.

Ms. Henderson asked about utilizing high school students as well for the event. She said she knows that high school students previously participated in tree plantings in the parks.

Ms. Arnett thought it was a good idea and said she would get in contact with Nicole Messacar.

Mr. Wulff asked if this would be for the trees along Lake Shore Drive.

Ms. Arnett replied that it is. There will be 22 trees planted along Lake Shore Drive, 5 burr oaks planted in Fedder's Alley, and 5 river birch planted around the gazebo.

Mr. Wulff asked if this is the NIPSCO planting.

Ms. Arnett replied affirmatively.

Ms. Arnett pointed out that she has 200 trees coming this spring, so she does not want to overextend her watering capabilities. There will be a total of 232 new trees needing weekly watering, so she wants to make sure she has the adequate capabilities to do that.

Ms. Henderson noted that she knows high school students put in some trees in that area (Washington Park) a few years ago, but she does not know if any of them survived.

Ms. Arnett stated that she did not know; she did not see any little trees there.

Mr. Wulff asked that Ms. Arnett look for the gator bags; 10 years ago, the City bought a couple cases of them.

Ms. Arnett indicated that she did find them.

Ms. Kalk commented that they are nice because they slow release the water which helps keep up on the watering.

Ms. Arnett stated that she along with her assistant will be taking the written exam for their CDL's so they can drive the watering truck.

Ms. Henderson wondered about whatever happened to the trees that were planted so it does not happen to these trees that are being planted.

Ms. Arnett stated that is her goal. She will work out a watering schedule with the Park Department. Her priority is to get these trees established over the next 3-5 years, making sure they survive.

Ms. Arnett also reported that she did some work in Winding Creek Cove. Some of the deer protection cages were mistakenly removed last year, so they will be putting those back up. She noticed that mulch was piled up over the root flares and against the trunks, so she dug out all the root flares. She communicated the importance of not piling the mulch up around the root flare as it can suffocate the tree.

Mr. Wulff said another good thing to use for deer protection is corrugated black pipe by slitting it and wrapping it around the trunk.

Ms. Kalk also mentioned using chicken wire or a 90-day repellent from Shake Away that hangs in pouches from the tree. She said they have had great success with the Shake Away product by hanging new bags every couple months.

Ms. Arnett stated that she pruned the oak trees but is waiting until the beginning of the growing season to prune anything else.

In Hansen Park Ms. Arnett checked on the oak trees that were damaged from lawn care equipment, indicating that they are holding their own.

Mr. Wulff mentioned that the corrugated pipe (about 6") would help for that type of situation too. He said it should also be utilized on the new park trees being installed.

Ms. Arnett added that a good mulch circle also helps to keep the equipment away from the trees.

City Street Trees

Ms. Arnett reported on her presentation to the City Council stating that she pulled data from the last few years of Tree City applications along with reports from her visual inspections. By purchasing trees and getting them in the ground she hopes to reverse the declining tree canopy and make sure the City continues to qualify for Tree City USA.

Regarding the trees coming, Ms. Arnett reported that the nursery will take them out of the ground mid-March; she will pick up loads of about 40 a week and get them in the ground.

Ms. Arnett felt it would be important to organize volunteer groups a couple of weekends (possibly April 4th and April 11th) to help with the labor. A planting event would get the community involved in the process, so they feel a connection to these trees. During the event she could disseminate literature about tree care, watering, etc.

Mrs. Anderson again suggested utilizing seniors because they look for things like that to do.

Ms. Arnett also suggested utilizing high school students again and using the March 28th tree planting event in Washington Park as a kick-off.

Grant Application and Maintenance

Ms. Arnett reported that there is a National Fish & Wildlife Association Grant which is due February 11th. She does not think she can apply for it this year because of not knowing what the budget will look like in terms of match. One of the qualifying categories is urban forest restoration. Although, she said she can apply for it next year.

Ms. Arnett will work on the Community & Urban Forestry Grants throughout this summer for submission this fall.

Ms. Arnett stated that going forward she would like to be able to find grant money or raise money to purchase a tree spade attachment for the City's Bobcat.

Purchasing and Tree Planting

Ms. Arnett stated that she hopes to maintain the funding for future years.

Ms. Arnett talked about an event other communities have in the fall called Oaktobefest. This would be a festival of food, specialty beers, music, and trees with various organizations participating and being held at a local park. This festival could raise money for the Tree Board to help them move forward with projects. Ms. Arnett stated that she would like to work on organizing this to bring it to fruition.

Planning Department

(Plan Commission, Board of Zoning Appeals, and Redevelopment Commission minutes are provided to the Tree Board via email from the Planning Department to keep Board members informed of upcoming projects)

Ms. Arnett provided copies of ordinance section 17.02.

Mr. Wulff lead the discussion stating that it was brought up by Councilman Paul Przybylinski to rescind this part of the ordinance. This was the ordinance the Council voted in which took effect January 1, 2019.

Ms. Arnett said it was a resolution to refer it back to the Plan Commission for review and she felt it was done in hopes so that it would be rescinded or that it would be modified in substantial ways to undermine its effectiveness.

Mr. Wulff talked about how much work was put into drafting the language of this ordinance to make it palatable for all sides. Mr. Wulff indicated that he thinks this resolution was introduced by Paul Przybylinski because he was not included in the decision making of the ordinance and said he really did not have the education behind it. He said this is the reason the Tree Board needs to educate everyone on this matter.

Ms. Arnett stated that from what she heard she thinks there was a misunderstanding about how it applies to private property. There was a notion that you cannot take down trees on private property to be developed. Ms. Arnett stated that is not the case. The ordinance establishes a procedure by which you take into the preservation of particular trees. She stated that when someone has approved construction plans, they can take down any trees within that building footprint in a 10' parameter. Ms. Arnett thinks the specifics of it are what is getting lost in translation. She said it is not a prohibition; it is a process and it fits in very well with the rest of the building codes and what builders and

developers are required to submit to the Planning/Inspection Office. This is an integral part of that; it is a regulation tool.

Mr. Wulff said it has only been implemented on a couple of small private developments not located in the center of Michigan City. He said a lot of the Michigan City lots already have houses built on them; there are very few inner-city lots that have a forest on them that this would apply to. He referred to issues in Shoreland Hills and on US 12, and the fact that this would help in those situations. The builders will be rewarded by saving some of the trees.

Ms. Arnett stated that this feeds into the landscaping requirements for new developments. If certain number of trees are saved, then that can be a credit to some of the other landscaping requirements. It is flexible and is meant to be a living kind of ordinance.

Board members spoke about the importance of educating people about this; Ms. Arnett talked about doing a press release; Mrs. Anderson inquired into providing a packet of information to builders.

Mr. Wulff said the information is in the ordinance. He said pitfalls won't be found until developers start working through this. As the Board starts hearing about it, they can tweak it, but nothing has been found wrong with the ordinance yet. He said the problem is mostly being uneducated about it, so the Board needs to educate everyone on this.

Ms. Arnett noted that the resolution is tabled until the Council's March meeting. She pointed out that even if the resolution does go through it would just go back to the Plan Commission for review. While that happens, it is still in effect.

Mr. Wulff acknowledged that this process has been used very successfully in other communities like Valparaiso and Dyer. He talked about the positive impact this will have on developments in Michigan City as well.

Urban Forest Plan Maintenance

Ms. Arnett reported that they have entered into negotiations to finalize the contract; hopefully wrapping it up by the end of this week or early next week. Once the contract is signed, it gets turned over to INDOT to issue the Notice to Proceed, then the company will be ready to go. They had a scoping meeting yesterday. The goal is to have the deliverable (tree inventory, right-of-way asset inventory) this fall.

Tree City Designation Maintenance

Mr. Wulff commented that the City should hear something on approval of their Tree City application sometime in March.

OLD BUSINESS

(Workman's comp for insurance)

Mr. Wulff indicated that he will talk to the City Attorney about updating language in the Tree Ordinance to include the same insurance requirements that is mandatory for all other contractors doing work in the city.

NEW BUSINESS

Mrs. Anderson asked if she heard correctly at the Council meeting that someone has put their name in to be on the Tree Board.

Ms. Henderson stated that it is Alena Ursida.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

(None)

PUBLIC COMMENTS

(None)

NEXT MEETING DATE

Mr. Wulff announced that the next regular meeting is scheduled for March 4, 2020.

ADJOURNMENT

The chair entertained a motion to adjourn.

Motion to adjourn by Ms. Henderson and unanimously approved.

The chair declared the meeting adjourned at approximately 7:00 p.m.


Barbara Ginther, Secretary