

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE  
MICHIGAN CITY TREE BOARD  
MARCH 4, 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, March 4, 2020, at 6:00 p.m. local time; the date, hour, and place duly established for the holding of said meeting.

**CALL TO ORDER**

Vice-President Laura Kalk called the meeting to order at approximately 6:05 p.m.

**ROLL CALL**

**Members present:** Barbara Ginther, Laura Henderson, Laura Kalk, Alena Ursida (4)

**Members absent:**

Connie Anderson, Mick Wulff, 1 vacancy (3)

**Staff present:**

City Forester Jessica Arnett, Planning Department Administrative Assistant Debbie Wilson

**Staff absent:**

None

Alena Ursida (filling the unexpired term of William Ginther) was welcomed to the Board. She introduced herself stating that she came to a couple Tree Board meetings and found it very fascinating about tree cover and the benefits of trees in our area. She said she also owns a home in LaPorte and was looking at the benefits of trees there as well. She is also trying to get into a lot of other programs and has made a lot of connections like the Girl Scouts and what they could do, and the possibility of the Tree Board hosting an event with the Skwiat Post. Ms. Ursida said she is here to learn more about trees, raise money for trees, and benefit the community.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

The chair entertained a motion for approval of the February 5, 2020 minutes.

***Motion by Ms. Henderson – seconded by Mrs. Ginther approving the minutes of February 5, 2020 as submitted. Voice vote was as follows: (Ayes) Board members Ginther, Henderson, Kalk, Ursida – 4; (Nays) None – 0. With a vote of 4 ayes and 0 nays, the MOTION CARRIED.***

**SECRETARY/TREASURER'S REPORT**

The chair entertained a motion for approval of the financial report ended 02/29/20.

***Motion by Mrs. Ginther – seconded by Ms. Henderson approving the financial report ended 02/29/20 as submitted. Voice vote was as follows: (Ayes) Board members Ginther, Henderson, Kalk, Ursida – 4; (Nays) None – 0. With a vote of 4 ayes and 0 nays, the MOTION CARRIED.***

**CLAIMS**

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

***Motion by Ms. Henderson – seconded by Mrs. Ginther approving the claims for March as submitted. Voice vote was as follows: (Ayes) Board members Ginther, Henderson, Kalk, Ursida – 4; (Nays) None – 0. With a vote of 4 ayes and 0 nays, the MOTION CARRIED.***

**COMMUNICATIONS**

(None)

**COMMITTEE REPORTS**

**(Outreach)**

Ms. Henderson asked Ms. Arnett if she emailed her Common Council presentation to the Tree Board members.

Ms. Arnett stated that she thought she did but would resend it to the Board members. She also commented that she believes the resolution which was tabled regarding the Tree Ordinance will be up again at the March 17<sup>th</sup> Council meeting at 6:30 p.m. She encouraged Tree Board members to attend in support.

Ms. Ursida commented that the Council has a new rule where the public is only allowed to talk five minutes to keep the meeting moving along.

**Gardening/Landscaping**

Ms. Kalk commented that it has been a soft (warm) winter. She said with that it has been great in the sense there were a lot of things people were concerned they had lost last year because of the polar vortex weather and the temperatures. With this season she said she has already noticed sprouting and swelling of plants, which is exciting but a little bit scary. Along with that will come a heavy germination of weeds. Ms. Kalk mentioned her concern about a lot of weeds and insect issues. She suggests getting weed preventers out earlier than usual which will help hinder germination of those weeds. It will also help with the spreading of additional ones. She talked about her concern with insects as well because there have been things coming up on Purdue's reports about heavier insect infestation this year. She will focus on that next month

because that is the time when people will want to approach it with either a systemic drench to get into the system of the plant as it is coming out of dormancy or systemic granules. As those plants start to come out of hibernation, she said you will start to see the insects become active. Ms. Kalk stated that there is imidacloprid drenches for insects which will go for 12 months. There are also systemic or natural fungicides and natural weed preventers. She recommends products with mycorrhizae (healthy bacteria) which will help with a lot of fungal issues by strengthening the core of the plants.

### **Arbor Day**

Ms. Arnett mentioned the kick-off event to the spring planting season on March 28<sup>th</sup> in Washington Park, noting that the flyer has been circulating.

Regarding Arbor Day, Ms. Arnett stated she got in touch with Johnny Stimley who is the new City Events Coordinator. The first Farmer's Market is May 2<sup>nd</sup>. She coordinated with Andrea Nichols from NIPSCO, although she is not certain if she will be able to bring any additional trees. Ms. Arnett has ordered saplings from the State Nursery to hand out at the event.

Ms. Arnett reminded everyone of the environmental extravaganza on April 25<sup>th</sup> at the Michigan City Public Library. She talked about the literature she will have at the Tree Board table. She suggested putting together a flyer with information about the Tree Board.

Ms. Henderson recalled talking about the dichotomous key as a treasure hunt, stating that she still needs to find actual samples of branches and things. She wanted to clarify that at the last meeting it was mentioned as an activity for Arbor Day, but instead is meant as an activity for the environmental extravaganza.

Ms. Arnett said she will also bring volunteer sign-up forms to the extravaganza and copies of the application for planting trees in the tree lawn.

Ms. Arnett stated that she talked to Johnny Stimley about the proposed Oaktobefest in the fall and has also talked to some of the local brewers about brewing oak barrel aged beer. She said she envisions the event taking place in Fedder's Alley; she wants it to be family friendly so there will be a cordoned off beer garden; local food trucks; fun activities and games; music; as well as a sapling giveaway for the fall planting season.

Ms. Henderson asked if the Tree Board will get a new City Council member to replace Johnny Stimley.

Ms. Arnett stated that someone will be caucused in at some point.

Ms. Kalk said she believes someone will be appointed within the next couple weeks. She said the Tree Board will miss Mr. Stimley but is looking forward to who is coming on next and what they have to bring to the table.

**Public Relations**

Ms. Kalk commented that Ms. Ursida had mentioned before the meeting about the Girl Scouts and keeping them in mind with the different projects the Board is doing.

Ms. Ursida said she also brought up about doing the breakfast with the Forester. The Skwiat Post has breakfast once a month at the end of the month on Sundays. She thought it would be a good fit to bring in the tree things with them. They are excited about any kind of community programs.

Ms. Henderson suggested sharing with both groups the March 28<sup>th</sup> tree planting.

Ms. Ursida will reach out to the groups.

Ms. Arnett mentioned that the trees she purchased will be coming out of the ground on the 16<sup>th</sup> or 17<sup>th</sup> of this month. From then on until early May she will be very busy planting trees.

Ms. Henderson asked the status of getting a tree spade.

Ms. Arnett said they did some searching around at Central Services and found a mini backhoe that attaches to the Kubota. The previous Forester would use that backhoe to take out the main scoop of dirt and then finish the hole with shovels to make sure it is the right depth and size. During her research on augers she found that there are a lot of problems associated with auguring tree holes like sinking after backfilling. Ms. Arnett said the backhoe would be the best option.

Ms. Henderson asked where the trees will be planted.

Ms. Arnett passed around a visual she created from Google maps and paint. About 120 of the 200 trees will be planted in the mid-town area around York Street to include Thurman Avenue, Dupage Street, and Tremont Street, and Pearl Street. Other cluster areas will include redbuds being planted along Ohio Street and in a couple areas to the north of town. She will plant them in a way where if there is a grant opportunity to purchase trees she can come back and intersperse them with some serviceberry, etc. She also coordinated with the Parks Director for some of the parks needing trees.

Ms. Henderson stated that she has some neighbors that have been requesting trees for some time – her neighbor on 9<sup>th</sup> Street and Janet Smith on 8<sup>th</sup> Street.

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Ms. Arnett said she has 8<sup>th</sup> Street on the list but she needs to see what is really going on with the trees there. She did prune a lot of the oaks back in the fall.

Ms. Kalk said there was also some from last year on 10<sup>th</sup> Street. She will resend Ms. Arnett the list.

Ms. Arnett stated that she must be careful with 10<sup>th</sup> Street because of the double tracking project. She does not want to plant something and then it has to come out because of construction. She is working with the Planning Department on coordinating projects.

Ms. Arnett said she will be making a public outreach statement about the tree planting as well. She recalled talking about tree tags at a prior meeting, stating that it is coming to fruition. She has put together a cardboard prototype of tags for all the new trees. The tags will hang on a lower branch so passersby can see them; it gives the common name, scientific name, and a QR code that can be scanned for more information about the tree. Main Street Association is going to help with that and build the website that the QR code will go to. The domain, mctrees.org will be linked to the City's website. Tomorrow she will be meeting with a local high school robotics team. She will purchase the circular wood disks and they will laser etch the QR code/lettering onto them. It is an organic material which will decompose over time or can be re-used depending on their condition.

Ms. Arnett said she is also having door hangers made that she designed with information on the care of trees. She passed around prototypes for the Board to see.

Ms. Ursida said she will be walking the St. Patrick's Day Parade and asked if there is any literature that can be passed out.

Ms. Arnett said she can run off some flyers for the March 28<sup>th</sup> tree planting event.

Mrs. Ginther commented that the Tree Board has participated in past parades, but it is too late to get in it this year.

Ms. Henderson suggested that the Board start discussing their participation in the parade at their January meetings.

### **City Park Trees**

(Already discussed)

### **City Street Trees**

(Already discussed)

**Grant Application and Maintenance**

Ms. Arnett reported that she has some grants on her list; a couple have fall deadlines. She wants to keep her eye on the one she mentioned last month from the National Fish & Wildlife Association Save our Great Lakes Grant. Urban reforestation is the category. She will try to pull together as much match as she can because she wants to use it for planting and maintenance money and she also wants to try to start a program for invasive removals. It has a February deadline so she will work on it for next year. She will apply this fall for the DNR Community & Urban Forestry Grant for purchasing trees or maintenance supplies and for the fall planting she will also apply for the CommuniTree Grant.

**Purchasing and Tree Planting**

(Already discussed)

**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)

**Urban Forest Plan Maintenance**

Ms. Arnett reported that today the City got the Notice to Proceed from INDOT. She will forward that to the consultant (HLR Engineering) and they will begin surveying trees March 16<sup>th</sup>. They have 5 ISA Certified Arborists that will be doing the tree aspect. The Planning Department is also working with them on inventorying other obstructions (light poles, etc.) on the City right-of-way. The deliverable is expected by the end of September. She said she can then analyze the data collected during the dormant season and prioritize what she will be doing in the coming years.

**Tree City Designation Maintenance**

Ms. Arnett stated that she is still waiting to hear on the Tree City approval.

**OLD BUSINESS**

**(Workman's comp for insurance)**

Ms. Kalk stated that Mr. Wulff will be connecting with the City Attorney on this matter.

**NEW BUSINESS**

(None)

**BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS**

Ms. Ursida asked if anything will be going on during the boat races. She wondered if the Tree Board could do something with the Park Department at Washington Park during that event. She pointed out a lot of people attend the event.

Ms. Kalk said they would keep that in mind.

Mrs. Ginther said in her subdivision there is a tree that is not located on their property, but a large branch is hanging over one of the houses. She asked if they have the right to cut the branch down.

Ms. Arnett replied that they can cut the tree branch to their property line but cannot go onto to the other private property. She noted that a lot of the tree care companies will know those rules.

Ms. Ursida asked if Ms. Arnett is doing the school circuit.

Ms. Arnett replied that she is planning to. Her priority for March and April is to get the trees planted. She is hoping that she can by the end of the school year. She said she is working on coordinating a tree planting event this spring with the local high school environmental group organized by Nicole Messacar. They will help plant the smaller trees in the neighborhoods and trees planted in the parks (Hansen Park, Patriot Park, and Water Tower Park).

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

(None)

**NEXT MEETING DATE**

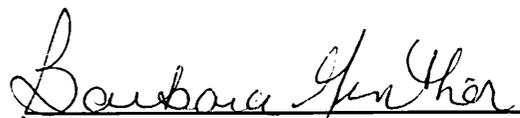
Ms. Kalk announced that the next regular meeting is scheduled for April 1, 2020.

**ADJOURNMENT**

The chair entertained a motion to adjourn.

Motion to adjourn by Ms. Henderson – seconded by Mrs. Ginther and unanimously approved.

The chair declared the meeting adjourned at approximately 6:45 p.m.

  
Barbara Ginther, Secretary