MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE
MICHIGAN CITY TREE BOARD
MAY 1, 2019

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, May 1, 2019, 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 6:00 p.m.

ROLL CALL
Members present: Connie Anderson, Barbara Ginther, William Ginther, Laura Henderson, Laura Kalk, Mick Wulff

Members absent:
Johnny Stimley

Staff present:
Planning Department Administrative Assistant Debbie Wilson

Staff absent:
City Forester position vacant

APPROVAL OF MINUTES
The chair entertained a motion for approval of the April 3, 2019 minutes.

Motion by Mrs. Ginther – seconded by Mr. Ginther approving the minutes of April 3, 2019 as submitted. Voice vote was as follows: (Ayes) Connie Anderson, Barbara Ginther, William Ginther, Laura Henderson, Laura Kalk, Mick Wulff – 6; (Nays) None – 0. With a vote of 6 ayes and 0 nays, the MOTION CARRIED.

SECRETARY/TREASURER'S REPORT
The chair entertained a motion for approval of the financial report ended 04/30/19.

Motion by Mrs. Ginther – seconded by Ms. Kalk approving the financial report ended 04/30/19 as submitted. Voice vote was as follows: (Ayes) Connie Anderson, Barbara Ginther, William Ginther, Laura Henderson, Laura Kalk, Mick Wulff – 6; (Nays) None – 0. With a vote of 6 ayes and 0 nays, the MOTION CARRIED.
CLAIMS
The chair entertained a motion for approval of the claims for May.

_Motion by Mr. Ginther – seconded by Ms. Kalk approving the claims for May as submitted._ Voice vote was as follows: (Ayes) Connie Anderson, Barbara Ginther, William Ginther, Laura Henderson, Laura Kalk, Mick Wulff – 6; (Nays) None – 0. With a vote of 6 ayes and 0 nays, the MOTION CARRIED.

COMMUNICATIONS
Mr. Wulff acknowledged an email from Larry Zimmer regarding the way the trees are being butchered to maintain the city's power grid. Mr. Zimmer attached a photo of one of the trees which has been butchered on US 20 in front of the former Carson Pirie Scott store. He expressed his frustration over how this looks stating it is an unacceptable image for our city and that the City and NIPSCO must work together to establish standards for tree/power line interface that does not degrade our city and to begin a phased public works project to bury the power grid. Mr. Zimmer asked if the now ugly trees can be removed entirely.

President Wulff responded by sharing his view on the matter. He did note that the picture of the tree provided by Mr. Zimmer is located in a right-of-way area which is under the jurisdiction of INDOT. He also pointed out that there are standards that ASPLUNDH uses when doing line clearing. It is one of the major circuits that runs through the city and they have the right by federal law to cut the trees back for clearance.

Mr. Wulff stated that these are nice trees appearing to be oak. He said they were not topped, they were direction pruned back for safety in the wires. Mr. Wulff said it is his opinion from what he has seen through the years that the job is not bad; the trees will fill out, although it will take some time. Aesthetically from the street view, Mr. Wulff feels that it is better to have some greenery from the ground up at least 30'. He said the trees could be removed and smaller trees put in, but he feels these are nice trees and they will slowly heal. He has seen where cut back trees make perfect circles around the wires, making it look somewhat creative. He stated that looking further down on Highway 20 there is not another tree on either side of the street. This is the only area along that stretch with some greenery.

Mr. Ginther pointed out the only other area with trees is in front of the bakery, just west of Ohio Street.

Ms. Henderson commented that when these trees were planted they were going to end up being way too big for the area.

Ms. Anderson asked who made that decision.

Mr. Wulff said it was probably Marquette Mall a very long time ago, probably in the 60's.
Mr. Wulff said he would be happy to reach out to Mr. Zimmer. Mr. Wulff stated that the Board appreciates his opinion, but there is nothing that can be done about it as a Tree Board. He commented that the tree crews are working in other areas of the city as well, and in some places, they have removed the trees entirely, but he stated that they are well within their right to do so. He pointed out that NIPSCO does have a 2 for 1 offer pending to replant trees. Mr. Wulff added that when he started on the Tree Board 20 years ago it was a lot worse out there, but things have tamed down now, and costs are being brought within tolerable means. The City is holding contractors and businesses accountable. Mr. Wulff referred to the clear cutting of trees on US 12 and Martin Luther King Drive pointing out that the City has set a precedent and issued a fine to the property owner for removing those trees.

Mrs. Anderson stated that she felt it was a good thing that Mr. Zimmer acknowledged there is a Tree Board. The Tree Board has brought awareness to their presence.

Mr. Wulff recalled going to the Common Council providing their recommendations for the ordinance, but the Council just blew off them off. He added that the Tree Board members have stepped up and are using their knowledge and experience to better help the City.

Ms. Henderson asked the potential for burying the power lines as referenced by Mr. Zimmer.

Mr. Wulff stated that he has attended a class for that. He said something like that is near impossible and would be very expensive. It is called a ground fault when all the rains fall in the low-lying areas and it would be impossible to find it without having to dig. In areas where it is virgin ground they could bury power lines, but he pointed out that Michigan City is a very mature forested city with mature neighborhoods and it would destroy more than it is worth because tree roots would be cut in the process. He said burying lines would have to be done during a new development when nothing is there.

Ms. Kalk stated that what can stop the butchering of trees for line clearance is what the Board is working with the application for planting in a tree lawn which will provide the proper guidance of what can be planted in a certain location. She indicated that it is the mission of the Tree Board to educate and make sure people and contractors are installing the correct trees in the proper locations.

**COMMITTEE REPORTS**

**Outreach**
*(Gardening/Landscaping)*

Ms. Kalk said a lot of people are coming into the garden center with concerns about their broadleaf evergreens. She recommends applying a slow release fertilizer now to help with the push back. She said to keep in mind that a lot of these evergreens are still
alive but will probably lose their leaves, so they will need to be trimmed in a couple weeks to push out the new growth. She reminded everyone to protect their broadleaf evergreens during the winter months by putting burlap around them or spraying them with Wilt Stop. Ms. Kalk said it was a wicked winter but there was not a lot of snow which normally provides a blanket of protection from the moisture wicking winds. She said even things like English ivy which is super hardy got burned out. Ms. Kalk said it is also a great time to get in the systemic insecticides. Again, she stressed that fertilizer will help make plants less susceptible to insect and fungal issues.

Regarding trimming and pruning of evergreens, Ms. Kalk cautioned to wait a couple weeks because after they are pruned they push out new growth which is tender to the lower temperatures and frost. She suggests waiting until mid-May but noted that if they have already been pruned and turned brown, the tips can still be trimmed off.

(ARobor Day)
Mr. Wulff announced that the Arbor Day celebration is to be held Saturday, May 4th, at the Farmer’s Market at 8th/Washington Streets.

Ms. Kalk stated that seedlings for the giveaway have been delivered to Beachside Garden Center. Those include 20 burr oak, 20 red oak, 20 swamp white oak, and 20 red bud. NIPSCO will be providing several hundred evergreen seedlings as well for the giveaway to include spruce and pine. Ms. Kalk said she also received a delivery of the 3-gallon trees provided by NIPSCO through their program, informing whoever ordered the trees to pick them up at the Farmer’s Market on Saturday. Ms. Kalk said she was not sure of the final count on available trees, but suggested contacting NIPSCO to see if there are any still available. She thanked NIPSCO for their donation.

Mr. Wulff recalled that Pat Boy was supposed to give some seedlings to Johnny Stimley, but he did not know the status of that.

Ms. Henderson commented that the press release went out on April 25th and 26th.

Ms. Kalk summarized the press release which provides the link to order 1-gallon and 3-gallon trees from NIPSCO and specifies that any 3-gallon trees ordered must either be picked up on May 4th at the Farmer’s Market or on May 5th at Beachside Gardens. Any trees not picked up on the 5th will be donated.

Ms. Henderson stated that she will print off a couple different handouts for the event on Saturday.

Mr. Wulff announced that the City Forester, Adam Garza, has resigned, so the City currently does not have a forester. Mr. Wulff said he is trying to keep up with the flow from the Central Maintenance Superintendent as things come up.
City Park Trees
(No report)

City Street Trees
Ms. Henderson asked the status of the $50,000 tree fund appropriation.

Mr. Wulff stated that he has tried emailing the Central Maintenance Superintendent (Bob Zondor) four times and has not gotten a reply regarding the Grand Beach Road issue. He said he really needs to talk to him and asked for direction from the Board.

Ms. Henderson suggested Mr. Wulff still be nice about it but to copy the Mayor on the emails.

Ms. Kalk agreed.

Mrs. Anderson asked if the money is still there.

Mr. Wulff said there were big ideas about talking to Woodruff and getting trees, but since the forester has resigned he does not know the status. Mr. Wulff said the trees could still be dug at this time because of the unique spring we are having.

Ms. Kalk stated that the time for digging trees will only get more and more concerning by the time a decision is made. She pointed out that there is still bigger planning which needs to be done before moving forward.

Mr. Wulff stated that he would like to talk to Mr. Zondor about the status of things to find out where we are on this. He would also like to express some other issues to him about the forester position being a 50/50 split with vector control, and the fact that he sees very little forestry going on and more vector control. He said he knows that was the cause of one forester resigning, although he did not what transpired with the last one.

Danny Loggins (Loggins Tree Service) spoke to the Board stating that the major issue is that between a forester and someone that does tree work is apples and oranges. He said the forester is not going to know how to do the tree work, and it is a waste of their time talking to the contractor when they could be doing other things. Mr. Loggins said that Mr. Zondor has heard the idea about the City having their own tree service.

Ms. Kalk agreed that the work is stretched thin and there is not enough manpower to cover everything that position is supposed to do.

Mr. Wulff remarked that Mr. Zondor should be talking to the Tree Board before having conversations around, because he himself has been waiting for that conversation.
Mr. Loggins asked if the City was not allowed to finish the trees on Old Grand Beach Road.

Mr. Wulf stated that he offered his services as the Tree Board President, but there is the need for machinery and trained and certified City staff to do the work.

Mr. Loggins stated that the City needs a tree service who has the machinery and knowledge of how to do it.

Mr. Wulf replied that is reason for the City having round robin with tree contractors. The City must be fair with the contractors who pay for a license in the City. He said the biggest thing is getting everybody to have adequate insurance. The City cannot do business with them unless they have the proper insurance.

Mr. Loggins said he wishes the City would hurry up and start cracking down on them. He sees many out there doing work with no insurance while others pay a lot for insurance.

Ms. Kalk added that it is also dangerous.

Mr. Loggins talked about the job of clearing trees on Karwick Road stating that there were City workers out there and whoever was doing the work did not know what they were doing; there were chain saws caught in trees.

Mr. Wulf said that is another reason to have discussions with the Superintendent of Central Maintenance. He said he heard about this last week but has not had the chance to investigate it.

Mr. Wulf added that when hiring a forester, the City is not taking in the forester grading; the last two were more environmental engineers. He pointed out that he recommended to the last forester that he get an Arborist certificate within a year. He said the Tree Board should be looking into criteria for the position, putting more emphasis on the Forestry degree.

Again, Ms. Kalk pointed out that the position is spread way to thin because they are in charge of managing vector control too; the positions need to be split.

Mr. Wulf stated that because of the environmental aspect of it, foresters are probably getting $60,000 plus benefits, but the City is not willing to pay $60,000.

Mr. Loggins commented that he is not sure how much the City really needs a forester because most of the plants and trees are already grown and just need service.
Mr. Wulff mentioned that one of the City's previous forester’s (Frank Seilheimer) had a true Forestry degree and knew how to work it. He did most of the work himself and contracted out the bigger jobs.

Ms. Kalk agreed but pointed out that there was also a separate position for vector control at that time.

**Grant Application and Maintenance**
(No report)

**Purchasing and Tree Planting**
(No report)

**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**
(No report)

**Tree City Designation Maintenance**
Mr. Wulff asked Ms. Wilson to check to see if any City departments received the Tree City USA package as it should have already arrived by this time.

**Goals**
(fundraising efforts)
Mrs. Anderson talked about fundraising efforts stating that she has been looking into possibilities that would benefit the Tree Board with their efforts. She pointed out that the Board did a fundraiser a while back, but the money is just sitting there. She asked what the Board’s purpose and goal is in doing fundraisers, and if it is to have money in the bank in case it is needed or if there is a specific purpose.

Ms. Kalk said the Board originally talked about specifically donating a tree to a not-for-profit organization, although the Board still needs to choose that organization. That was the goal for that year. She said the goal can be changed each year, or it can be a once a year project, but the Board would need to move forward on it.

Mrs. Anderson said she is not sure everybody was happy with that goal, so she felt the Board should put some real thought into a specific project that everyone likes and work toward that goal.

Ms. Kalk asked Mrs. Anderson what she thought about Johnny Stimley’s project of planting an orchard to feed the animals at zoo.
Mrs. Anderson stated that she really likes that project and would be supportive of focusing on that project through fundraisers.

Other expressed liking the project as well.

Mr. Ginther pointed out that the state forester had brought up concerns with public safety, insurance, watering issues, taking soil samples, etc.

Ms. Kalk said some of those issues would be of concern if humans were consuming the food, but things would not need to be treated for insects if the food is being harvested for consumption by the zoo animals.

Mr. Wulff stated that the state forester had issues because the funding being discussed was grant based, not a fundraiser.

Ms. Kalk recommended focusing on the community garden and having it harvested for the animals, so it gets away from the treatments for edibles.

All agreed it was a good idea to focus on fundraising for this project.

OLD BUSINESS
(Workman's comp for insurance)
Mr. Wulff reported that he has not had the chance to follow up with the City Attorney. Ms. Kalk said she did not have a chance either.

(Application for planting in tree lawn)
Ms. Kalk reported that she and Ms. Henderson have the draft completed but were going to have the forester review it. She asked if there is any other way to move forward with it.

Mr. Wulff said they could move forward with it and the next forester would have to deal with it. He suggested they provide the Board with the final draft for the next meeting.

NEW BUSINESS
(None)

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS
(No comments)

PUBLIC COMMENTS
(None)

NEXT MEETING DATE
President Wulff announced that the next regular meeting is scheduled for June 5, 2019.
ADJOURNMENT
The chair entertained a motion to adjourn.

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

The chair declared the meeting adjourned at approximately 6:57 p.m.

Barbara Gilther, Secretary

Mick Wulff, President