MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE
MICHIGAN CITY TREE BOARD
JULY 10, 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, July 10, 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 6:05 p.m.

ROLL CALL
Members present: Connie Anderson, Barbara Ginther, William Ginther, Laura Henderson, Laura Kalk, Johnny Stimley, Mick Wulff (7)

Members absent:
None (0)

Staff present:
Planning Department Administrative Assistant Debbie Wilson

Staff absent:
City Forester

APPROVAL OF MINUTES
The chair entertained a motion for approval of the June 5, 2019 minutes.

Motion by Mrs. Ginther – seconded by Ms. Kalk approving the minutes of June 5, 2019 as submitted. Voice vote was as follows: (Ayes) Connie Anderson, Barbara Ginther, William Ginther, Laura Henderson, Laura Kalk, Johnny Stimley, Mick Wulff – 7; (Nays) None – 0. With a vote of 7 ayes and 0 nays, the MOTION CARRIED.

SECRETARY/TREASURER’S REPORT
The chair entertained a motion for approval of the financial report ended 06/30/19.

Motion by Mrs. Ginther – seconded by Ms. Kalk approving the financial report ended 06/30/19 as submitted. Voice vote was as follows: (Ayes) Connie Anderson, Barbara Ginther, William Ginther, Laura Henderson, Laura Kalk, Johnny Stimley, Mick Wulff – 7; (Nays) None – 0. With a vote of 7 ayes and 0 nays, the MOTION CARRIED.
CLAIMS
The chair entertained a motion for approval of the claims for July.

Motion by Mr. Ginther – seconded by Mrs. Anderson approving the claims for July as submitted. Voice vote was as follows: (Ayes) Connie Anderson, Barbara Ginther, William Ginther, Laura Henderson, Laura Kalk, Johnny Stimley, Mick Wulff – 7; (Nays) None – 0. With a vote of 7 ayes and 0 nays, the MOTION CARRIED.

COMMUNICATIONS
(None)

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Outreach
(Gardening/Landscaping)
Ms. Kalk reminded everyone that a lot of plants get really stressed this part of the year with the extreme heat, so she recommends making sure they are watered well. Most plants will let you know that watering is needed; specifically, hydrangea being good indicators when they start wilting which is a good sign the rest of the garden is possibly heading into a stressful situation as well. Ms. Kalk said to also pay attention to lawns as they have been seeing some fungal issues and burnout. There are a lot of systemic and natural products that can be used for both insecticidal and fungal issues. With the heat and the prior rains, a lot of weeds are growing fast. When using those kill out products when temperatures are over 80 degrees, Ms. Kalk pointed out that there is an evaporation issue and those products can evaporate off into the air and go into trees and nearby plants. She cautioned to pay close attention to the directions on the product labels and to apply them appropriately and in proper temperatures. She stated that even with applications of the horticultural oils (neem oils) it can magnify the heat and burn the plants. Ms. Kalk recommends doing applications during a cooler time of the day.

City Park Trees
(No report)

City Street Trees
(No report)

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**  
(No report)

**Goals**  
(fundraising efforts)  
Mrs. Anderson reported on the proposed zoo garden project stating that she has talked with Mr. Stimley about some ideas. She noted that Ms. Kalk is working on a layout of the garden. Mrs. Anderson stated that the first step in the fundraising goal would be to get the trees purchased and planted, and to accomplish that she suggests a fundraiser where people could donate money to purchase a tree to be planted in memory of someone. Mrs. Anderson stated that she was not sure how many trees could be planted in the garden.

Ms. Kalk acknowledged that she is working on the design, stating that since the space is small, she would suggest under a dozen trees because there are already a lot of existing trees in that space. She stated that trees are already being donated. In addition to the trees, Ms. Kalk said there will need to be labor, soil, and all the other things that will need to go into that area. She felt the tree sponsoring is a wonderful thing and something they should still focus on.

Mrs. Anderson stated that the trees could possibly be adopted for their continuous care. She said it would also be a good project for the high school students that Mr. Stimley works with by getting them involved with the care of the trees to offset some of the costs of the project.

Ms. Kalk talked about the design of the garden, which in addition to the columnar trees would incorporate things like planter boxes, benches, and arbors; stating that those things could also be memorialized pieces. She pointed out that some trees have already been donated and include apple, cherry, plum, and apricot.

Mr. Wulff agreed it was a great idea to memorialize trees, recalling a tree planted years ago in Washington Park in memory of former Mayor Joe LaRocco, although he is not sure if the tree is still there with the redesign work done in the park over the years.

Ms. Henderson asked about water to the site.
Mr. Stimley stated that they still need to investigate that.

Ms. Kalk said watering will be important for the establishment of the plants and should be established before moving forward with the planting.

Mrs. Anderson asked about the possibility of installing a well.

Ms. Kalk said they are looking into all options to get water to the site.

Mrs. Anderson stated that the fundraising focus right now should be for preparing the site and purchasing the trees. This could be an ongoing project. Mrs. Anderson asked if there will be a garden in addition to the trees included within the site.

Ms. Kalk said the Board was talking about it, but she wasn’t present at that meeting and would have to look through the notes regarding the pros and cons of having a garden and what can and cannot be done because of liability issues.

Mrs. Anderson said she was thinking of things like pumpkins.

Ms. Kalk said she thought about including gourds and squash.

Mr. Wulff noted that the Board could not get any funding through the State because of the liability, but there is nothing to say it couldn’t be funded through other ways and means. He pointed out that the tree stewardship program could help with finding volunteers.

Mrs. Anderson said she feels once this project is presented to the public it will take off and take care of itself. She asked if it is possible to plant trees this fall.

Ms. Kalk replied that she anticipates completing the design in September and recommends planting no later than the third week in October if water is available to the site.

Ms. Henderson asked about including a pollinator garden.

Ms. Kalk replied that it definitely could be included.

OLD BUSINESS
(Workman’s comp for insurance)
No update.

(Application for planting in tree lawn)
Ms. Kalk noted that the draft is done but a lot of it has to do with the Forester.
Mrs. Anderson asked if there is any follow-up on the City getting trees from LaPorte County Landscaping, or if the City totally lost out on the deal.

Ms. Kalk stated that she believes they are officially closed.

Mr. Wulff said assumes it was not taken advantage of and the City lost that opportunity.

Mr. Wulff asked Ms. Henderson for a report on attending the tree stewardship training.

Ms. Henderson explained that this was a tree steward program given by the DNR. They put it on annually at different locations throughout the state. Ms. Henderson reported that she attended it in Portage along with the then City Forester Melissa Mullins. The training was two days for a cost of $30. They practiced planting a tree learning correct techniques for planting. She said they learned a lot and she will bring the information to the next meeting. Ms. Henderson highly recommends the training program.

Ms. Kalk reported that she spoke with Micky Gallas who is fully on-board with planting replacement trees as previously promised to the Board. Ms. Kalk said she felt it was not an appropriate time to plant large oak trees during the extreme heat. Ms. Kalk said she would like Mr. Wulff to meet her and Ms. Gallas at the site to give her some guidance on placement of the trees. Ms. Kalk said she feels it would be better to plant the trees in September/October rather than now and it would also give Ms. Gallas additional time to obtain that size of tree. Ms. Kalk stated that Ms. Gallas has expressed her willingness to follow through with everything promised.

NEW BUSINESS
(Nothing)

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS
Mr. Wulff opened discussion about the direction of the future City Forester with the resignation of the last Forester. Mr. Wulff noted that these are his own comments, not necessarily any of the Board itself. He stated that a previous Forester (Frank Seilheimer) had a Forestry Degree. With his degree and what he was paid, he paid off in spades from the day he started. With the last few Foresters, the City is pushing the Vector Control position on them as well. He said the last Forester, Melissa Mullins, had other training and other disciplines, and he did not see any training on the Forestry end of it. Mr. Wulff pointed out that the Tree Ordinance outlines the basics for a Forester. He feels a letter should be written to the Mayor and Bob Zondor and include the standards set out in the ordinance for hiring a Forester. He said if they are going to use equivalent experience, the Board needs to know what the equivalent experience is, stating that horticulture is totally different than arboriculture. Mr. Wulff said the City is looking down the wrong avenue to fill this position, and if they are looking to go this route then the Forester should be at the upfront position and Vector Control at the
bottom. He does not see these two jobs ever cohesively working together; one person cannot do it all and the pay is not enough.

Mrs. Anderson asked if the $50,000 appropriation given to the Tree Board is in the budget.

Mr. Stimley replied that it is in the annual budget.

Mrs. Anderson asked if the Board could use some of that money to subsidize that position.

Mr. Ginther and Mr. Wulff both replied that the money cannot be used for salary.

Mr. Wulff recalled that Mr. Seilheimer came to the City on a grant from the State. The first year the State paid for it and then the City was to slowly absorb that as a full-time position. He pointed out that the City is now neglecting that promise made to the State.

Mrs. Anderson said there are all sorts of grants out there for positions; it is just a matter of finding them and tapping into them. The grant could hopefully pay for the position to just be a Forester, not the Vector Control.

Ms. Henderson noted that the Tree Board is supposed to be involved in the hiring of the Forester.

Mr. Wulff said he does not see that happening and he expressed his discouragement on how the last hiring went. He feels that the City would be better off hiring somebody within for a Vector Control Officer like Dave Morlan was back in the day. He said Mr. Morlan was a lifer from Michigan City and did a great job.

Board members suggested having a special meeting to discuss this with the Mayor, Bob Zondor, and H.R. before they hire another Forester.

Mr. Stimley recommended writing a letter to the Mayor and Bob Zondor and include a copy of the ordinance, asking for a special meeting prior to hiring the Forester. He suggested having the meeting within the next week because they are already working on the 2020 budget.

Ms. Kalk and Ms. Henderson volunteered to draft a letter for all Board members to sign.

Mr. Stimley will forward the letter to the appropriate personnel along with suggested dates for a special meeting.

Mr. Wulff referenced Section 102-34 of the ordinance – City Tree Board Duties and Responsibilities, etc.
Mr. Wulff again brought up the fact that the Board was given a $50,000 appropriation for the trees they were supposed to get from LaPorte County Landscaping, but the City missed that opportunity because of the Forester not following through. The City could have tripled their investment, but now the money will probably have to be re-appropriated.

Mr. Stimley added that the first question he will be asked during budget hearings is why nothing was done with the $50,000 appropriation given to the Board.

Ms. Henderson commented that the City has lost four Foresters over a three-year period.

Mr. Wulff commented that Department heads should realize that there is a wealth of knowledge with members of the Tree Board, and that knowledge is readily available just by asking. The Board’s true mission is not being performed.

Speaking to the Council, Mr. Wulff commented that Frank Seilheimer paid off in grant money because he knew how to do it and was taught how to do it.

PUBLIC COMMENTS
(Nonne)

NEXT MEETING DATE
The next regular meeting is scheduled for August 7, 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 6:50 p.m.

Barbara Ginther, Secretary