



MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE MICHIGAN CITY TREE BOARD

March 5, 2025

The Michigan City Tree Board met in a regular meeting at Alco TV, 301 E 8th St #101, Michigan City, IN 46360, on Wednesday 03/05/25, at 5:30 p.m. local time; the date, hour, and place duly established for the holding of said meeting.

Members Present:

Jen Birchfield, Dominique Edwards, Betsy Elsaesser, Laura Henderson, James Mellowitz, Mary Nell Murphy. Quorum of four satisfied. Council Liaison Nancy Moldenhauer also present.

Members Absent:

Dennis Brittain, Council Liaison Dr. Vidya Kora

Public Present:

Phil Graf of Great Lakes Urban Forestry Management; Tim Werner, City Engineer.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Mary Nell moved and Jim seconded approval of the agenda, motion passed.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mary Nell moved and Jim seconded approval of the January minutes (re-voted due to Laura's delayed swearing into new term of office). Betsy moved and Laura seconded approval of the February minutes. Both motions passed.

TREASURER'S REPORT

The City Comptroller had noted no changes since last month's reports.

COMMUNICATIONS

- City Forester Michael Wolff clarified in a 2/25 email to the board "City legal department has decided to not do anything in reference to the Grant until such time as we hear something official from the Federal Government ". Jen noted we are awaiting clarity on federal actions. Jim will draft a letter noting the consequences of the latest federal funding delays and/or freezes and send it to Jen, Tim Werner and the Mayor. She may decide to post a finalized version on the City's website.
- Mary Nell provided info on NIRPC's new invasive tree replacement program with Indiana DNR; details on the Friends of MC Tree Board Facebook page to receive a native tree to replace a removed Callery Pear or Tree of Heaven.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Public Relations: April Green Drinks Zoom presentation by Tree Board members on the completed tree inventory and the status of the IRA federal grant.

Education & Outreach: Betsy provided an update on the 3/29 Master Gardener show at MC High School. Mary Nell moved, Laura seconded a motion to reimburse Betsy the \$50 application fee. Betsy will contact the board on volunteer schedule for that day.

Arbor Day, Tree Give-away: Mary Nell noted MC was approved on 2/17 as a Tree City again, materials are shipping to City Hall. She will contact Mayor's Office on the annual Arbor Day proclamation. Tree giveaways will be 4/26 Earth Day Extravaganza at MC Senior Center from noon-3 and the first MC farmers market on 5/03 from 8-noon.

CITY FORESTER REPORT

Michael emailed the board his written report, Laura read this into the minutes:

Forester Monthly Report to Michigan City Tree Board – March 2025

1. *Worked on training with the Arborist Apprentice.*
2. *Continued working on IRA Grant*
 - a. *Attending monthly coordination meeting.*
 - b. *I am going to cancel the spring planting.*
3. *Worked on tree inspections.*
4. *Collaborated with Vector Control to rewrite City Ordinance 102-1 and RFQ for 2025 Landscape services.*
5. *I will not be attending the March Tree Board meeting due to the conflict with personal event.*

OLD BUSINESS

- **Update on IRA grant progress and inventory—presentation by Phil Graf**

Phil provided an extended PowerPoint presentation on the completed Tree Inventory; nearly 14K trees have been inventoried with a stocking density of 57.9%. The Tree Board expressed appreciation for the plan. Phil noted Tony Bazil is the City's GIS Coordinator.
- **Communitree**

MC's application has been received and is in process. Nancy recommended that we identify a teacher per school to shepherd the tree-planting project. Betsy and Jen will work out a proposal.
- **Re-vote re partner with Sustainability Commission on EME event**

Mary Nell moved and Dominique seconded approval of coordinating with the Sustainability Commission for the upcoming Earth Day Extravaganza (re-voted due to Laura's delayed swearing into new term of office). Motion passed.
- **Review ordinance 102-34 Tree Board Duties and Responsibilities**

After some discussion, it was agreed that Jim would re-send his proposed ordinance to the board for discussion at the next meeting. Betsy noted that the City's website has an outdated ordinance describing the board's duties. Nancy noted that email discussions may be construed as a quorum meeting. There was a suggestion of a workshop to reconcile issues.

NEW BUSINESS

None.

COMMENTS

Board: Nancy clarified the City Council Liaison positions: Dr. Kora will continue as a non-voting liaison, and Nancy will be a second non-voting liaison.

Public: Tim Werner thanked the Tree Board for their work.

Next Meeting Date

The next regular meeting is scheduled for 4/2/25 at 5:30 pm, at Alco TV location 301 E 8th St.

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn was approved.

Respectfully submitted by Mary Nell Murphy