



MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE MICHIGAN CITY TREE BOARD

May 7, 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 05/07/25, at 5:30 p.m. local time; the date, hour, and place duly established for the holding of said meeting.

Members Present:

Jen Birchfield, Betsy Elsaesser, Laura Henderson, Mary Nell Murphy. Quorum of four satisfied. City Forester Michael Wolff and Council Liaison Nancy Moldenhauer also present.

Members Absent:

Council Liaison Dr. Vidya Kora

Public Present:

Mayor Angie Nelson Deutch, Phil Graf of Great Lakes Urban Forestry

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Laura moved and Betsy seconded approval of the agenda, motion passed.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Laura moved and Betsy seconded approval of the April minutes; motion passed.

TREASURER'S REPORT

The City Comptroller sent the monthly reports; Mary Nell will forward to members.

COMMUNICATIONS

- Arbor Day: Mayor Angie declared 4/26 Arbor Day for the Earth Month Extravaganza
- Betsy received a notice from NIPSCO that our grant was declined. She noted we were able to go forward with the local school tree plantings due to the tree donations from NIRPC/CommuniTree
- The Friends of MC Tree Board Facebook page now has 183 followers

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Public Relations:

- NIPSCO grant: as noted above, grant declined.

Education & Outreach:

- NIRPC/CommuniTree: Two of the three elementary school tree plantings have taken place at Marsh and Pine schools. Each school had about 40 students participate; they pledged to water and mulch and care for the trees. The third tree planting is scheduled at Edgewood on this Friday. Jen noted that Springfield has also expressed interest.

- Tree Giveaway: Laura, Jen and Betsy staffed the tree giveaway at the MC farmers market on 5/03. There will be another tree giveaway 5/24 when the farmers market opens officially.
 - There was discussion on asking recipients of the free trees to provide their names and addresses of where the trees will be planted, and possibly their email or phone. Ideally new tree planting GIS would be entered by the City Forester to keep the tree inventory up-to-date. Jen noted the board would review improvements for next year's procedures.
 - Mary Nell will add a Facebook event for the 5/24 tree giveaway
 - Volunteer list: Michael noted there are no names entered on the online volunteer spreadsheet
- Farmers Market: Tree Board will continue our monthly outreach on first Saturdays at the Michigan City farmers market.

CITY FORESTER REPORT

- Michael had emailed the board his written report:
 - *Worked with and on continued training with the Arborist Apprentice.*
 - *Continued working with contractors for the IRA Grant.*
 - *In negotiation with SCA to establish a contract to plant 500 trees in the fall.*
 - *In April, Forestry received, evaluated and responded to an average of 22 calls for tree work per day.*
 - *Worked establishing a fluid paper flow.*
 - *Collaborated Vector control and Street Dept for suppling labor to trim and remove trees.*
- Michael informed the board that as on 4/28 he provided his resignation to the Mayor; he will serve until the end of May.
- Arborist Apprentice Bella Menoz has been let go since she will not be able to meet the terms of the apprenticeship by having daily contact with a full-time Certified Arborist. Her last day will be May 5, which is within her 90-day probation.
- Mayor Angie provided information on the transition. She has submitted a proposal to the Board of Works for Phil Graf to take on the City Forester duties on a contractual basis so that there will not be a gap in services through the end of the year. The Board of Works meets on May 19.
- Jen asked Michael about the transfer. Currently no trees have been pre-ordered; the RFQ has not yet been sent out to the Board of Works. The original plan was to plant 250 trees this Spring, and another 250 in the Fall. Now the plan is to plant 500 trees this Fall. Phil agreed the planting can be handled contractually.

OLD BUSINESS

- **Ordinance 102-34 Tree Board Duties and Responsibilities:** The special meeting to workshop the proposed ordinance on the Tree Board's duties was canceled prior to this meeting in light of recent changes.
- **Update on IRA grant progress and inventory**
 - Phil noted he is ready if the Board of Works approves the proposal; the Tree Inventory is completed and the plan was submitted in March

- Michael noted due to a glitch in GIS the Tree Management report was not ready to be sent to the board
- Mayor Angie asked for a transition meeting with her and Michael, Jen and Nancy
- **Communitree**
Jen confirmed that MC Tree Board has been awarded 11 trees for local school plantings. A Fall planting program is expected.

NEW BUSINESS

- Mayor Angie informed the board that Dominique Edwards has accepted a position as City Planning Director and therefore had to step down from the Tree Board.
Mayor Angie also noted that James Mellowitz and Dennis Brittain do not currently have valid appointments. As noted in a prior email from Jen, “The City has been auditing board appointments and found that these appointments did not include the advice and consent of the City Council, which is required per city code. These members have been asked to provide letters of intent to be reappointed for the mayor’s consideration.” The Mayor stated that she has received letters from James and Dennis stating their interest in being reappointed.
- **Walker Street Park Community Orchard**
No updates available.

COMMENTS

Board:

- ◆ Nancy thanked Jen for the Green Drinks Zoom presentation on 4/3 was well-received and inspirational. Save the Dunes has posted the talk on YouTube.
- ◆ Nancy noted that Steve Barker at NIPSCO may be available to assist with native planting projects

Mayor:

- Mayor Angie reported the City has purchased a Restoration Trailer. Kabelin Ace has donated the trailer that can be checked out for environmental clean-ups. The City can drop off and pick up the trailer.
- There is now a Dumpster Program to reduce illegal dumping and engage with the community.

Public: none.

Next Meeting Date and Adjournment

Jen reminded us that the next regular meeting is scheduled for 5/7/25 at 5:30 pm, at Alco TV location 301 E 8th St. Betsy moved and Laura seconded adjournment, motion passed.

Respectfully submitted by Mary Nell Murphy