



MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE MICHIGAN CITY TREE BOARD

June 4, 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 06/04/25, 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 Phil Graf and Council Liaison Nancy Moldenhauer also present.

Members Absent:

Council Liaison Dr. Vidya Kora

Public Present:

Dennis Brittain

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

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

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

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

TREASURER'S REPORT

The City Comptroller provided the monthly reports; Mary Nell reviewed and noted the donation increase of \$115.25 and the #439 Other Services (\$24K) was the holding fund for the US Forest Service grant expenses that are to be reimbursed by the grant.

COMMUNICATIONS

- Laura spoke to Mayor Angie at coffee event and inquired about the City Forester position. The Mayor noted her intent to have this continue as a contractual position. The board had no objections. Phil then spoke to outline his expectations and how he will work with the board. He has already met with the director of Public Works. He is contracted to serve as the City Forester 6/1-12/31.
- Mary Nell noted various DNR Forestry emails received and distributed to the Tree Board including the Tree Species Selection Guide

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Public Relations:

- NIRPC/CommuniTree Grant: tree planting project at MC elementary schools
 - Betsy and Jen dug the holes for the 10 trees at these schools: 4/28 at Marsh, 5/02 at Pine, 5/08 at Edgewood, 5/29 at Springfield. These were high impact areas and

well-received by the schools. She would like to expand the project to middle and high schools.

- Betsy will re-apply for the CommuniTree grant for a fall planting. Jen noted the limitation is watering. The board thanked Betsy for her plans to water over the summer.

Education & Outreach:

- Farmers Market: Jen noted that Farmed & Forged is now the organizer for the MC farmers market. She has submitted our application to participate monthly. Jen will contact Laura and Betsy to see if we can complete our tree giveaway (<30 trees) at this Saturday's farmers market, otherwise the next one will be July 5 (following our July 2 meeting).
- There was discussion on improvements for next year's Tree give-aways. The board noted it was much smoother due to the new location, use of buckets, tree tags and the volunteers. It was agreed to keep the order to 500 trees, but to include more native shrubs and to have more signage. We will revisit as we get closer to the order deadline.

CITY FORESTER REPORT

- Phil plans to have a monthly report to the board on the Friday before our meetings.
- There will be a "Tree Blitz" so that the public can see some progress on the grant beyond the tree inventory and intern, items that can't be viewed.
- Phil is looking at pre-approval of trees and is working on a RFP for tree removal and pruning; first priority will be high risk trees.
- Fall planting is in the plans
- Phil will work around the state's Bat Law that prohibits tree pruning or removal after October 1; Oaks and Elms are deferred from summer pruning due to oak wilt and elm diseases.
- Betsy inquired about city worker training on tree maintenance since last year there were problems with pruning of Oaks during months with oak wilt concern. Phil will look at using some of the tree grant on Professional Development.

OLD BUSINESS

- Jen will forward to the city's lawyer Amber the certified letter regarding a lawsuit with the city.

NEW BUSINESS

- There was discussion of sending one annual email to the council, media, interested parties on the Tree Board monthly schedule, however Nancy noted the Open Door Law. We will continue with the monthly notification.
- Annual budget: Jen will submit our request for next year's budget to continue our current budget
- Betsy moved and Mary Nell seconded a motion to combine the agenda topics "PR" with "Education & Outreach" into "Outreach & Engagement." Passed.

COMMENTS

Board:

- Jen received a survey from the Mayor from the University of Wisconsin-Madison on Tree Board activities. She will review; Mary Nell offered assistance if needed. Deadline 6/18.
- Just prior to the meeting, the Mayor's office emailed the board on three board appointments approved by the Council:
 - Dennis Brittain, returning
 - Harshini Ratnayaka
 - Denise Blau

Public:

- Nancy congratulated the board for a successful tree giveaway

Next Meeting Date and Adjournment

Jen reminded us that the next regular meeting is scheduled for 7/2/25 at 5:30 pm, at Alco TV location 301 E 8th St. Laura moved and Betsy seconded adjournment, motion passed.

Respectfully submitted by Mary Nell Murphy

Confirmed by Board President Jen Birchfield

_____ *Date:* _____