MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE MICHIGAN CITY TREE BOARD
November 5, 2025

Respectfully submitted by Mary Nell Murphy
Confirmed by Board President Jen Birchfield

Date: 12/2/25

The Michigan City Tree Board met in a regular meeting at Alco TV, 301 E 8th St #101, Michigan City, IN 46360, on Wednesday 11/05/25, at 5:30 p.m. local time; the date, hour, and place duly established for the holding of said meeting.

Members Present:
Jen Birchfield, Denise Blau, Betsy Elsaesser, Laura Henderson, Mary Nell Murphy, Harshini Ratnayaka. Quorum of four satisfied. City Forester Phil Graf and Council Liaison Nancy Moldenhauer also present.

excused prior to meeting M. Murphy 12/3/25

Not Present:
Member Dennis Brittain
Council Liaison Dr. Vidya Kora

Public Present:
Dakota Euler and Leslie Shad

APPROVAL OF AGENDA
Betsy moved and Denise seconded approval of the agenda; motion passed.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES
Betsy moved and Denise seconded approval of the October minutes; motion passed.

COMMENTS - Public

1. Leslie Shad of Minnequa Beach shared her draft brochure with the board "Help Preserve and Grow the Michigan City tree Canopy" which listed tree benefits with a contact to IndianaTreeCanopy@gmail.com . Jen noted her appreciation for her support and will have the Tree Board review and run by the City. Mary Nell noted her concerns for how the Tree Board can

archive shared documentation such as previous handouts and signs produced by prior City Foresters.

2. Dakota Euler of Emma Street reiterated his concerns about the nuisance trees in a nearby alleyway, and noted he was encouraged that a tree had been planted in the area. Phil spoke of his concern on nuisance trees that are not on city property. He is consulting with the City attorney on how to proceed.

TREASURER'S REPORT

The City Controller's Office provided the monthly reports; Mary Nell emailed these to the Board prior to the meeting. Betsy moved and Denise seconded approval of the financial reports; motion passed.

COMMUNICATIONS

- 2026 Indiana Arborist Association Annual Conference, Noblesville 1/20-22/26. Phil noted he will be attending (and speaking at) the conference.
- Facebook: we now have 207 followers. Mary Nell recently posted on the recent school plantings, requests for planting volunteers, and the list of registered arborists on the City's new webpage.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Outreach & Engagement:

- CommuniTree: Tree planting project at MC schools:
  Betsy spearheaded the plantings at St Stanislaus, Queen of All Saints, Marsh Elementary and two locations for Paladin (Headstart and Imagination Station) from 10/22-29. The board thanked Betsy for her work on this. She noted all the schools were welcoming, and that it was a joy to see the students' positive reactions. Betsy thanked Jen for the "red truck deliveries."

- State Nursery bill for Earth Day seedlings $206.88
  Mary Nell moved and Denise seconded approval to reimburse Betsy for the payment of the Earth Day tree seedlings from the DNR Jasper State Nursery; motion passed. The event will be held at the MC Senior Center on Saturday April 25. The board appreciates Jen (and the red truck) picking up the seedlings from Jasper in April. The species ordered:
  - 100 Redbud
  - 100 Black Gum
  - 100 Bald Cypress
  - 1 Wildlife Packet (140 trees)

- Farmers Market 10/04: Laura and Dennis staffed a table at the last farmers market of the year. Jen helped set up and tear down. It was agreed that the board would only attend the first and last markets rather than monthly. Jen will complete the annual application.

CITY FORESTER REPORT

Jen had sent Phil's monthly report to the board for September and October. Phil noted these highlights for October:

- **Tree removals** the contractor is behind due to various issues
- **Tree planting** 311 trees have been planted to date
- **Public Works Director:** Phil has met with Wendy Vachet to work on revisions to the Tree Protection Ordinance

OLD BUSINESS

- **Mayor's Community Activation Grant**: Phil presented a demo on tree signage using a central map and QR codes that could be implemented at Michigan City parks, schools, Singing Sands Trail. Krueger and Barker schools were noted since they have a science emphasis and are near wooded areas. Smartphones can link via the QR code for info on the tree: common and scientific name, current height and a link for more detailed info on the species (TBD Morton Arboretum, Purdue University?)

  Mary Nell moved and Betsy seconded a motion for Jen to move forward with this proposal by drafting the grant request to be voted on at the next meeting; motion passed. Phil noted there should be funds remaining for another project as well. There was discussion of also having physical tags for some larger, significant trees.

- Moore Road/Hwy 12 development: Phil will provide more info after the 10/08 meeting. Phil met with Public Works Director Wendy Vachet; any further inquiries on this development can be addressed to the City Attorney.

NEW BUSINESS

- none

COMMENTS

Council Liaisons:

- Nancy thanked the board for their patience and dedication in following the quorum rules. The rules for email discussions was reviewed. A member may email the board with a notice, but there should not be a "Reply All' or a reply to three or more members since that will qualify as a quorum.

Board:

- none

Next Meeting Date and Adjournment

Jen reminded us that the next regular meeting is scheduled for 12/3/25 at 5:30 pm, at Alco TV location 301 E 8th St. Betsy moved and Laura; adjournment, motion passed. Meeting adjourned at 6:30 pm.

Member Name	Type	Term start	End	Role
Jennifer Birchfield	Mayoral Appointment	7/1/2024	8/01/28	President
Mary Nell Murphy	Mayoral Appointment	1/1/2024	12/31/27	Secretary
Denise Blau	Mayoral Appointment	08/01/25	8/1/28	
Dennis Brittain	Mayoral Appointment	7/1/2024	7/1/2027	
Betsy Elsaesser	Mayoral Appointment	7/1/2024	07/01/27	Vice President
Laura Henderson	Council Appointment representing Elston Grove Neighborhood Association	02/15/25	02/16/26	
Harshini Ratnayaka	Mayoral Appointment	7/1/24	07/01/27	