

Tree Board

Noblesville, Indiana

November 16, 2020 Meeting Minutes

In attendance were Vince Baker, Sandy Lynch, Jennifer Roberts, TJ Houghtalen, Kelsey Sears, Nick Snyder, Jack Martin, Patty Johnson, and Matt Light

Guests: Evan Elliott, Ashley Mulis, Mike Reed [late]

Meeting called to order by Sandy Lynch at 3:30pm.

- Treasurer's Report: Jack Martin did not provide a treasurer's report at this time. He did not feel there were any changes to the account.
- No changes made to the minutes. Vince Baker made a motion to approve the minutes, Jennifer Roberts seconded the motion.

Old Business

1. Vince stated that his department has started tree planting in Section 1.
2. Sandy stated that we successfully completed the tree dedication for Rick Taylor at Seminary Park on October 30, 2020.
3. Matt Light provided updates on the city tree plan and asked for input. Matt reminded the board and guests about the tree pilot program the city is hoping to implement. We are still in the process of looking at the pros and cons of the proposed plan. He also discussed that the city is working on their annual tree care plan and also the 5-year master plan (this will be worked on continually through the winter). They are working on a comprehensive update to the plans for street trees. Matt asked for feedback from the board when looking at the 5-year master plan.

New Business

1. Sandy proposed that we vote to have our first Tree Board meeting of 2021 on Monday, January 4th, 2021 at 5:00pm at City Hall Room 213. At that January meeting, we will then vote on the rest of the year's meeting dates. Proposed dates: January 4, February 1, March 1, April – No Meeting (Spring Break), May 3, June 7, July 5, August 2, September – No Meeting (Labor Day), October 4, November 1, December 6. Mayor Jensen will update Tree Board members between now and the January meeting date. We will also choose officers at that meeting.
2. Sandy gave brief updated information for the Tree Steward Program for 2021. The DNR is almost certain we will likely do most of this program via Zoom meetings & videos. Sandy provided the link with more information on the program:
<https://www.in.gov/dnr/forestry/2854.htm>

3. Sandy brought up needed updates to the Tree Board Website. Our website is under the Street Department's section of the City website. By ordinance, we should have: list of desirable trees that can be planted in the city right of way, list of undesirable trees that can be planted in public places and the right of ways, 5-year master plan for the care, removal, preservation, pruning, planting, and disposition of street trees (plan is approved by the Board of Public Works and Safety), and an annual budget plan for inspection and tree care/maintenance. These are goals we need to work on for 2021.
4. Jennifer discussed that another thing the ordinance states that there's a form to request a street tree. She noticed there is no form at this point and was wondering how we're doing this, especially with the potential of moving to the city's new plan to rid of street trees (will this null the need for this form?). She wondered if downtown area might still need a form like that since it will have its own different plan in the updated city tree plan.
5. Jennifer also stated that she's been doing a lot of research on other tree boards throughout the state, and there are a lot of tree boards around (specifically Merrillville/Crown Point) that are very involved in reviewing plans and inspecting things that are planted, thus taking some of the responsibility off of the urban forester and his department. Jennifer proposed that we should be that active and help out more. Also, we need to know where the specimen trees are (where the large trees are). Jennifer wondered if engineering has access to this information and if they are considering it when putting in sidewalks. She plans to talk to engineering.
 - a. Jennifer discussed that in order to preserve our tree canopy in town, maybe we should implement a stronger ordinance about city trees. For example, she spoke to the Muncie Urban Forester. In order to cut trees in the city there, you have to have a permit and have to have certain certifications to do it. It preserves the canopy that you do have and it prevents people from butchering the city trees that are on private property.
6. Jennifer discussed the Tree City Growth Award for 2021 (<https://www.arborday.org/programs/treecityusa/growth-award/>): While researching more ways we can be more effective as a board, she found this award and thought it could be attainable. Maybe this could be a goal for us to attain this award in 2021. Jennifer opened up to the board to ask thoughts.
 - a. Vince said we have done the award in the past, and it may be something that if we want to do it, it would fall upon the tree board.

Open Floor

- Jennifer continued the discussion of how we can grow the board in 2021, and what can we do to prioritize keeping our town beautiful? She proposed that maybe we should look at the potential of adding more people who are interested. The minimum is 7, but maybe we can get more – more bodies means more work we can do. Jennifer asked the board if we are up to the challenge of taking this board up a notch. Maybe in January we could set goals for the year of how we can do more as a board.
 - Members of the board wondered what this might look like.
 - Jennifer brought up some of her general thoughts: provide more services to the community, apply for more grants, find more people with time and energy who are

passionate about trees and preserving our current canopy. No set in stone ideas yet, but we can think about it and try to plan more specific goals in January.

- The board opened up the discussion once again about the proposed City Tree Plan.
 - Jennifer still strongly feels that moving the trees back into the yards will significantly change the dynamics of these neighborhoods, and this doesn't work at all for downtown. Vince agreed that we need a different plan for downtown.
 - Jennifer discussed that her problem with the Tier 1 trees plan is that it states if the tree is behaving badly it goes. It doesn't consider the possibility of finding a way to fix the sidewalk and work around the tree instead of cutting it down. Jennifer is advocating that we value the trees, if perfectly healthy, and consider multiple possible solutions with the trees causing problems.
 - Vince reminded the board that we have to follow ADA requirements and this somewhat limits the solutions we can look at.
 - Jennifer plans to look more into what other tree boards are doing for solutions.
 - The board agrees that we must value both the tree canopy and *also* the walkability of the sidewalks. Sidewalk problems are happening in both old town *and* any established subdivisions with mature trees.
 - Matt and a committee of people will continue to look at the plan and adjust, taking these things into consideration.
- Guest, Ashley Mulis, brought forth the idea to potentially consider more common area trees. Additionally, be more intentional about making sure that qualified people are planting the trees because so many tree problems are a result of poor planting.

Adjourn - Next Meeting is January 4th, 2021 at 5:00pm at City Hall Room A213.

- Motion to adjourn at 4:50pm by Jennifer.
- Seconded by Sandy.

