

TREE BOARD – City of Columbia City

March 17, 2026, 6:00pm

MINUTES

- Roll Call (Present) Janice Daniel, Jeff Bleijerveld, Brent Bockelman, Bryan Smethers, Dan Knuth, Jim Christl, Amanda Thompson (Arborist) Seth Slabuagh (Absent) Chip Hill
- President Janice Daniel called the meeting to order and asked for a motion to approve the February minutes. Brent made a motion to approve the minutes, seconded by Bryan. A vote was taken; all voted “aye”.

OLD BUSINESS

- Financial Update
 - Chip was on vacation. However, we don't expect there were many expenses this past month.
- Update on Tree Ordinance
 - No Update at this time.
- Update on New Tree Logging in Tree Keeper
 - Dan is needing to upgrade his computer in order to do a better job of using the program and logging the location of city trees. Seth reported he has spent some time getting acquainted with the software.
- Grant Application Questions (Budgets)
 - Jeff requested more detailed information that's needed for the grant application to the Whitley County Community Foundation. They have requested a detailed budget of what we expect to receive in funding for 2026 and how we intend to spend those funds. Jeff will contact the city treasurer for information regarding the licensing costs for Tree Keeper.
- Memorial Funeral Trees
 - Brent shared a trifold designed by his daughter, to be used as our promotional piece to be available to potential donors at our two funeral homes. Verbiage is still required, which he along with Bryan and Jim will create and present at our next meeting so we can get the brochures printed and in the hands of the funeral homes.
 - Janice spoke to Smith Funeral and they are interested but had questions about how they would present the opportunity to donors (i.e., individual tree or contribution toward tree-planting). At this point, they will post to their website and include Chip's number.

- We discussed having the brochure include an envelope for people to pay by check or in cash. All agreed that we should seek all and any ways to contribute (cash, check, online, QR Code, Venmo).
- We still need to contact DeMoney Grimes Funeral Home to request their participation and input which we will do once a first draft of our brochure is ready.
- Tree Removal/Trimming List
 - Seth sent a list to Chip. We had discussed having the city remove the 27 trees under 10". Brent will follow up and contact Chip to get the city crews moving on the 10" trees.
 - At present, Sean Liechty has a list of 15 priority removals to begin with.
- Depoy Drive and Smiles on Main Plantings
 - Smiles on Main has contracted the removal of 6 trees with Daniel Landscaping. Four new trees in the city's right-of-way will be paid for by the tree board and will include 2 sugar maples and 2 white oaks.
 - The Depoy project will be done as a tree board activity. We could potentially plant as many as 18 trees. Janice will contact Shade Trees Unlimited about providing 9 White Oak for the entry on Depoy and 9 Honey Locust on Westchester.
- Continued Discussion for Arbor Day and First Fridays
 - We are waiting on Little Turtle Elementary to provide a location. We'll plant a White Oak. Dan has confirmed the event for April 24 @ 10:40am.
 - First Friday's???

NEW BUSINESS

- New Tree Requests
 - Brent heard from the homeowners at 365 N Walnut who have requested 2 trees. Also, the homeowners at 404 N Elm have requested 1 tree (although there appears to be room for 2). Brent to visit each site and report back.
- Signage for New Tree Plantings
 - Chip had flags made up and will place them where we have planted. They will also be used to indicate our intended dig locations for new plantings.

Meeting adjourned at (6:55pm).

Submitted by Jeff Bleijerveld, Secretary