



Highland seeks grant to replace trees

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HIGHLAND | If it receives a federal grant, the town plans to start counting its trees, the Town Council said.

With many of Highland's trees reaching the half-century mark, some are dying and others are diseased.

Thus, the council gave the green light for Richard Underkofler, of the nongovernmental Highland Community Foundation, to apply for the grant.

Underkofler said the grant, which would be awarded by October 2016, could be as much as \$50,000 with the town matching it with the same amount.

Of the 50 percent match by the town, the Street Department and Sanitary District each would chip in 18 percent, while the Park Department would contribute 14 percent.

The grant would help fund an inventory of the town's trees in parks and parkways.

If there is enough cash left, trees would also be tallied on the public school properties, along the Little Calumet River and the Cady Marsh and Hart ditches, Underkofler noted.

"The inventory would be done by a professional forestry consultant," who would be chosen through a bidding process, he said.

The grant also would fund creating a maintenance plan to remove bad trees and plant new ones.

But winning the grant is not a sure thing, Underkofler said, because the town is competing with 21 other communities and there is only \$600,000 earmarked for 2016.

The associated resolution passed by the council shows that some trees infected by the emerald ash boer disease have already been removed, but about 138 diseased trees remain in parkways and on parkland.

The document also notes that no funds exist to remove them.

Their removal and replacement would be done by a contractor through a future bidding process, Underkofler said.

To help fund this, the foundation would seek another grant, Underkofler said.

"We want to have a diversity of age, trees and species," he said.

To explain, Underkofler said having trees of differing ages would spare the town from losing a significant number of them at the same time because of age.

Likewise, multiple species would spare the town from losing many trees at the same time in

cases of species-specific diseases, he added.

In conjunction, the management plan would schedule trees to be planted every year to provide that mixture.