

## MESSAGE FROM THE TREE BOARD PRESIDENT

This year the electric department removed 35 street trees and ground 37 tree stumps. This was at a cost of “in-kind” services of \$81,600.00. By utilizing the Columbia City Electric Department in their off peak periods in the winter months, the city is able to save tens of thousands of dollars by not having to contract this work to a 3<sup>rd</sup> party company. A contract was awarded to J&B Nursery for the planting/replacement of 27 trees for those that were removed. The cost to our 2009 budget was approx. \$5,100.00.

In 2007 the Tree Board completed a **street tree inventory** [http://www.columbiacity.net/pdf/Columbia%20City\\_Trees%20-%206-3-09.pdf](http://www.columbiacity.net/pdf/Columbia%20City_Trees%20-%206-3-09.pdf) of 90% of all trees within Columbia City. This inventory allows us to better manage the over 4,000 trees that Columbia City is responsible for in order to better be able to serve the citizens and manage removal, pruning, and if need be, recovery in an emergency. By managing our urban forest we can better utilize, in a sound fiscal way, our limited yearly budget. The day-to-day management of this inventory system falls to the Mayor’s secretary, Martha Acres.

There are approximately 220 trees that the inventory has identified for removals and/or pruning. It would be impossible based on current resources to remove or prune this amount of trees at one time. Our goal this year was to prioritize these trees based on most need and hazardous conditions. The Board contracted with Davey Resource Group to have a certified arborist evaluate these trees and prioritize them for us so that we can use our resources more effectively. This resulted in the selection of 50 trees for immediate pruning this year, which has already been completed. The remainder trees have been prioritized for the next two years to coincide with our 3 year contract with I&M for pruning. Our cost against this year’s budget is \$7,000.00.

By proactively maintaining our tree infrastructure, Columbia City is in a much better position than many other cities and towns in Northeast Indiana. When recent storms hit the area, Columbia City suffered only minor damage to its urban forest system that resulted in power lines, streets, homes and vehicles also having little to no damage.

We have completed all pruning's for 2009 and will not resume removals until after the electric department has completed city Christmas decorations this winter. The only exception to this will be any tree or limb that poses a threat to safety of persons or property. The Tree Board will continue its mission of inspections and special request evaluations by the citizens of Columbia City throughout the year as needed.

I would like to take this opportunity to publicly thank the Columbia City Electric Department. By utilizing our city resources, we have been able to save the taxpayers of Columbia City several tens of thousands of dollars. The electric department does an outstanding job in its work for the tree board and they deserve special recognition for all that they do. I would also like to publicly thank the Mayor's secretary, Martha Acres, [macres@columbiacity.net](mailto:macres@columbiacity.net) Martha serves the board in many facets including, as I have already said, maintaining the tree inventory, serving as a contact for the DNR and 3<sup>rd</sup> party contractors, and maintains consistency during changes of personnel on the board as well as its leadership.

2009 marks the 15<sup>th</sup> consecutive year that Columbia City has earned the designation of **Tree City USA**. In order to qualify to be a Tree City there are certain requirements that must be met and these include: a budget of at least \$2.00 per capita (based on the 2000 census CC had a population of 7,077), recognize Arbor Day, have a Tree Board ordinance, an Arbor Day Proclamation from the Mayor and a yearly application. At this year's Arbor Day celebration held at Mary Raber Elementary School, the Mayor was presented with the city's award from Pam Louks, State Forrester and Community Urban Forest Coordinator. We once again planted a tree at the school and were entertained by the educational skits of the children. There are only 64 Tree Cities in Indiana. These cities combined planted 15,000 trees, pruned 20,800 and only removed 5,600. This shows a trend among these municipalities that our maintenance is key in helping to save the urban forest of cities and towns.

We have all heard of the devastation of the **Emerald Ash Borer** [www.IN.gov/dnr/entomolo/5349.htm](http://www.IN.gov/dnr/entomolo/5349.htm) to cities and towns around the Midwest. The EAB is here in Whitley County! Currently 4% of all trees in Columbia City are Ash trees, this represents approximately 160 trees that could possibly be infected just in city trees, not counting Ash trees

that are not in our system that are located on private property. Whitley County is under **general infestation quarantine**. This means that no firewood, trees, wood chips, etc. are permitted outside of Whitley County without a permit. This quarantine is being enforced by state law enforcement as well as DNR law enforcement officials. At this time, we are not anticipating pesticide treatment for any city trees should that become a necessity due to current budgetary constraints.

Trees and shrubs are an important part of the city and contribute to the overall quality of life in Columbia City. Trees promote healthier communities, leaves filter the air we breathe by removing dust and other particles (it is estimate that 1 tree can absorb 1,000 pounds of CO<sub>2</sub>), trees can also absorb rainfall helping to reduce the release of overflow sewage into the rivers during heavy rains, trees moderate climate, conserve water and provide habitat for wildlife, reduce the heat island effect caused by pavement and buildings, properly placed trees can increase property values and commercial buildings in wooded areas rent quicker and tenants stay longer just to name a few of the benefits our city landscape can bring to the table.

Eddie Beagles

Tree Board President