



Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes
September 4, 2025, 10:00 AM Central Time
Virtual Meeting

Board Members Attending:

Rachel Barker- Chair
David Gorden - Chair Elect
Sam VanMaanen - Vice Chair
Jon Hicks - Treasurer
Patrick Franklin - Past Chair
Anne Beard - Trustee
Kyle McCann - Trustee
Cindy Schwab - Trustee
Andrew Koeser - Trustee

Staff Attending:

Dr. Paul Putman-President and CEO
Jonathan Cain - Communications and Engagement Manager
Suzette Guzman-Brown - Operations and Governance
Coordinator

Absent:

Lori Brockelbank – Trustee
Dan Herms – Trustee
Megan Fielding – Trustee

Members Attending Late:

Asia Downtin – Trustee
De'Etra Young – Trustee

The meeting was called to order at 10:03 AM Central Time by Board Chair Barker. A quorum was established with 9 of 14 Trustees present.

I. Approval of Meeting Minutes

The minutes of the May 20, 2025 meeting were reviewed. A motion to approve the minutes was made by Vice Chair VanMaanen and seconded by Treasurer Hicks. With no abstentions or objections, the motion was passed unanimously by those present. The minutes were approved as presented.

Note that Trustees Brockelbank, Downtin, Fielding, Herms, and Young were not present for the vote.

II. Consent Agenda

Treasurer Hicks made a motion to approve the consent agenda as presented. The motion was seconded by Trustee Schwab. With no objections or abstentions, motion carried.

Note that Trustees Herms, Fielding, Downtin, and Young were not present for the vote.

Note: At 10:06 AM, Trustee Young joined the meeting.



III. President/CEO's Report – President/CEO Dr. Putman

Dr. Putman presented his report, which was discussed by the Board.

- Ongoing Partnership Cultivation
 - Outreach is being made to Arbnet and their consortium of arboretums, including the Morton Arboretum, and the Chicago Community Trees Initiative
- Fall Grant Making Cycle
 - As of the meeting date, 140 letters of intent have been received and 17 fully submitted applications.
- Monthly Updates
 - Dr. Putman asked for feedback on the monthly updates he has been providing to the Board. Trustees responded that they found them helpful.
- ISA Conference-New Zealand
 - TREE Fund silent auction was cancelled due to lack of donations. Dr. Putman is working with Caitlin Pollihan on ideas to raise TREE Fund's visibility at the 2026 ISA Conference in Detroit.
- Other Items
 - The Asplundh Hyland Johns Endowed Research Fund will be announced on September 10 at the Trees and Utilities Conference at the awards luncheon.
 - The first installment of \$250,000 was received from the second research fund [to be announced May 2026] towards their \$500,000 gift. It's been invested in a short-term CD while other investment options are examined. The second installment is due in December.

IV. Board Giving – Chair Barker

Chair Barker gave a call to action to the Trustees regarding fundraising, emphasizing Section 2 of the Board Handbook, Trustees are expected to make an annual personal gift to TREE Fund, as well as cultivate, solicit, and source individual and corporate contributors. While endowment giving has been robust, operating funds are facing a shortfall and there is still a \$300,000 gap in fundraising. A fundraising briefing document is being created.

Note: At 10:11, Trustee Downtin joined the meeting.

V. Financial Report – Treasurer Hicks, Dr. Putman

Treasurer Hicks presented the July Financial Report and 2024 Audit, which were discussed by the Board.

- Reporting of funds has been more transparent with the breakdown of Program vs. Operating expenses, especially the reporting of the State Gamelands fund.
- There is a shortfall in the operating budget, \$40,000 of which is carried over from previous years.
- Dr. Putman highlighted and gave a brief history of the administrative fees for funds that were enacted by the Board.
 - This year there is a little over \$30,000 in fees that are being released from restricted to unrestricted.
 - As part of the effort to diversify funding streams for TREE Fund, Dr. Putman and the rest of the staff continue to explore new partnerships and opportunities.
- Tour des Trees



- Treasurer Hicks noted that there are funds still coming in from the event, and that expenses were kept in check. So far, TREE Fund is seeing a net gain of \$100,000.
- Other Items
 - TREE Fund's total assets have mostly seen an increase year over year since 2022.
 - The Audit and Finance Committee is seeking another investment advisor in addition to the Chicago Community Trust.
 - Dr. Putman gave an overview of the CD's that have matured and were reinvested.
 - Dr. Putman acknowledged the efforts of the Development Committee's efforts on the sponsorship campaign, which started with 130 prospects and has 70 prospects remaining. A survey will be going out asking Trustees for input on areas and types of organizations for outreach.

VI. Motion to Accept 2025 Audited Financials

A motion was made by Trustee Beard to accept the 2025 Audited Financials as presented and seconded by Trustee Gorden. After a brief discussion surrounding cash being held in money market accounts and if they were interest-bearing and with no objections or abstentions, the motion passed.

Note that Trustees Brockelbank, Fielding, and Herms were not present and did not vote.

VII. Tour des Trees Update - Jonathan Cain - Communications and Engagement Manager

Communications and Engagement Manager Cain began by acknowledging Trustees who participated in the ride and surrounding events.

- Over the entire week about 420 miles were covered in five days.
- There were 60 riders and 15 volunteers involved.
- 15 of the 23 domestic ISA Chapters were represented, as well as Chapters from Canada and the United Kingdom.
- Event Highlights
 - There were five tree plantings, six presentations to youth groups by Professor Pricklethorn, and three professional learning events.
 - Sponsors included Bartlett, ArborMetrics, Bandit Industries, Morbark, Asplundh, Vermeer, Vermeer Midwest, SavATree, ISA Michigan, and Wright Service Corp.
 - A special tree was planted in honor of Gwen Gilens, who had recently passed away. Her husband Al also set up a special fundraising page in her honor.
 - Jo Nakoff was presented with the annual Ken Ottman Volunteer Award.
- Fundraising
 - Dr. Putman gave an overview of the Tour des Trees Budget, which was \$391,000, with \$329,313 raised, leaving a gap of over \$61,000. \$17,000 of which has been identified, leaving a gap of around \$40,000.
 - TREE Fund does not budget an actual cost per rider due to the varying number of riders year-to-year, but the cost this year was approximately \$3,000 per rider.
 - Dr. Putman also shared the fundraising efficiency ratio per Charity Navigator. The standard is \$0.35 for every dollar raised. This year the Tour des Trees spent \$0.52 for every dollar raised, while last year it was \$0.72 for every dollar raised.



- 2026 Tour des Trees will be in North Carolina and the dates are set for September 12 through 18.

VIII. Old Business

- Strategic Plan
 - Dr. Putman presented an overview, which included Audience Prioritization for outreach. A survey will be sent later to get feedback from Trustees on which areas in order of priority.

A motion to approve the Strategic Plan as presented was made by Treasurer Hicks and seconded by Chair Elect Gorden. With no objections or abstentions, the motion carried.

Note: Trustees Brocklebank, Fielding and Herms were not present and did not vote.

IX. New Business

- Board Handbook Section 5: Financial and Gift Policies

A motion to accept the updated version of Section 5 of the Board Handbook was made by Chair Elect Gorden and seconded by Trustee Downtin. With no objections or abstentions, the motion carried.

Note: Trustees Brockelbank, Fielding and Herms were not present and did not vote.

- Board Handbook Section 6: Operating Policies (Employment Handbook)

A motion was made to accept the updated version of Section 6 as presented was made by Trustee Koeser, and seconded by Trustee Beard. With no abstentions or objections, the motion was unanimously carried.

Note: Trustees Brockelbank, Fielding, and Herms were not present and did not vote.

- Board Handbook Section 7: Business Continuity and Risk Management Policies

A motion was made to accept the updated version of Section 7 as presented was made by Trustee Beard and seconded by Trustee McCann. With no abstentions or objections, the motion was unanimously carried.

Note: Trustees Brockelbank, Fielding, and Herms were not present and did not vote.

- Urban and Community Forestry Society (UCFS) – Urban Forest Foundation Fund (UFFF)
 - This is being set up more of an agency-type fund and not a full endowment, building on the partnership with UCFS.
 - The amount to be distributed will be based on 5% of the three-year average of the fund, with TREE Fund collecting a small administrative fee.
- Utility Arborist Association (UAA) - Utility Arborist Research Fund (UARF)
 - The fund has over \$1 million in its endowment and has granted out nearly \$800,000 in research funds.



- UAA has approved the revised fund agreement to keep the UARF going in perpetuity.
- TREE Fund receives \$16,000 in administrative fees annually for the fund.
- There will be a signing event at the Trees and Utilities Conference since this is in honor of UARF's 15-Year Anniversary.

A motion was made to accept the UCFS and UARF fund agreements as presented was made by Trustee Beard and seconded by Trustee Downtin. With no abstentions or objections, the motion was unanimously carried.

Note: Trustees Brockelbank, Fielding, and Herms were not present and did not vote.

- TREE Fund Board of Trustees Self-Assessment
 - Chair Barker gave an overview of the assessment and questions that will be asked of the Board, which will be sent out after the meeting. The results are to be discussed during the Board meeting in December.
- Board Skills and Competencies Matrix
 - Dr. Putman explained that this will be used to better inform the Nominations Committee of what talents and strengths there are among the Trustees. This will be sent out in the form of a survey after the meeting.

X. Next Trustee Meeting

- Chair Barker announced that the December Board Meeting will be held at the ISA Headquarters in Atlanta and will be on the 2nd and 3rd. Dr. Putman also gave a brief overview of logistics and the agenda.
 - The Board will meet on Tuesday the 2nd, with the joint Board and Liaisons meeting taking place on Wednesday the 3rd.
 - The goal is to have all 23 of the domestic ISA Chapters represented on the committee and to have more collaboration between the Trustees and the Liaisons.
 - Trustee Beard brought up the idea of offering CEUs for attending the meeting. Dr. Putman said that he will be speaking with Caitlin Pollihan of ISA and will bring the possibility up.
 - Dr. Putman clarified costs covered by TREE Fund

There being no further business, at 11:49 AM Central, the Board of Trustees meeting adjourned to the Executive Session.

At 12:20 PM Central Time, a motion was made to adjourn the meeting by Trustee Koeser and seconded by Treasurer Hicks. With no objections or abstentions, the meeting was adjourned.

Note: Trustees Brockelbank, Fielding, and Herms were not present and did not vote.

Minutes prepared and submitted by SGB

Approved December 2, 2025