



Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes - DRAFT
December 2, 2025 – 8:00 AM Eastern Time
International Society of Arboriculture
270 Peachtree St NW, the Falcon’s Conference Room, Atlanta GA

Members Attending in Person: Rachel Barker - Chair
David Gorden - Chair Elect
Sam VanMaanen - Vice Chair
Jon Hicks - Treasurer
Patrick Franklin - Past Chair
Anne Beard – Trustee
Lori Brockelbank – Trustee
Asia Dowtin – Trustee, ISA Component Council
Megan Fielding – Trustee
Andrew Koeser – Trustee
Cindy Schwab – Trustee

Members Attending Virtually: Kyle McCann – Trustee

Staff Attending in Person: Paul Putman – President/CEO
Jonathan Cain - Communications and Engagement Manager
Heath Hupke - Grants and Development Manager

Staff Attending Virtually: Suzette Guzman-Brown – Operations and Governance Coordinator

Absent: De’Etra Young - Trustee

The meeting was called to order at 8:01 AM Eastern Time by Board Chair Barker. A quorum was established with 12 of 13 present.

I. Consent Agenda – Chair Barker

Treasurer Hicks made a motion to approve the consent agenda as presented, which included the minutes of the September 4, 2025, Board of Trustees Meeting and the December 11, 2024, Joint Board of Trustees and Liaisons Meeting. The motion was seconded by Trustee Dowtin. With no objections or abstentions, carried.

Note: Trustee Young was not present and did not vote.

II. President/CEO 2025 Report – CEO/President Dr. Putman

Dr. Putman began by sharing a letter of thanks from a previous scholarship recipient. He then presented his report and highlighted major milestones.



- New milestone: TREE Fund has made over \$6 million in grants and endowments and there is over \$6 million in endowment.
- 2025 was the 10th anniversary of the webinar series, and the 15th anniversary of the Utility Arboriculture Research Fund.
- New hosted funds and agreements signed, and significant commitments include:
 - \$500,000 from Asplundh for Hyland Johns.
 - \$500,000 from new fund to be announced in May 2026.
- Scholarship applications and research proposals have grown substantially.
- Dr. Putman is in talks about another project to have the endowment managed by TREE Fund.

Other items presented and discussed were TREE Fund's ratings with Guidestar/Candid, the Better Business Bureau, and Charity Navigator and challenges to nonprofits across the board, as well as the Board Self-Assessment survey and Dr. Putman's travel for the past year.

III. 2025 Budget Update – Treasurer Hicks

Treasurer Hicks presented an update from October and 2025, which were discussed by the Trustees.

- The 2025 operating budget is showing a \$43K deficit partially offset by expense management. Assets reached nearly \$7.5M.
- Chicago Community Trust is changing their reporting platform. Therefore, the latest statement from them is dated June 30th.
- At a special meeting of the Audit and Finance Committee, three investment advisors were selected to interview to manage TREE Fund's restricted funds not held at Chicago Community Trust. Interviews to be conducted in mid-December.

IV. Budget 2026 Presentation and Vote – Treasurer Hicks

The budget for 2026 was reviewed and discussed by the Board. A motion was made to approve the 2026 budget as presented by Chair Elect Gordon and seconded by Vice Chair VanMaanen. With no objections or abstentions, the motion passed unanimously.

At 9:25 AM, the meeting adjourned for a break and returned at 9:44 AM.

Note: At this time, Treasurer Hicks left the meeting.

V. Research and Education – Trustee and Research and Education Chair Koeser

- Overview of new structure
 - Trustee Koeser presented a slate of candidates to fill out the roster of the Committee, including recommendations for grant panel chairs.
- Update on Fall 2025 Grantmaking
 - There were 128 competed submissions for grant programs for the fall cycle of 2025.
 - Panels are filled and submissions are being reviewed, with discussions scheduled for the week of December 8th, with goal to have concluded by pre-holiday break.
- Restructuring of Review Process
 - Trustee Koeser presented an overview of the restructured process, including timelines and benefits.



- Multiple panel chairs will lead groups of reviewers for each grant program, which is expected to streamline the review process and lead to more informed discussions.
- Documentation of Policies and Procedures
 - Included are Conflicts of Interests, Recusals, use of AI, and outline of Review Panels.
- Strategic Plan
 - Goals include update of Impact Report, calculation of ROI, and hosting of a Research Summit Symposium in 2028.

VI. Intermezzo – CEO/President Dr. Putman and Grants and Development Manager Hupke
Dr. Putman and Grants and Development Manager Hupke gave an overview of appeals in 2025, including timeline of when campaigns went out and their effectiveness. Individual giving is down significantly.

At 12:09 PM , the meeting adjourned for lunch and returned at 1:01 PM.

Note: At this time, Trustee Brockelbank left the meeting.

VII. Financial Strategy and Endowment Plan - CEO/President Dr. Putman

Dr. Putman began by recapping the fee structure approved by the Board for administration of funds. The goal is to get to a sustainable model where the operating budget would be covered by TREE Fund's administration fees. He then presented three possible scenarios:

- 1: Build up endowments to the point where fees cover operating expenses.
- 2: Create an endowment specifically for operating expenses.
- 3: A combination of the two (which is most realistic scenario).

VIII. Election of Trustees and Officers – Chair Barker

- Recognition of Outgoing Trustees
 - Lori Brockelbank
 - Dan Herms
 - De'Etra Young
- Vote on Trustee Renewals (two-year terms)
 - Asia Dowtin
 - Jon Hicks

Chair Barker called for a motion to approve the renewals as presented, which was made by Trustee Beard and seconded by Trustee Kooser. With no objections and one abstention, renewals were approved.

Note: Trustees Brockelbank and Young and Treasurer Hicks were absent and did not vote. Trustee Dowtin abstained.

- Vote on new Trustees (Two-year terms)
 - Carol Donnelly



- Christina Bazanson
- Vivek Shandas

Chair Barker called for a motion to approve the new members as presented, which was made by Trustee Schwab and seconded by Trustee Downtin. With no objections or abstentions, new Trustees were approved.

Note: Trustees Brockelbank and Young and Treasurer Hicks were absent and did not vote.

- Vote on Slate of Officers (one-year terms):
 - Chair – David Gorden
 - Chair Elect – Sam VanMaanen
 - Vice Chair – Jon Hicks
 - Secretary/Treasurer – Carol Donnelly

Chair Barker called for a motion to approve the slate of officers as presented, which was made by Past Chair Franklin and seconded by Trustee Schwab. With no objections or abstentions, officers were approved.

Note: Trustees Brockelbank and Young and Treasurer Hicks were absent and did not vote.

IX. Confirmation of Committee Chair Appointments – Chair Barker

- Vote on Committee Chair Appointments (one-year terms):
 - Audit and Finance Committee – Carol Donnelly
 - Research and Education Committee – Andrew Koeser
 - Development Committee – Sam VanMaanen
 - Communications Committee – Asia Downtin
 - Liaison Chair and Vice Chair will be elected at Liaison Meeting

Chair Barker called for a motion to approve the Committee Chairs as presented, which was made by Chair Elect Gordon and seconded by Trustee Fielding. With no objections and three abstentions, Committee Chairs were approved.

Note: Trustees Brockelbank and Young and Treasurer Hicks were absent and did not vote. Trustees Downtin and Koeser and Vice Chair VanMaanen abstained.

X. Vote on External Appointments – Chair Barker

- ISA Component Council – Anne Beard (2-year term)

Chair Barker called for a motion to approve the appointment to the ISA Component Council as presented, which was made by Trustee Downtin and seconded by Vice Chair VanMaanen. With no objections and one abstention, appointment was approved.



Note: Trustees Brockelbank and Young and Treasurer Hicks were absent and did not vote. Trustee Beard abstained.

XI. Old Business – Chair Barker

- Board Self-Assessment

Dr. Putman gave an overview of the highest and lowest rankings of the Self-Assessment survey.

- There needs to be a greater focus on onboarding new Trustees.
- Overall, the Board is functioning well.
- There was discussion on how to get better responses to surveys.

- Trustee Skills/Competencies

Dr. Putman gave an overview of the highest and lowest rankings of the Trustee Skills and Competencies survey.

- The survey will be used to inform Board Nominations Subcommittee of the Executive and Governance committee.

- Priority Audiences

Dr. Putman gave an overview of the Priority Audiences survey,

- Only 25% of Trustees had responded.
- There is a three-year outreach plan aligned with Strategic Plan that was approved by the Board of Trustees.

At 1:52 PM the Board of Trustees adjourned for a break and returned at 2:05 PM.

Note: At this time, Trustee Brockelbank returned to the meeting.

XII. New Business - Barker

- Investment Strategy Update – Dr. Putman (for Treasurer Hicks)

Dr. Putman gave an overview of the three investment funds that were being considered for restricted funds going forward.

- Interviews with all three are scheduled for later in December, with the goal of having funds invested by the May Board of Trustees meeting.

- 2026 Calendar – Dr. Putman

Dr. Putman reviewed the preliminary calendar for 2026, which was discussed by the Board.

- Preliminary dates for Board of Trustees meetings are May 19th and possibly 20th, September 3rd, and December 8th and 9th.

XIII. Committee Goals and Report-Outs – Dr. Putman

Dr. Putman gave an overview of the Goals Dashboard showing each Committee's 2025 goals and updates on progress, as well as 2026 goals, which will be discussed during the Joint Board of Trustees and Liaisons meeting on December 3rd. Reports on progress of each Committee were highlighted by Chairs, with Dr. Putman representing Treasurer Hicks for the Audit and Finance Committee.

There being no further business, at 3:07 PM Eastern, the Board of Trustees adjourned to Executive Session.



At 3:42 PM Eastern and there being no further business, Chair Barker called for a motion to adjourn the Executive Session. The motion was made by Trustee Downtin and seconded by Vice Chair VanMaanen. With no objections or abstentions, the motion carried.

Note: Trustee Downtin and Treasurer Hicks were absent and did not vote.

Minutes prepared and submitted by SGB

Approved May 21, 2026