

Natural Resources Commission

Meeting Minutes December 2, 2020 (WebEx)

Attendance: Commissioners: Judy Gibbs, Brandon Krumwiede, John Lindgren, Nancy Schuldt, Tiffany Sprague, Brian Fredrickson, Mike Schrage, Brandon Van Tassel, Mike Pennington.

City Staff: Diane Desotelle, Natural Resources Coordinator; Jennifer Ondrik, Administrative Clerical Specialist; Clark Christenson, City Forester; Jim Filby Williams, Director of Property, Parks & Libraries. Doug Mensing - Applied Ecological Surveys (AES).

Call to Order:

The meeting started at 6:05 p.m.

Hartley Native Plant Community Management Plan

The Commission discussed final edits on the draft Hartley Native Plant Community Management Plan. AES will ensure to address (via footnote) the recent change in grey wolf status. The group discussed the need for a long-term-funding strategy for restoration work within the park. Director Filby Williams shared that that City recognizes the importance of the intact natural systems at Hartley and assured the Commission that general fund dollars would continue to be allocated to prioritize restoration efforts. The Commission voted to approve the draft Management plan with the discussed edit. **VOTE : 9 (Yes) to 0 (No)**

Natural Resource Coordinator Report (Diane Desotelle)

Diane updated the Commission on progress made on the Natural Resources Management Program Plan. Currently she is working on gathering data and formalizing a mechanism to collaborate and share information. Diane shared the names of Natural Resource experts that were selected to be part of a Technical Team. The Team will meet for a second time in March to help lay out a path forward on plan implementation. Diane explained how she will utilize a decision support tool (developed by the EPA) that will be helpful in identifying questions and organizing program priorities. Finally, she explained how the Natural Resource Commissioners will act as a second set of eyes alongside of the Technical Team and ensured that she would update the Commission regularly.

EPA Grant – Work continues on the acquisition of tax-forfeit land in the St. Louis River Estuary. This project is moving forward, we are generating our parcel listing and will be meeting with St. Louis County next week.

Lastly, she shared that her work group visited the 30-acre area that will be restored as part of the grant. The group spent some time identifying plantings that will need to be ordered this winter for restoration work this spring.

Forester's Report (Clark Christenson)

Clark reported that his AmeriCorps member had made significant progress on conducting a tree inventory in our Tier One parks, this is 90% completed and will be finalized this spring. He shared that the City of Rochester is in the process of rolling out their Urban Forest Management plan and that his intention was to mimic this plan in the near future for Duluth. He reported that removal of EAB trees was nearing 700 total. Lastly, that 2 new Park Maintenance employees were recently hired.

Directors Report (Jim Filby Williams – Director of Property, Parks, & Libraries)

Director Filby Williams updated the Commission on the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between the City of Duluth and Saint Louis County. This MOA will go before City Council on December 15th and describes the process by which the parties will negotiate the selection and basis for conveyance of up to \$4.6 million dollars of ecologically valuable tax-forfeit land. Next steps in mid-January are for the City to submit the initial parcel selections to the County for consideration (based on the guidelines approved by the NRC). The final list of parcels will be brought back to the NRC and other city bodies for review and/or approval in the near future.

Announcements

None

Adjournment:

There was a motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:47, M/S/C.