

Natural Resources Commission

Meeting Minutes March 3, 2021 (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; Jim Shoberg, Senior Parks Planner.

Call to Order:

The meeting started at 6:04 p.m.

Forest Revitalization Project Plan

Clark Christenson, City Forester, gave an overview of the public meeting and comments received for the Forest Stand Revitalization project as a follow-up to his comprehensive presentation to the Commission in February. He responded to questions received about slash and strategies related to re-generation by clarifying that slash from the harvest will be left on the ground and mitigation strategies such as fencing or bud-capping may be included if it will increase the White Pine regeneration success in locations with high density deer populations.

Clark received ten public comments through the public engagement process. Seven were in support of the project. The overall feedback was positive with a few concerns and technical suggestions. As a result of the feedback and discussions, the Izaak Walton League ([Ike's](#)) submitted a project proposal through the [Parks and Recreation project proposal process](#) with full support from City staff. Their proposal is to provide for a passive approach to managing the stand at Spirit Mountain; the City's internal review team will be meeting later this month to discuss the proposal, and if approved, prepare an agreement with the Ike's for working in this area.

It is to be noted that the collective comments received from the public engagement meetings held in February regarding the Forest Revitalization Plan were not shared with the Natural Resource Commissioners until Thursday, March 4th. The consolidated public comments were also posted to the NRC Boards & Commission webpage on Thursday, April 1st and can be found here: <https://duluthmn.gov/media/WebSubscriptions/196/20210401-196-12702.pdf>

The Commission voted to adopt the [Forest Revitalization Project Plan](#), as presented, including support of the Ike's management aid at the Spirit Mountain location. **Vote: 9 – Yes, 0 – No.**

Natural Resource Management Program Plan & NR Coordinator Report (Diane Desotelle)

Diane presented to the Commission her work over the past month on the Duluth's first natural resources management program plan. This program plan will be used to set the foundation for natural resource priorities and strategies to accomplish work. Diane explained how the City hopes to include alternative recommendations based on existing knowledge and understanding of funding and staffing. She updated the Commission on the Technical Support team developed to help guide this plan and explained that a decision support tool is being developed by the EPA to help document and gauge the appropriateness of proposed and existing projects.

Diane also updated the Commission on the acquisition of critical tax forfeit lands for permanent protection and explained the stacked GIS layering mechanism used to identify lands with natural resource significance. Lastly, she discussed a draft timeline for public engagement.

Forester's Report (Clark Christenson)

Clark reported that he and his crew have been focusing on pruning efforts throughout town and are currently in the Morgan Park neighborhood. Efforts will soon shift to emerald ash borer impacted tree removals (identified by green ribbons) with a major focus in West Duluth and Lincoln Park neighborhood's. Park Maintenance will be applying for a grant to assist with problematic EAB removals.

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

Director Filby Williams answered questions from Commissioners.

Public Comments

Louise Levy – Expressed disappointment that the NRC did not receive the public comments and input related to the Forest Revitalization Project held on February 11th prior to our meeting this evening. In addition, she expressed frustration with the WebEx system with not being able to view other attendee's during the virtual meetings.

Announcements

Commissioner Van Tassel's term expires this month and this will be his last meeting. The Commission will discuss electing a volunteer interim secretary in April and City staff will initiate the search to fill his vacancy with the Clerks department.

Adjournment:

There was a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:08, M/S/C.