

Urban Forest Commission

Meeting Minutes January 16, 2019

Attendance:

Commissioners: Christine Penney (telephone), Brandon Van Tassel, Beth Kleinke, Jim Lemmerman, Susan Stanich, Mike Pennington, Judy Gibbs (recorded session).

City Staff: Diane Desotelle, Natural Resources Coordinator; Clark Christenson, Forester; Erik Birkeland, Ex-Officio; City Councilor Em Westerlund (not present)

Call to Order:

The meeting started at 6:02 pm.

Minute Approval:

A motion was made to approve the minutes from the September 19th, 2018, Meeting. M/S/C.

Public Comment Period:

Jim Barott, Soil Scientist with the US Forest Service, spoke on his interest in becoming a commissioner. Jim shared his relevant experience with urban forestry and that now that he is a Duluth citizen, he is eligible to apply. Erik Birkeland explained that due to the UFC transition to a Natural Resources Commission, applications are on hold until the proposed commission transition is voted on. He encouraged Jim to apply, however, in the near future.

Forester's Report (Clark Christenson – City Forester)

Clark reported he and his crew were finishing up with Ash tree removals with only a few more days of stump grinding in the Lakeside neighborhood. He indicated that some dead oak were also removed at Enger. Park Maintenance frequently lends a hand in snow removal and between assisting with that and the holidays they were a bit behind schedule. Their focus will soon shift to pruning activities beginning at 22nd Ave West and moving west.

Natural Resources Report (Diane Desotelle– Natural Resources Coordinator)

Diane commented she is excited and looking forward to the transition of the UFC to a Natural Resources Commission. She commented she has been working diligently behind the scenes to assist in getting the ordinance language ready for UFC review before it goes to the City Council.

In addition, she has also been working on an Invasive Species Management Plan for the City to help streamline and track our efforts and increase monitoring. The city received a grant from the MN Department of Agriculture to control up to 30 Japanese Knotweed sites, an aggressive invasive plant. As part of the grant match, the Duluth Invader crews will concentrate efforts on Wild Parsnip eradication along the St. Louis River. Diane shared that just recently the city received approval for a small educational grant to focus on increasing knowledge and understanding of the CD3 station recently installed at Munger Landing. The waterless boat cleaning station helps to reduce the spread of aquatic invasive species in our area. Finally, she reported spending time dedicated to stream work and has been working with the MN Pollution Control Agency to identify potential sources of E.coli in impaired streams with a total maximum daily load. The City has secured some funding earmarked for this work and now we are in need of a citywide plan.

Old Business:

UFC View shed Policy Subcommittee – Tabled

UFC Term Limits – Tabled

New Business:

UFC Transition Update (Erik Birkeland)

Erik reported that the transition to a Natural Resources Commission has been steadily advancing and is moving forward toward a City Council vote. The City has drafted ordinance language and a timeline for the conversion. Erik thanked Diane for her hard work and dedication over the past few months. City Administration and the Attorney’s office vetted a preliminary redlined version of the ordinance that was shared with commissioners earlier this week via email.

Erik indicated that as we review the draft ordinance language this evening that City Administration asked him to emphasize the following points:

- Adding *resiliency* language to the power of duties as we have come to see the impacts of devastating recent storms.
- Incorporating the DNAP – Duluth’s Natural Area Program
- Membership – encouraging current members to continue with their current terms and consider another term if they are willing.
- Consider refreshing the UFC Bylaws, not tonight but in the next couple of months.

He then shared the following timeline for the proposed transition from the UFC to a the Natural Resources Commission (see below)

UFC to Natural Resources Commission Timeline

January 16, 2019	UFC meeting	Review and approve draft ordinance.
Mid-Jan to Mid-Feb	Outreach to stakeholders	
February 11, 2019	Council meeting	First reading of ordinance
February 20, 2019	UFC meeting	Work on NRC bylaws
February 25, 2019	Council meeting	Second reading and vote
March 20, 2019	UFC meeting	Work on NRC bylaws
March 27, 2019	New ordinance in effect	
April 17, 2019	First meeting of NRC	Approve NRC bylaws
May 1, 2019	Deadline to fill two vacant NRC seats	

Diane Desotelle thanked the commissioners for all of the background work defining the scope and purpose of a Natural Resources Commission over the past months and emphasized that while ordinance language is inherently cut and dry, some of the language will best be used for the NRCs bylaws. She also wanted to share that the attorneys office thought it important for everyone to see the redlines to the ordinance as the City is amending the existing Urban Forest Commission ordinance, rather than creating a new one. City *owned* and City *managed* lands were included

because there are some private lands the City manages. Staff suggested the attorneys consider language in Sec. 2-127, powers & duties that relates to climate resiliency and adaptation.

Susan Stanich shared a phrase for consideration in the new commission's powers and duties. This phrase incorporated language from previous discussions on the emotional and spiritual benefits from emersion of natural surroundings. Susan agreed to get the phrase to Erik Birkeland and Diane Desotelle for the attorney's consideration.

Diane Desotelle asked the commissioners to get any *substantial* changes to the draft ordinance language to her by February 1st as the deadline for submission to the next council meeting is scheduled for February 11th.

Erik was asked to comment on the membership of the new commission. Erik explained that we are proposing current UFC commissioners remain until their term expires and add to the commission members as capacity allows. He commented that while administration values the current commissions' experience and technical expertise, we want to be able to expand the technical expertise by filling in the two vacancies and those whose terms are expiring. He also encouraged commissioners to consider another term. Erik shared that the clerk's office is currently streamlining the application and selection process for potential commissioners. Beth Kleinke stated that she for one was excited to assist with the task of recruiting additional commissioners. Brandon Van Tassel shared that while he understood the need to keep the ordinance language as flexible as possible, he encouraged targeting candidates with professional experience in both soils and hydrology.

Over the next few weeks, city staff will conduct outreach calls to stakeholders informing them of the proposed new commission and timeline. Erik suggested that it could be helpful for commissioners to attend the council meeting on February 11th to show support at the first reading of the ordinance. Christine Penney shared that she was in formal support of the direction and timeline of the transition. Erik Birkeland concluded that he was pleased to have the support of the commission and was excited to pass along the message to administration.

The group agreed to come prepared to the next meeting on February 20th to discuss the new bylaws should the ordinance amendment pass.

Brandon Van Tassel shared with the group that the 7th Biennial Upper Midwest Invasive Species conference is likely being held in Duluth in October of 2020! For additional information see: <https://www.umisc.net/>

Adjournment:

There was a motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:48, M/S/C.