

Natural Resources Commission

Meeting Minutes July 17, 2019

Attendance:


Commissioners: Brandon Van Tassel, Beth Kleinke, Susan Stanich, Judy Gibbs, John Lindgren, Nancy Schuldt, Brandon Krumwiede, Mike Schrage, Mike Pennington.

City Staff: Jim Filby Williams, Director of Administration; Diane Desotelle, Natural Resources Coordinator; Clark Christenson, Forester; Jennifer Ondrik, Administrative Clerical Specialist.

Call to Order:

The meeting started at 6:04 pm.

Minute Approval:

A motion was made to approve the minutes from the June 19th, 2019, Meeting.  M/S/C.

Public Comment Period: No comments

New Business:

Officer's discussion and vote:

Jim Pennington was elected as interim Chair up to the first annual meeting vote in September. Mike Schrage was elected as Vice Chair. Brandon Van Tassel was elected as Secretary.

Bylaws discussion and vote:

The group discussed the bylaws. John Lindgren requested clarification on the Commissions duties in *developing recommendations* and *soliciting public input*. Jim Filby Williams explained that that generally City staff solicit input and develop drafts and then obtain the Commission's and the public's input. He shared that in most other Commissions the City brings forth proposals and the Commissions role as a legislative body is to discuss, amend, and/or adopt and support the draft. The group discussed serving on subcommittees and agreed that commissioners could both participate in the development of recommendations while serving on a subcommittee and vote on those recommendations. All major issues passed by the Commission will be passed on to City Council or the appropriate commission for adoption.

A motion was made to adopt the bylaws pending a few minor grammatical and wording changes. Jennifer Ondrik will make the updates and obtain Secretary Van Tassel's signature. The bylaws will be given to the Clerks office and posted to the website.

DNAP Ordinance, Guidelines, Viewshed and Tree Ordinance Discussion Q&A:

Diane Desotelle and Clark Christenson answered commissioners specific questions related to the major guiding principles this group will be referencing.

Clark agreed to bring forth any recommended changes needed in these documents for practical on-the-ground forestry solutions. He explained that while some of the existing viewshed guidelines are a bit vague, he indicated that he receives only a handful of complaints a year, and therefore, the ordinance review is not a high priority at this time. As for the Duluth Natural Areas

Program, Diane said she has been keeping a list of areas where amendments are needed for the Commission's future work.

Old Business:

Forester's Report (Clark Christenson – City Forester)

Clark reported that spring planting in Lakeside has been completed, close to 200 trees were put in the ground. Crews will continue planting work in the fall. Currently, he has been focusing on watering the new trees. Green water bags have been installed on new growth, this will increase the success rate during this very hot and dry season. Clark's seasonal employee continues to make progress on the city-wide boulevard tree data collection project. The inventory started in the west side of town and is moving east, currently we are halfway through Lincoln Park. Clark will see if he can schedule a date for this employee to provide an informational presentation to the Commission. Clark shared with the group his challenges of informing the public about the on-going forestry work. Nancy Shultz suggested utilizing a bi-monthly Lakeside / Lester Park newsletter called a "[Look at Lakeside](#)" and an online application called [Nextdoor](#) to keep the public informed on forestry issues.

Natural Resources Report (Diane Desotelle– Natural Resources Coordinator)

Diane informed the Commissioners on a collaborative land swap the City is working on with St. Louis County and the Minnesota Land Trust. The City is working with the County to develop a Memorandum Of Understanding for the project. The goal is for the City to become the owner of approximately 3,500 acres of tax forfeit land within Duluth from St. Louis County to permanently preserve the public benefits of these forest lands. At the same time, the county would become the owner of Potlatch lands being sold off outside the city for open space and timber management. Diane explained the Commission might be able to assist by reviewing the parameters developed to select lands appropriate for the project. This is a complicated process and, at the same time, an exciting opportunity to better re-align how our public lands are managed by compressing years of real estate and legislative work into a more or less single transaction.

Diane reported that the CD3 boat cleaning station at Munger Landing is going well. This new unit includes a wet/dry vacuum, high-pressure air hose, scrub brushes and other devices to help boaters clean their boats and trailers to reduce the spread of invasive species. The City has collaborated with CISMA and hosted a very productive "Pull Party" on July 10th for invasive Wild Parsnip along the Western Waterfront trail. On August 8th there will be a workshop on [Bohemian & Japanese Knotweed at the Hartley Nature Center at 6:00 PM](#). She encouraged the Commission to come and to share the event with others.

Diane is expecting stream sampling for E.coli on Tischer and Keene Creek to begin toward the end of July. The goal is to obtain additional information on potential sources of e-coli in order to plan for any necessary remediation projects.

The Hartley Natural Area Management Plan sub-committee will include Judy Gibbs, John Lindgren, and Mike Pennington along with a few Hartley Nature Center board members. They will assist in the development of the Plan. The project's goal is to have the first draft ready by the September 4th NRC meeting, then present to both the Parks & Recreation and Planning Commissions before going to Council before the end of the year.

Diane will coordinate an informational presentation on the habitat alternatives analysis for Mud Lake for the August 7th meeting. Ideally, Pat Collins, Natural Resources project lead for the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources may be able to present. A copy of the City's final report will be emailed to the Commission and can be found at: <https://duluthmn.gov/media/7954/may-1-2019-mud-lake-final-causeway-alternatives-report.pdf>

The August meeting will center around the preferred ecological alternatives and the Commissions' take on the differences between the proposed alternatives. At that time, the Commission may decide to submit a letter to the Parks and Recreation Commission who will be voting on a preferred alternative at their September 11th meeting. This topic will likely go before City Council toward the end of September.

Adjournment:

There was a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:17, M/S/C.