

# Natural Resources Commission

Meeting Minutes July 7, 2021 (WebEx)

## Attendance:

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

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

## Call to Order:

The meeting started at 6:11 p.m.

## New Business

### EPA Decision Support Tool – Joint Session with the Natural Resource Management Program Plan’s Technical Team Natural Resource Management Program Plan

Diane Desotelle, Natural Resources Coordinator gave a brief update on the Natural Resources Management Program Plan (NRMPP). The plan goal is to create tools and a process for Duluth and its’ partners to prioritize and complete natural resource related management work across the city.

A major component of the NRMPP is a decision support tool developed by the EPA Office of Research and Development aimed to review projects based on funding, staff, and natural resource components to help create a structure for project prioritization and implementation in conjunction with the City’s partners.

The major emphasis of the meeting was to present and discuss this decision support tool. Representatives from MN Land Trust together with the City’s NRMPP contractor, Emmons Olivier Resources and Hoisington Koegler Group participated in the working session with the Natural Resource Commissioners and members of the NRMPP – advisory Technical Team.

Comments and suggestions will be collected and Diane will work with the City’s partners and contractors to further refine and finalize this decision support tool as a component of the NRMPP.

### Natural Resources Coordinator Report

Due to time constraints at the meeting Diane Desotelle provided the attached report to the Commissioners.

### Forester’s Report

Due to time constraints at the meeting Clark Christenson provided the attached report to the Commissioners.

### **Director's Report (Jim Filby Williams – Director of Property, Parks, & Libraries)**

Director Filby Williams did not have an update for the Commissioners.

### **Announcements**

This will be our last virtual meeting, next month we will be meeting in person.

### **Public Comment**

David Schafroth requested additional information on the methodology behind the GIS mapping process related to development suitability in the City.

Tom Cortruvo inquired about trees along London Road.

### **Adjournment**

There was a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:55, M/S/C.

**To: Natural Resources Commissioners**

**From: Diane Desotelle, Natural Resources Coordinator**

**Date: July 7, 2020 –**

**Re: Natural Resources Coordinator monthly report to the Commission**

**Bow Hunt Ordinance Amendment** – The amendments approved by the NRC for the bow hunt ordinance had its' first reading at City Council on July 6<sup>th</sup>. A second reading is needed for ordinance changes and plans are to include this at the July 19 City Council.

**Strategic Public Lands Realignment Project** – The projects to permanently protect over 2,500 acres of tax forfeit lands which have significant environmental, recreational and/or storm water management value was presented informationally to the City Council at a Committee of the Whole meeting on June 21<sup>st</sup>. Public meetings providing similar information are planned for June 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup>. A [link](#) to where the public can view the maps and submit comments on the project is on the City's main website. Plans are to bring a final parcel list to the NRC for approval at the August 4<sup>th</sup> meeting.

**Grant Application to Plant Trees for EAB Areas** - The MN Land Trust is working with Community Action Duluth and the City to apply for a U.S. Forest Service Great Lakes Restoration Initiative grant to plant a diversity of native trees in the St. Louis River Natural Area where Ash is prevalent. This project is a good fit for the grant and meets the natural area's management plan goals to diversify and build a resilient native plant community in light of Emerald Ash Borer impacts.

**City Sustainability Advisory Team** - The initial charge of the Sustainability Advisory Team is to develop an overall strategy with a few actionable, high-level goals for the City on sustainability. The Team will assist the City to 1) determine high-level sustainability goals, 2) contribute to climate action work plan development, 3) prioritize actions, and 4) share technical knowledge and skills to contribute to City initiatives related to: energy and climate mitigation, climate adaptation and community resiliency, natural resources, sustainable buildings, and waste reduction. In April, the City Council approved a resolution that declared a climate emergency. The City is now taking on the development of a climate action work plan and I will be working with this group to help with the development. The goal is to have something drafted by the end of the year.

## **Forester's Report; July 7<sup>th</sup>, 2021**

With summer in full swing we are at the point where we are struggling to install the last of our “spring” plantings. Struggle is a strong word. It's more the tediousness of finding places for the last 2 dozen trees that are extra due to the ordering process. While the lack of rain in the past two months (very similar to the same period last year) has required us to spend several days watering, our overall progress is, unlike last year, headed in the right direction.

Ash locations are scattered throughout the city and generally don't hold to any pattern. Consequently our plantings are similarly scattered. One location where we were able to do a more thorough planting is the 4000 block of W 6<sup>th</sup> Street. Even that location is still missing trees because the supplier for yellowwood was unable to deliver.

That is the other story of planting in 2021. Roughly 20% of the trees we ordered were not delivered for various reasons. Strong consumer demand and poor overwintering success are the most cited reasons for not delivering trees. We can interpret that how we desire but it still leaves us with locations that we will need to backfill next year which only adds to the scattered nature of our planting. We will get that work done but it's an unnecessary wait that only adds to the public's (and my own!) frustration.

When planting is wrapped up we will start ash injections and continue with ash removals. The guidelines published by the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) state that ash should not be removed during the flight stage of EAB. This makes perfect sense in an area where the potential infestation is small and the potential to spread EAB to non-infested areas large. However, our current situation is not one of a discrete, tiny infestation. EAB is generally spread throughout the city with the exception of Gary/New Duluth and Fond du Lac.

After talking to the MDA they agreed that continuing ash removals during flight season is, in the name of public safety, the most prudent course of action. Once planting is done we will start injecting ash trees as per the EAB Management Plan and continue removing those trees with green ribbons wrapped around them.

Between tree planting and other small projects we have done some ash removals to fill time when needed. One in particular stands out. Near the Seafarer's Center at 2024 W 3<sup>rd</sup> Street stood a large ash that has been declining for several years, picture below. It was growing in a very difficult spot with concrete surrounding it on 2 sides, a gravel parking lot and a small strip of grass on the 2 remaining sides.

During removal the crew saw numerous EAB adults and had multiple land on their brightly colored shirts. It's unusual to see any adults so this was new for everyone. Once the tree was down one crew member counted rings on the stump

(standard procedure for any removal) and came up with 123 years which is both impressive and humbling. Considering the changes in immediate proximity to this tree and the history that passed below its canopy it's amazing it lasted that long. The fact that it died due to a pest that our systems of commerce inadvertently introduced is maddening.

Since we are on the topic of invasive species, the MDA has done some research on Amur corktree (*Phellodendron amurense*), one that was gaining in popularity as a street tree. Like our native ash trees, corktree has male and female plants. There are several varieties that claim to be male only and can be planted with no threat of escape. However, research done by the MDA indicates not all trees stay within their given sex and offspring can be produced.

Thankfully we only have a handful (18) of corktrees and all of them are located along 4th Street. We will be removing them this summer and replacing them next year.

I understand I won't be speaking at this next meeting. If you have any questions, comments or concerns I am always available via phone (218-730-4328) or email ([cchristenson@duluthmn.gov](mailto:cchristenson@duluthmn.gov)).



