



NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes September 7, 2022
Duluth City Hall, Conference Room 330

I. Call to Order

Chair Schrage called the meeting to order at 6:04 p.m.

II. Roll Call

Commissioners Present: Judy Gibbs, John Lindgren, Allison Ray, Mike Schrage, Nancy Schuldt, Tiffany Sprague
Absent: Sophia Green

Others Present: Councilor Terese Tomanek, Jim Filby Williams, Kate Kubiak, Clark Christenson, Allison Brooks

III. Approval of the Agenda

Commissioner Schuldt made a motion to approve the agenda as submitted. Kubiak added an agenda item – Public Lands Transfer update. Commissioner Lindgren seconded with addition. Unanimously Approved.

IV. Approval of the August 3, 2022 Meeting Minutes

Commissioner Lindgren made a motion to approve the August 3, 2022 meeting minutes as submitted; seconded by Commissioner Schuldt. Unanimously Approved.

V. Old Business

A.) Re-approval – City of Duluth Goose Management Plan (Kate Kubiak)

Kubiak provided an overview of the purpose of the Goose Management Plan. The Plan is the mechanism to allow Canada Goose management on property owned by the City of Duluth. By having the Plan in place, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources and partner organizations can pursue goose management on City property to support the reestablishment of wild rice in the St. Louis River Estuary. At this time, the City has no plans to pursue management beyond efforts to support the reestablishment of wild rice.

Commissioner Schuldt appreciates the detailed description of the largely unsuccessful non-lethal control methods that have been attempted. Commissioner Ray clarified that there would not be subsequent updates to the Goose Management Plan. Kubiak commented that the City of Duluth would host public meetings and engagement opportunities if the Plan were to be implemented for purposes of goose control outside of wild rice reestablishment efforts.

Commissioner Gibbs made a motion to approve the City of Duluth Goose Management Plan as submitted; seconded by Commissioner Schuldt. Unanimously Approved.

B.) Update – Open Commissioner Seats (Kate Kubiak)

Kubiak provided an update that there are two remaining vacancies and that there have been interviews with applicants. A new commissioner is intended to begin in October, and there is still one opening.

C.) Update – Commission involvement regarding upcoming Parks Levy (Nancy Schuldt)

Commissioner Schuldt prompted a discussion regarding the upcoming Parks Levy Increase Referendum and the NRC's role in advocating for the referendum. The goal of any literature produced by the NRC would be to



NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes September 7, 2022
Duluth City Hall, Conference Room 330

inform and persuade the public. Commissioner Lindgren commented that the NRC is well positioned to describe how the increased funding can be leveraged to secure additional outside grants and explain how the process creates significant improvements. Filby Williams reiterated that City of Duluth employees cannot advocate, but they can provide educational information. Commissioner Sprague commented that other commissions may be a good audience for a talking point from NRC to assist with disseminating accurate information. Commissioners Schuldt and Lindgren will continue to work on developing a letter.

D.) Update – Public Lands Transfer (Jim Filby Williams)

Filby Williams reviewed the selection process involved in establishing a plan for the available tax forfeit parcels. It has been important to strike a balance between the opportunity for development and the need for land protection, such that not all of the available undeveloped land is transferred to the City of Duluth. The selection of parcels involved a negotiation with St. Louis County where the City of Duluth demonstrated an interest in balancing development and protection. There has been agreement between the County and the City regarding the parcel acquisition. What remains to be decided is where some of the exceptionally large parcels will be split to facilitate protection and development as reasonable. As more information becomes certain, it will be shared with the NRC, including a map and an eventual action item for the Commission. In total, nearly 2,500 acres of tax forfeit land will be transferred from the County to the City.

VI. New Business

A.) NRC Officer Elections

Commissioner Sprague made a motion to approve the officer nominations as follows:

Chair: Commissioner Lindgren

Vice-Chair: Commissioner Schuldt

Secretary: Commissioner Gibbs

The motion was seconded by Commissioner Ray. Unanimously Approved.

VII. Staff Reports

A.) Natural Resources Coordinator Report (Kate Kubiak)

Kubiak commented that the Natural Areas Conference will be featuring a field trip where Kubiak will share the natural areas of Duluth with attendees. A first annual meeting will be held for the Natural Resources Management Program Plan (NRMPP) will be held October 7 from 9:00 – 11:00 a.m. at City Hall.

B.) Forester Report (Clark Christenson)

Christenson provided a brief overview of the forestry activities this summer. Commissioner Schrage asked about the abundance of tree cages that are at various sites around Duluth and asked what maintenance needs are present to address the cages. Filby Williams commented that the forestry team is almost entirely dedicated to Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) response work. Christenson responded that he is working to secure volunteers to remove cages from established trees and maintain the young trees.

An AmeriCorps member will be beginning in October, and Christenson hopes to have them continue with the Tree Inventory. Ultimately, forestry would like to survey 20% of the tree population annually, which would create a 5-year cycle for tree surveys citywide. The City has secured \$350,000 in grants from the Minnesota



NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes September 7, 2022
Duluth City Hall, Conference Room 330

DNR to fund removal of EAB-infested trees and planting of replacement trees. Removal of high-risk and dangerous trees are the priority. Roughly, 400-500 ash trees will be removed through the secured grants, which will leave approximately 1,000 ash trees remaining.

The Scots Pine invasion at Hartley Park has been challenging as the trees are difficult to identify and control options are limited. There is likely a seed tree in the vicinity that would need to be eradicated for control efforts to be successful long term. Filby Williams suggested collaboration with the staff and volunteers at Hartley Nature Center to address the invasion.

Christenson announced that an Arbor Day Celebration will be held at 2:00 p.m. on Tuesday, September 20 at Wheeler Athletic Complex. The event will be co-hosted with Mindy Granley and the Sustainability office. The wood accumulated at Park Maintenance will be auctioned this fall for burning within the region's quarantine zone. Roughly 80% of the wood is EAB ash trees. The cost is very low, but a logging truck and trailer is required as City staff will not load the wood for people and the 8-foot logs are challenging to move.

C.) Director's Report (Jim Filby Williams)

Filby Williams recognized the efforts of Mindy Granley and her team. Sustainability has established a fund to implement action items in the City's Climate Action Plan. The funding will benefit natural resources work in Duluth. \$300,000 will be used to fill a funding gap for stormwater management and green infrastructure elements in the Lincoln Park improvement project. The funding is also being used as a local match for the EAB grants. The stormwater program is developing complementary projects to the work at Lincoln Park with three green infrastructure projects to protect water quality and mitigate flood damage.

Filby Williams commented that there are an array of upcoming events, including an event on September 12 for DNR partners for outdoor recreation, on September 22 there will be a public meeting to solicit input on the Congdon Boulevard resilience project, on September 28 there will be a ribbon cutting for the St. Louis River Estuary National Water Trail at Chambers Grove, and on October 29 the Minnesota Land Trust annual event will be held in Duluth where the City will be recognized as their partner of the year.

VIII. Public Comment

No public comments.

IX. Announcements

Commissioner Schrage announced that Wildwoods Wildlife Rehabilitation will host a Sweet Sixteen fundraiser and celebration on September 11, 2022 from 2:00 – 6:00 p.m.

X. Adjournment

Commissioner Sprague made a motion to adjourn; second by Commissioner Schuldt. Unanimously approved.

Meeting adjourned at 7:17 p.m.

Next Meeting - Wednesday, October 5 at 6:00 p.m. at Duluth City Hall, Conference Room 330.