

Natural Resources Commission

Meeting Minutes July 1, 2020 (WebEx)

Attendance:

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

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

Call to Order:

The meeting started at 6:03 pm.

Duluth's Guidelines for Selecting Tax-Forfeit Open Space Parcels for City Ownership and Protection

The Commission voted to adopt the Guidelines for Selecting Tax-Forfeit Open Space Parcels for City Ownership and Protection as written. **(VOTE: 7 – Yes, 1 Abstained – Brian Fredrickson)** These guidelines will go before the Planning Commission on July 14th.

Duluth Streams Bacterial Source ID Study (Steve Gruber – Burns & McDonnell)

Steve shared a presentation and initial findings of his investigative work in and around both Keene Creek and Tischer Creek. Steve reported that the Keene Creek Study Area indicated birds, and not dogs, were a possible E. coli source. Higher E. coli levels were present in the southern reaches near Irving Park. In addition, initial evidence suggests that additional monitoring for human sources, may be beneficial. Similarly, the Tischer Creek Study Area samples showed positive for bird markers, but not for dog markers. Human markers were also identified (although few samples were taken) in the T-2 reach located near the University pond and wetland. Overall both streams have stretches where E. coli is high and bacteria could be coming from sediment and debris that accumulates in an urbanized setting where conditions are prime for growth.

Steve shared that his final report would include some priorities, additional monitoring recommendations, and some best management practices. Diane commented that the City would continue to work with the storm water folks on additional “detective work” and identify funding sources. The Commission will be provided a copy of the finalized report and it will be posted on the website.

Discussion on the potential sale of City owned lands (Jim Filby Williams – Director of Property, Parks, & Libraries)

Jim explained why it may be necessary for the City to consider the possibility of selling some City owned land parcels. He explained that currently the City does not have guidelines directing these types of actions and indicated that we intend to bring the Commission a set of draft guidelines and processes in the near future. He further emphasized that these guidelines would draw heavily from three existing documents: (1) The Comprehensive Land Use Plan, (2) Mayor's Task Force Report from 2012 on the reuse and protection of public lands, and (3) Duluth's guidelines on selecting tax-forfeit open space parcels for city ownership and protection (the guidelines approved tonight). The Commission discussed that some inherent bias may exist within this group. Jim assured them that the development of a set of guidelines would keep us *all* honest as

we move forward. Brandon Krumwiede suggested the City consider a fourth document in the development of these initial written guidelines, the National Flood Insurance Program Community Rating System document.

Natural Resources Report (Diane Desotelle – Natural Resources Coordinator)

Diane reported that we received 10 proposals in response to the Natural Resources Management Program Plan RFP. She will be working with a small team to review and score the proposals over the next month. It will be necessary to wait on our funding sources, EPA & GLRI grants, before moving forward. Next month she plans to incorporate an update on the Hartley Native Plant Community Management Plan and also use our meeting as the initial public meeting. This is a more technical project and doesn't anticipate any controversy. We will be using this as a venue to define areas, help us prioritize and strategize the work to be completed at Hartley.

Forester's Report (Clark Christenson – City Forester)

Clark reported that with staffing shortages, the coronavirus, and a summer drought, he and his crew have been limited to watering trees four out of five days a week. He anticipates that the City will likely be falling behind on the goal of removing 400-500 Emerald Ash Borer trees in 2020. Lastly, he informed that Commission that he will be a part of Diane's review team evaluating the proposals received for the Natural Resources Management Program Plan.

Announcements

Tiffany Sprague reported that the Duluth Urban Area Streams TMDL report was open for public comment.

Additional information can be found here: <https://www.pca.state.mn.us/water/duluth-urban-area-streams-watershed>

Adjournment:

There was a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:40, M/S/C.