

Natural Resources Commission

Meeting Minutes September 2, 2020 (WebEx)

Attendance:

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

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

Call to Order:

The meeting started at 6:06 p.m.

Sustainability Officer Introduction

Mindy Granley updated the Commission on her roles and responsibilities as the City's new Sustainability Officer. Her goals are to: (1) **Demonstrate**; The City pursues opportunities to address environmental challenges in sensible, responsible, and equitable ways. (2) **Measure and Communicate**; Track and share progress and challenges on our goals and (3) **Inspire**; Initiate projects and partnerships for sustainable change.



Park Point Beach Nourishment Project Overview

The City of Duluth requested that dredged material be used to nourish the Minnesota Point shoreline to temporarily restore eroded beach and dune habitat as recent storms have displaced and redistributed material along this area. This work is a coordinated effort between the Army Corps of Engineers and the City of Duluth to keep our harbor open. Diane explained that this practice is indeed safe as the beach sediments have undergone extensive chemical and physical testing. The MPCA issues water quality certification approving these sediments and ensure that these materials pose negligible risk to humans, aquatic organisms, and wildlife. Commissioner Lindgren and others felt it may be important for the City to consider the development of a *long term* beach nourishment plan. Jim Filby Williams informed the group that the City has been collaborating with industry experts to first better understand the long-term trajectory of these materials and may consider a long-term plan in the future.

Park Point Dune Restoration Messaging

Anna Hess, District Manager for the MN DNR spoke to the Commission on recent efforts in dune restoration messaging efforts. She explained that the DNR is currently working to release a paper on dune stabilization techniques and showed a few similar examples. In addition, she explained the DNR's role in determining the high water level and how this affects permitting for the placement of rip-rap and other stabilization techniques on private land. Jim Filby Williams

requested that perhaps Anna and City representatives set up a separate meeting to better understand this regulation.

Natural Resources Coordinator Report

Diane updated the Commission on her latest progress and projects. Final updates are being made to the Hartley Native Plant Community project plan. A stakeholder meeting will be held October 21 to inform the public of the process and ask for general feedback. We will then be presenting the draft report to the NRC with plans to finalize the project in December.

The City has contracted with Emmons & Olivier Resources, Inc. for the Natural Resources Management Program Plan. The county land exchange project is moving right along. The funding is coming together and the team hopes to have the parcel lists by the end of 2020 using the guidelines this Commission approved.

The Duluth Streams Bacterial Source Identification Study was finalized and added to website here: <https://duluthmn.gov/media/WebSubscriptions/196/20200820-196-12063.pdf> This study identified some simple practices to help reduce E-coli sources in and around Keene and Tischer Creek, the City is considering next steps for tackling some of these management strategies.

Forests Report

Clark updated the Commission that he and his staff received some training on injecting Ash trees and that a member of his crew would continue planned injections this fall. The Forestry team will be moving forward with EAB removals this fall and may have to put aside some of their typical pruning work to get this completed. In addition, he reported that replanting's may be delayed due to staffing levels.

Directors Report

The City recently came to an agreement with US Steel that will result in the transfer of 50 acres of ecologically important shoreline for inclusion in St. Louis River Natural Area. We have begun implementation of Phase I at Brighton Beach to move existing trail infrastructure ~100 feet away from the water's edge. We are hopeful that Phase II, which will include obliteration and reconstruction of the existing roadway and development of a new NE entrance, will happen in 2021. We will be communicating to the City Council and the community our change in direction to the improvement, use and management of some shoreline property, owned by Burlington Northern Railroad, which faces Tallas Island. The City's previously approved plan that envisioned a rail to trail extension and conversion will no longer be pursued. Rather, this eight-acre chunk will be managed for invasive species and become part of the St. Louis Natural Area. The City will shortly be signing a very preliminary agreement with a developer interested in the Enger Park Golf Course (Driving Range area) for a multi-family housing unit. This agreement means that for the time being we will negotiate the development of this housing exclusively with them it is not a promise of construction. Park Points "Pontliana Woods" will be included in the pool of candidates for inclusion in the county land exchange. Jim thanked the Commission and staff for

their continued progress on long-term protection of Natural Resources throughout this national pandemic.

Announcements

Judy Gibbs shared that the newly published National Water Trail maps arrived last week and can be picked up at the St. Louis River Alliance Office in the DeWitt Seitz Building. For additional information please see: <https://www.stlouisriver.org/news/nwtmap-pickup>

Clark reminded the Commission that the City of Duluth celebrates National Arbor Day on the 3rd Tuesday of September (September 15th, 2020) vs April, but with the COVID crisis we will be unable to host a volunteer event this year. Clark will be working with Cheryl Skafte, Volunteer Coordinator, to release a video focused on EAB and how citizens can focus on trees in their own yards.

Adjournment:

There was a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:45, M/S/C.