

Urban Forest Commission

Meeting Minutes May 16, 2018

Attendance:

Commissioners: Christine Penney, Mike Pennington, Beth Kleinke, Judy Gibbs, Brandon Van Tassel, Jim Lemmerman, Susan Stanich.

City Staff: Diane Desotelle, City Provisional Natural Resources Coordinator, Clark Christenson, City Forester (not present); Erik Birkeland, Ex-Officio (not present)

City Councilor Em Westerlund (present)

Call to Order:

The meeting started at 6:03.

Minute Approval:

A motion was made to approve the minutes from the April 18th, 2018, Meeting. M/S/C.

Public Comment Period: A student from East High School was in attendance as part of a class requirement.

Forester's Report (Darin Franckowiak – Park Maintenance)

Park Maintenance City staff have been working diligently in the Lakeside neighborhood and have now removed 281 of the 408 Ash trees identified. The group will now begin planting at the 1800 block of East 4th street. The plan is to plant 205 trees between the 1800 – 2600 block locations. The City purchased a diverse variety of tree species in hopes to increase long-term survivability. These species include: Ginko, Kentucky Coffee, Bur Oak, Sugar Maples, Horse Chestnut, Hackberry and a few varieties of Elm. The goal is to have this completed by the end of August. Ricks Tree Service was contracted to grind the stumps of the trees that were cut down this year and next year these areas will be replanted.

The Park Maintenance staff have also been working with the Minnesota Department of Agriculture on the use of Biocontrol in some of our heavily wooded parks that have been affected with the Emerald Ash Borer (EAB). The City is currently planning to release three species of parasitoid wasps in and around Hartley Park and have additional releases planned this summer in both Lincoln and Central Parks. This technique, used in conjunction with traditional forest management practices, have shown promising in the control and spread of EAB. See attached email from Christopher Mallet with the Minnesota Department of Agriculture for specifics related to the Biocontrol treatments being applied in the City.

For additional information please see:

<http://www.mda.state.mn.us/plants/pestmanagement/eab/eabbiocontrol.aspx>

New Business:

UFC Transformation Sub-committee update

On May 1st the UFC Transformation sub-committee group met to discuss the approach to convert the Urban Forest Commission into a Natural Resources Board or Environmental Advisory Commission. This revised Commission group would focus on the City's Natural Resource-related planning, policies, and projects by providing a heightened level of study and oversight and communicate their findings and recommendations to other primary City Commissions. The sub-committee working group initiated the development of an outline summarizing the focus areas of this new board. The major categories discussed were; (1) Urban Forests & Trees, (2) Natural Resources Management (3) Sustainability (4) Education and Outreach (5) Working Commission. The sub-committee will meet again on June 4th at 11:00 AM to continue working on this outline and will plan to present to the UFC Commissioners at the next meeting scheduled on June 20th.

The group discussed the *ideal* makeup of the new Natural Resources Board which would include representatives from the City's five council districts as well as several Natural Resources technical experts. The group brainstormed such experts to potentially include: Forestry, Storm water Management, Natural Resources, Hydrology, Invasive Species, Environmental Education, and Transportation. The group will continue this discussion and once agreed upon will work to change the bylaws to incorporate this.

A discussion was held on how the idea of transforming the UFC came about. Em Westerlund commented that it has been a pending discussion for some time now. As a City we need to work out how to best handle environmental concerns internally and flush out the role of this committee. Diane Desotelle met with Jim Filby Williams, Public Administration Director, who is supportive of this endeavor.

The group then discussed the Duluth Natural Area Program (DNAP) program. Diane Desotelle explained the criteria for nominating an area for the DNAP program. The four main criteria for listing include; (1) Significant Plant communities (2) Important Birding Areas, (3) Geologic features, (4) Special water feature(s). Diane explained to the group that going through the nomination process for both Hartley and the St. Louis River corridor will be helpful and we should learn a lot in the process to better understand how best to make the DNAP work successfully as a local tool to protect natural lands in perpetuity.

Judy Gibbs posed the question, "Do we think this is going in the right direction?" Mike Pennington questioned if we are perhaps broadening our scope too much? Christine Penney commented that we have to broaden it in order to be more effective. Brandon Van Tassel reminded the group of the desire for this committee to not be an additional stop-gap but rather to be an advisement board. Beth Kleinke commented that she is looking forward to digging into the policies. Preparing and adopting a tree planting guidelines for the city. She is of the opinion that we would hold more weight if we work to document our objectives. Also, she questioned about the City's staff capacity for this sort of undertaking. The group determined that some of the work needed should be staff driven, and that it's a good sign the City is in the process of hiring both a full time Forester as well as a Natural Resources Coordinator.

UFC Term Limits

Christine Penney shared with the group the idea of rotating the President and Vice President candidates every year. Alternatively, she posed the option of having a standard rotating position each year for EVERY member. In addition, it was discussed that we should determine the best approach, set term limits and incorporate these items into the new bylaws.

Limits of Acceptable Change

Christine Penney shared a graphic outlining a 9-step process on human-induced impacts to the environment. The Limits of Acceptable Change was developed by Recreation researchers to determine how much human-induced change is acceptable. The overall concept is involving citizens throughout the entire planning and implementation process. Christine shared it would be helpful for the city to incorporate this concept into its planning process. Some excellent examples of projects where this *could have* been beneficial are the Kayak Bay Project and the Duluth Traverse Trail. Currently the City has a plan established in the creation and approval of Master and Mini-Master Plans, however, after these plans are adopted we are not circling back in a timely manner to check in with the public.



Arbor Day Celebration Plan

Brandon Van Tassel is leading the Arbor Day Celebration. The kick-off event will be held on Thursday, May 31st from 5:00 – 7:00 PM. Volunteers will be meeting at the Munger Parking Lot located at 7261 Pulaski Street, Duluth, MN.

Community Action Duluth will also be sponsoring weekly tree planting events on Wednesdays during the months of June, July, and August (not July 4th). For additional information please see: <https://www.communityactionduluth.org/whats-happening/>

Adjournment:

There was a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:01, m/s/c.