

Natural Resources Commission

Meeting Minutes February 2, 2022 (Virtual Meeting)

Attendance: Commissioners: Brandon Krumwiede, Mike Pennington, Judy Gibbs, Tiffany Sprague, John Lindgren, Nancy Schuldt, Allison Ray, Mike Schrage, Brian Fredrickson. **Absent:** None.

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

Call to Order:

The meeting started at 6:04 p.m.

Old Business

Strategic Public Lands Re-alignment Project

The Commission passed a motion to formulate a special working group (Commissioner Krumwiede & Commissioner Ray) to re-work the Lands Protection Memo and bring back a final version that can be more easily adapted to include any future tax forfeit land acquisitions. The final version will then be voted on in March. **VOTE: 9 – Yes; 0 – No. Motion Carries.**

Natural Resources Management Program Plan (NRMPP)

Diane provided an overview of the newly drafted implementation chapter of the NRMPP. Infographics were developed to demonstrate 3 alternative funding levels for implementation. She also explained the program will be adapted moving forward in relation to the decisions for project priorities and the availability of funds and staff to implement the projects. The storymap is posted to the City's website here: <https://duluthmn.gov/parks/parks-planning/progress-in-the-park/natural-resources-program-plan/>. The Commission asked Diane to provide an overall informational presentation on the NRMPP at its March meeting before asking for a final vote to adopt the program plan.

New Business

Natural Resources Coordinators Report

Diane reported that work continues behind the scenes on the tax forfeit land acquisitions with St. Louis County. Also, the Natural Resources Coordinator position was posted and closes on February 6th. The City is hoping to be able to have the new staff on board before her departure on April 1st. Finally, work is going on to contract invasive species efforts for the 2022 season. This is on-going work from the past in Hartley, along the Waabizashikana, near the zoo and along the DWP, and Lincoln Park. Lastly, she informed the Commission of an upcoming technical workshop on March 10th & 11th with the Army Corps of Engineers to kick off research efforts to understand what the possible federal infrastructure impacts are in association with the MN Point shoreline.

Forester's Report

Clark updated the Commission on his efforts to get the Forest Revitalization project out to bid. He met with Mindy Granley (Duluth's Sustainability Officer) to discuss how she can assist in the development and creation of a City Forest Management Plan. The aim is to obtain and fund a GreenCorps or intern to develop a plan based on example plans (e.g., Rochester, Minnesota). He also informed the Commissioners of upcoming grant opportunities for Emerald Ash Borer tree

removal funding and shared his hope that this could significantly reduce the workload and hazard potential for his crew in the coming season. Lastly, he reported his crews were finishing up pruning work in Gary New Duluth and moving on to Lakeside.

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

Director Filby Williams shared the recent progress the City has made on securing approval and funding to acquire *private* lands for permanent protections. The City Council recently passed a resolution authorizing the application for grant funds from the US Forest Service to acquire an undeveloped portion of Forest Hill Cemetery in the Woodland neighborhood to be managed for outdoor recreation and long-term preservation consistent with the Imagine Duluth 2035 Comprehensive Plan. Secondly, negotiations continue with US Steel to for the City to obtain ~50 acres of ecologically intact open space along the riverfront in the St. Louis River Natural Area.

Announcements

Diane shared that Mindy Granley will be updating City Council on 2/14/22 on the Climate Action Work Plan.

Public Comment

Betty Greene – Thanked the Commission for their work on the lands protection memo.

Louise Levy – Shared her support for an additional Natural Resources Coordinator position within the City. She expressed her concerns with recent trails being built in and around Spirit Mountain and her dissatisfaction with the limitations of the virtual WebEx system and being unable to view other attendees.

Julie O'Leary – Expressed her concerns that Commissions aren't publicly sharing enough internal information when making large planning decisions.

Adjournment

There was a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:54, M/S/C