



## NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes May 3, 2023

Duluth City Hall, Conference Room 330

### I. Call to Order

Chair Lindgren called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

### II. Roll Call

Commissioners Present: Lori Dando, Pam Foster, Judy Gibbs, John Lindgren, Mike Schrage, Nancy Schuldt, Tiffany Sprague, Andrew Streitz

Absent: Sophia Green

Staff Present: Allison Brooks, Jim Filby Williams, Kate Kubiak

### III. Approval of the Agenda

**Commissioner Schrage made a motion to approve the agenda; seconded by Commissioner Dando. Unanimously approved.**

### IV. Approval of the April 5, 2023 Meeting Minutes

**Commissioner Dando made a motion to approve the April 5, 2023 meeting minutes; seconded by Commissioner Foster. Unanimously approved.**

### V. Old Business

#### A.) Strategic Public Lands Re-Alignment

Williams stated that a final resolution authorizing the transaction of the vast majority of the parcels will likely go to City Council at the May 22 meeting. Some parcels will lag slightly to allow for necessary state reviews, such as high and low water line determinations. Commissioner Schrage asked how much of a lag, and Williams responded that it would be potentially a few months as the reviews will take place this summer.

After this resolution for the transaction, there will be a subsequent resolution of record to officially record the deed transfers after they are received. Next, there will be a shift from the acquisition process to that of protection of the parcels, including parkland designation. Secretary Gibbs asked what the process will be for protecting the parcels that are not going to be formally designated. Williams responded that while they will not have the same formal designations, the parcels have been acquired explicitly with the purpose of protection. The funding source for their acquisitions also restricts sale or development. Perhaps there is a future avenue for formalizing the designation with support from City Stormwater.

Commissioner Schrage asked how City Council is likely to view this, and Williams responded that it is likely to pass unanimously because there have been a number of previous resolutions and this action is pursuant to those previous resolutions, but that there is always a possibility that questions could arise. Chair Lindgren thanked the staff and community members that have been involved on the project and expressed interest in exploring the designations for the stormwater parcels. Vice Chair Schuldt commented that there has been ample research into the world of stormwater protection value, which could be used to provide strong rationale as to why it is important for the City to pursue protecting these parcels.

### VI. New Business

#### A.) Duluth Natural Areas Program Overview and 2023 Plans [Kate Kubiak]

Kubiak provided a presentation of the Duluth Natural Areas Program (DNAP) overview. Magney-Snively



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Natural Area was the first DNAP area, and it was designated in 2003. There are five criteria that lands are considered based on, including: significant native plant communities, special species, important bird congregation areas, natural water features, and geologic landforms. The nomination process incorporates significant assessments and research. Each designated natural area needs to have a management plan. Designation as a natural area does not place limitations on development. Being a designated natural area does improve access to grant funding and ensures that any other planning processes that arise are consistent with conservation goals and management needs.

Secretary Gibbs asked if there were other locations identified as potential additional natural areas, such as Hawk Ridge, Amity, and Brewer Park. Kubiak replied that yes, other lands have been proposed, but there are limitations on staff time and that the preference at this time is to focus on the existing areas. Williams commented that, even if the nomination is from an external party, the nomination process and management is very staff time intensive. For the designation to carry weight, there is a need for the City to commit to, and execute, the necessary stewardship that differentiates the designation. Hartley provides a nice example of how partner organizations can be critical in natural area management. Hartley Nature Center has committed to supporting stewardship, and recently hired a stewardship position to facilitate these activities.

### VII. Staff Reports

#### A.) Natural Resources Coordinator Report [Kate Kubiak]

Kubiak shared that the prescribed burns at Hartley Park and the western terminus of Waabizheshikana will likely take place tomorrow. There has been a lot of preparation and planning to try this pilot project. Vice Chair Schuldt suggested taking photos, including after the burn to show the regrowth process. Commissioner Foster suggested a walk through of each site prior to the burn to check for nesting ducks.

#### B.) Director's Report [Jim Filby Williams]

Williams shared that the City may wish to do a community announcement or some other media event to mark the significance of the land acquisition. Williams also shared that the City has recently learned of funding totaling \$1.5 billion through the Inflation Reduction Act to invest in urban forests. City staff are working on an application that would provide five years of funding to support urban canopy reinvestment in Duluth. While there is no certainty to the funding, this could be an exciting opportunity.

### VIII. Announcements

No announcement.

### IX. Public Comment

No comments.

### X. Adjournment

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

Meeting adjourned at 6:45 p.m.

**Next Meeting** - Wednesday, June 7 at 6:00 p.m. in Duluth City Hall, Conference Room 330.