



NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION

MEETING MINUTES

October 2, 2024 – 6:00 p.m.

Lakeside Conference Room 430, City Hall

I. Call to Order

Chair Lindgren called the meeting to begin at 6:00 PM.

II. Roll Call

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

City Staff Present: Kate Kubiak, Jim Filby Williams, Bronwyn Bauer

III. Election of Officers

The commissioners held a discussion for nominations for the position of Chair. Vice Chair Schuldt said that she is not able to move to the Chair position for 2025 but is willing to stay on as Vice Chair. Secretary Gibbs is willing to stay on as Secretary. Vice Chair Schuldt nominated Commissioner Streitz for Chair, and he accepted the nomination. No other nominations were made. All Commissioners approved this nomination.

IV. Approval of the Agenda

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

V. Approval of the August 7, 2024 Meeting Minutes

Commissioner Foster made a motion to approve the August 7, 2024 meeting minutes; seconded by Commissioner Raichel. Unanimously approved.

VI. Old Business

A. Designation of 69 parcels to DNAP status - St. Louis River Natural Area (Kubiak) – TABLED

After some discussion about the level of protection this designation will provide, it was decided to table this item for next meeting so staff can get some clarification.

B. Tischer Fish Kill Response Update (Commissioners) – MOTION

Filby Williams reported that the City has not yet been contacted by the MPCA about the investigation report and it may be a while before the investigation is complete. He is not able to give any update tonight but wished for the City and State to work together to expedite the investigative report. Vice Chair Schuldt would like to see some transparency in this investigation and made a motion to show the support of the Commission by issuing a statement; this is what the commission decided on:

The Natural Resources Commission urges the City of Duluth and The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency to be forthcoming to the public with general procedural information, process, and potential timeline of the report of the August 1, 2024 Tischer Creek spill, and to expedite the release of this report as early as possible.

Filby Williams will bring this statement to City Administration. Commissioner Schrage seconded the motion. Commissioner Foster and Chair Lindgren recused themselves due to conflict of interest with their respective employers. The motion passed 7-0.

VII. New Business

A. Purpose and Future of NRC (Commissioners)

Chair Lindgren started the conversation asking what Commissioners see as the purpose and vision of the NRC. Commissioner Schrage said that it is the Commission's role to advise the City on natural resource issues and make recommendations. He said that the group should be careful about being managed and to guard against it. The Commission needs to control the agenda and whether a meeting is held each month or not.



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Chair Lindgren asked if other City commissions have visioning sessions to decide on what projects to focus. Filby Williams said that the Natural Resource Management Program Plan (NRMPP) is the governing document and focus for the NRC. Commissioner Raichel said that it would be helpful to know what the new administration's priorities are so that the commission can advise them on relevant issues. Vice Chair Schuldt added that the commission has the ability to form working groups and could identify areas of overlap between the NRC's mission and the mayor's priorities. Commissioner Sprague asked how the NRMPP works with the City's Comprehensive Plan and reminded the group that the mayor did support the Hartley resolution that is going to Council this month and approved the parkland delineation that originated with the previous administration. Filby Williams said that administration has been asking staff about each commission they work with to find out how they function and about the work they do. He has been stressing to them how important the work of the NRC is, and is sorry if the commission has not felt appreciated now that the pace of work has slowed down.

B. Buckingham Creek Project update (Video)

Kubiak explained that the video she is about to show is about the Buckingham Creek restoration project at Enger Golf Course and demonstrates the partnership between many organizations, including the City of Duluth, The Minnesota DNR, and the US EPA. The video was funded by the MN DNR, Legacy Amendment, and the US EPA Great Lakes Restoration Initiative.

Secretary Gibbs leaves at 7:13 PM.

VIII. Staff Reports

A. Natural Resources Coordinator's Report (Kate Kubiak)

Kubiak provided the following written report:

- Assembling Project Team for Magney-Snively Natural Area Plan update.
- Met with St. Louis County about Public Land Exchange – we can acquire about 20 more parcels before the end of the year that were stuck in limbo.
- Community action Duluth stream corps – met with them and the land trust to discuss their schedule over the next year or so – make sure they get everything done in our grants.
- Held a Duluth invaders – annual meeting
- Helped Jim get Hartley Dam decision through commissions.
- MN Point Dune Restoration/Study grant application – advised larger group.

B. City Forester's Report (Clark Christenson)

We continue to remove trees across town, trying to keep up with mortality from EAB and expected mortality in other species. The dry weather has been a boon to this work but has delayed our tree planting. I'm currently waiting for a decent rain event to start planting. The dry weather is magnified in the boulevards where we plant. Trying to make trees survive the current situation is very laborious so we will continue to delay until conditions are favorable. I know last year we planted several trees very late (31st of October) and they are doing well this year. So, it seems that the planting window is much broader in the fall than I would guess!

Finally, we have done some buckthorn eradication in our natural areas where we have seen it creeping in. It



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is a never-ending project but one that we need to stay on top of. Some areas may need more attention, and we are working on how to best fund that.

We also spent some time establishing no-mow areas across town. While I normally don't deal in grass, we will plant these areas with trees next spring and a no-mow option is the best way to prevent future damage from mowing equipment.

C. Director's Report (Jim Filby Williams)

None.

IX. Announcements

None.

X. Public Comment

Dave Zentner thanked the commissioners for their service in this commission.

Diane Desotelle urged the commission to fight for funding, request that they adopt the Hawk Ridge area as a natural area, to stay strong and have a powerful voice, and continue to move the agenda along.

Jill Crawford Nichols asked about the protections that come with the DNAP status and what the resolution will be to the Tischer Creek investigation. Filby Williams reiterated that the City does not have an update and has nothing to add to the previous statement read at last month's NRC meeting.

XI. Adjournment

Commissioner Sprague made a motion to adjourn, Commissioner Foster seconded. Meeting adjourned at 7:39 PM.

Next Meeting – November 6, 2024 at 6:00 PM Lakeside Conference Room 430, City Hall.