



NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION

MEETING MINUTES

November 6, 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, Judy Gibbs, John Lindgren, Mike Raichel, Mike Schrage, Tiffany Sprague

Commissioners Absent: Pam Foster, Nancy Schuldt, Andrew Streitz

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

III. Approval of the Agenda

Commissioner Schrage asked that a Tischer Creek Update be added to the agenda. Unanimously approved.

IV. Approval of the October 2, 2024 Meeting Minutes

Unanimously approved.

V. Old Business

A. Designation of 69 parcels to DNAP status - St. Louis River Natural Area

Kubiak shared a resolution that Commissioners Streitz and Schuldt helped write for the City Council, then went through a presentation with maps showing current City parcels and newly acquired parcels. Filby Williams said that because of land complexities, the City was not able to purchase all the parcels it originally wanted, but some parcels may be a future possibility.

Commissioner Raichel made a motion to vote to support the resolution; seconded by Commissioner Schrage. Unanimously approved.

B. Tischer Creek Update

Filby Williams said that staff did bring the statement created by the Commission at the previous meeting for the Tischer Creek incident to Administration, but that the City Attorney's office said it is not permissible for the commission to push for action because the commission acts only in an advisory capacity. Kubiak then sent a letter to City Councilor Awal, as the Parks, Libraries, & Authorities Committee Chair, to share with the Council. There is no new update or report, and it could be 6-9 months before a report is issued.

Commissioner Raichel thanked staff for listening to the commission's wishes and following through.

VI. New Business

A. Viewshed Application 415 E. Skyline

Christenson explained that a citizen submitted a View Claim form to have trees that block his view of the lake on Skyline Parkway removed, at his own cost. The applicant would hire a contractor to complete the work, following a scope set by the City. Christenson's role is to present this information to the commission and ask for recommendations, but no action is required. He needs to follow the guidelines in the Legislative Code, Article IV of Section 35. It would include about a dozen trees, mostly aspen; the trees are on a slope, directly above a stream. Commissioner Sprague asked if the stream was a trout stream, but then discovered that it is not. Christenson mentioned that he will have to consider whether using an herbicide in this area is advisable so near a stream. Commissioners Schrage and Raichel advised that removal should be conservative.



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B. ATV Planning – Update

Filby Williams said that the City intends to study several West Duluth trails for possible ATV use at the request of a group of residents who created a nonprofit ATV Club. He recently met with the County, DPD, DFD, and the Public Works department about this issue. They discussed the amount of illegal ATV use in the area and the extraordinary fragility of the natural area surrounding these trails. Most ATV riders are responsible, but just one irresponsible rider can cause major damage. Some of the proposed issues to study include connecting the far western part of the City to existing trail, exploring locations in the periphery of the City, looking at existing trails to share with ATV users, anticipating conflicts between user groups, and protecting natural resources. Filby Williams said he is currently looking for funding for a study to be completed for this project, but nothing would be done until later in 2025. Commissioner Raichel said that it will be important to incorporate wildfire planning into this process, and Chair Lindgren cautioned that it is very common for ATVs to cause the movement of invasive species along trails.

VII. Staff Reports

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

Kubiak provided the following written report:

- 1st meeting of Magney-Snively Natural Area Plan update planned for mid-November
- Preparation for Sec 111 public meeting with USACE
- Preparation for annual Natural Resources Projects review meeting with partners
- Preparation of RFP for small grant-funded restoration project at Park Hill
- Buckingham Creek at Enger weekly meetings
- Site visits with St. Louis River AOC staff and Audubon
- Continued forestry Coordination with north Shore Forest Collaborative, The Nature Conservancy and UMD
- Continued progress towards acquiring forest hill land.

B. City Forester's Report (Clark Christenson)

We finally started planting trees, often by filling in the blank spots we left this spring. By the end of next week, we should have about 200 trees planted this fall for a total of 700 this year. On the other side of the equation, we have 334 total removals. We will add to that but for the first time in many years, we have a net gain in boulevard trees!

We are also making final preparations for the greenhouse to store trees this winter that will allow us to have an early spring for our trees. Electrical and gas hookup should happen this week and then we will put the trees to bed.

C. Director's Report (Jim Filby Williams)

None.

VIII. Announcements

Kubiak reported that the lottery funding for natural resources passed during the election yesterday.



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IX. Public Comment

None.

X. Adjournment

Commissioner Sprague made a motion to adjourn, Commissioner Raichel seconded. Meeting adjourned at 7:23 PM.

Kubiak thanked Chair Lindgren for his work as Chair of the Commission, as this is his last meeting as Chair.

Next Meeting – December 4, 2024 at 6:00 PM Lakeside Conference Room 430, City Hall.