



NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION

MEETING MINUTES

January 8, 2025 – 6:00 p.m.

Lakeside Conference Room 430, City Hall

I. Call to Order

Chair Streitz called the meeting to begin at 6:03 PM.

II. Roll Call

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

Commissioners Absent: Lori Dando

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

III. Approval of the Agenda

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

IV. Approval of the December 4, 2024 Meeting Minutes

Commissioner Raichel made a motion to approve the minutes; seconded by Commissioner Sprague. Unanimously approved.

V. Old Business

A. Tischer Fish Kill Update (City Staff)

Chair Streitz conveyed his disappointment at not having any answers about this yet. Kubiak said that she talked to Tom Johnson in the Engineering department, but he has no new information. Vice Chair Schultz asked if Tom Johnson would be able to attend a meeting to explain what the City is doing to prevent this from happening again. Kubiak will see if Tom is able to do this. Filby Williams had nothing new to share.

Chair Streitz shared that the meeting is being recorded.

VI. New Business

A. Salt Use and Impacts to Water Quality (Barb Huberty, League of Women Voters)

Barb Huberty, Jane Hovland, and Barb Akre from the League of Women Voters gave a presentation about salt use and the impacts to water quality. They are willing to work with the City to help improve the harmful effects of salt to our streams and to educate those who use salt on the roads, parking lots, and sidewalks. They are working to get some legislation passed at the state level to help with this problem. Huberty said that the City is attempting to write an ordinance to require licenses for those that distribute salt. Chair Streitz asked how the commission can help with this issue. Hovland said that the commission can help educate the community, take a stand and raise up this issue, and talk about the long-term concerns, but there is not a good way for the commission to take on these items. Huberty also said that the MPCA monitors only 10 of Duluth's watersheds, and more may be labeled "at risk" if the salt issue is not addressed. Educating users would be a good way to start, but Commissioner Sprague said that you need a coordinator to do this, but it takes a lot of work. Since it is no specific organization's job, it gets dropped.

B. Natural Resources Management Program and Plan Update (Kate Kubiak)

Kubiak presented an overview and update of the NRMPP. She said there is a great story map on the website, but it is the partnerships that are invaluable to the program. She has an annual meeting each year and 15 different agencies are included; at the end of the meeting, after everyone talks about the projects they are working on, people talk to each other and connections are made. The funding from the EPA for the



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implementation of this program has been used to buy tax forfeited parcels to put into protection and is also used for preservation, including dealing with invasive species. Filby Williams said that we don't need authority over our partners to get things accomplished – bringing partners together and seeing the collective good that happens is what counts. Commissioner Raichel asked what obstacles still exist in getting things accomplished. Kubiak said that it used to be the City, but now in her current position, she can work with all the right departments to keep projects moving. SHPO is a more commonly an obstacle.

C. 2025 NRC Topics (All)

No new topics were discussed and there were no questions.

D. Natural Resources Management Program Funding Discussion (All)

Filby Williams explained that the \$55,000 for natural resources is from the Parks Capitol budget, which is forever capped. Each year the most significant expenses, salaries, go up, and every department, except Parks, gets the overages covered by the City. In five years, this budget will be \$0. So far, this \$55,000 has been able to be reserved for natural resources, but it will become untenable. Chair Streitz and Commissioner Lindgren asked how the NRC can help and leverage their autonomy as a board. Filby Williams said that he represents administration, so cannot tell them how to lobby admin. Secretary Gibbs said that the Library Board faced challenges in the past and asked how they approached the issue. Filby Williams said that they had an advocacy agenda, and the board maintained a thoughtful separation so that staff were not put into an awkward situation. Vice Chair Schuldt said that the new City Administrator said he was coming to Duluth because of the green spaces, so maybe he would come to an NRC meeting and the Board could give him a brief pitch for increased funding. Commissioner Schrage said that in the past, the NRC has written a timely editorial in the newspaper, so that is an option.

VII. Staff Reports

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

- Notes and records on 2024 natural resources work.
- Planning for 2025 natural resources goals.
- Hartley Trib 7 – working with Hartley stewardship committee to make a plan for mitigating flooding there and restoring the blocked (by tree limbs) channel.
- Selected contractor for small forestry restoration project at Park Hill.
- St. Louis AOC BUI 9 (habitat) Technical Team mtg.
- Lower St. Louis R. Habitat workgroup quarterly mtg – City will be chair of this group in 2025.
- Future forestry planning (more info to come).

B. City Forester's Report (Clark Christenson)

Things are moving along at Park Maintenance and being flexible is an asset that we have leaned on in recent months.

Normally we would be pruning trees and working our way through the city. And certainly the weather is very good for that work. However, the number of ash trees with significant signs of decline from EAB has forced us to focus on those before we continue pruning. However, days with poor weather has allowed us to continue pruning trees that we planted in the past six years. The plan, at least for now, is to continue removing ash through January or conditions become more conducive to pruning. Starting in February we will



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move back to pruning. We won't be able to accomplish as much and our pruning cycle will take a hit but we clearly need to focus on removing those trees that present the most obvious hazards.

We are moving forward with replacing trees in Canal Park. Many trees have either been removed or are doing so poorly they should be removed. That cohort makes up most of what we will replace. Currently we plan on grouping replacement species to create some cohesion in the design but also using five new species to help diversify the area. A contractor will complete the work and will be done by Grandma's Marathon. We expect this project to go out for bid by the end of the month.

C. Director's Report (Jim Filby Williams)

None.

VIII. Announcements

Filby Williams plans to give a presentation to the City Council about the strategic lands realignment, Kubiak will let the commission know when this will happen.

IX. Public Comment

None.

X. Adjournment

Commissioner Sprague made a motion to adjourn, Commissioner Schrage seconded. Meeting adjourned at 7:44 PM.

Next Meeting – February 5, 2025 at 6:00 PM Conference Room 330, City Hall.