



NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION

MEETING MINUTES

June 4, 2025 – 6:00 p.m.
Conference Room 330, City Hall

I. Call to Order

Chair Streitz called the meeting to begin at 6:00 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: Jim Filby Williams, Kate Kubiak, Clark Christenson, Bronwyn Bauer

III. Approval of the Agenda

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

IV. Approval of the May 7, 2025 Meeting Minutes

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

V. Old Business

A. Tischler Fish Kill Update (City Staff)

No staff update.

B. Advocacy (Chair Streitz)

Chair Streitz said that he and Secretary Gibbs have decided that they and fellow Commissioners can attend future City Council meetings to speak during the public comment period about all the good that has come from the Natural Resources Commission. He would like to have all Commissioners sign up to do this and talk about successes, watersheds, and other relevant topics to NRC programs. Vice Chair Schuldt thought this was a great idea, and Commissioner Raichel agreed.

C. EAB Plan Update (Clark Christenson)

Christenson said he and his team have about 750 ash tree removals left to do and hope to do 400 this summer. They have planted 350 trees so far, which is enough to meet grant requirements. They are working around lead water line replacements and are planting in groups/neighborhoods and not just one here and there, to increase productivity. Overall, he has a goal to plant 500 trees per year but hopes to plant 700 this year. They planted 650 last year. Next year they should be done with removal and planting on boulevards. They have briefly been working on ash in parks, and a few near streets, but mostly in boulevards.

Commissioner Lingren asked if there is a hazard component to the infected ash trees and Christenson said there is. They haven't made any decisions about ash trees in parks and trails, and Filby Williams added that more discussion is needed. Chair Streitz asked how many ash trees are in Duluth, and Christenson said he didn't have a specific number, but that there are tens of thousands. Commissioner Schrage asked if small ash trees are susceptible to Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) and Christenson said they can be, but the EAB prefer bigger trees.

D. Mission Forest Work (Clark Christenson)

Christenson said there have been many successes with the new greenhouse as well as a few failures. They are still learning but are saving money growing their own trees. One of the new trees they are growing is the



NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

June 4, 2025 – 6:00 p.m.
Conference Room 330, City Hall

yellow buckeye, which cost about \$10 each, versus the Ohio buckeye which are \$160 each. Christenson showed several areas near Mission Creek where they hope to do some work with money from the Minnesota Land Trust (MLT). The plan to plant white pine, white cedar, yellow birch, and burr oak on several slumped slopes. In flat areas, they may try the jack straw system to deter deer from accessing newly planted seedlings. Commissioner Schrage said it seems wasteful to drop so many mature trees for this. Commissioner Raichel said it would be better to plant trees first, then drop if they go with this plan, and recommended treating the stumps with herbicide. Christenson said that equipment access is also a factor to consider in this process. Kubiak added that Mission Creek is not one of our Priority Watersheds, but the Mission Forest is a management priority and when the MLT wants to give money to help manage this area, we will accept. Filby Williams said that having Kate and Clark working on these projects leverage better successes. Kubiak said they want to increase species diversity and shade the stream. Commissioner Raichel said that active management is critical to maintain healthy forests. Commissioner Sprague asked if there are trails in this part of Mission Forest and if so, maybe we could encourage people who use the trails to take photos to document the growth and progress of the project. Filby Williams said that there are trails here and that maybe the MLT would be interested in monitoring the progress or encouraging hikers to contribute.

VI. New Business

A. Park Hill Restoration Project

Kubiak said the City received a Conservation Partners Legacy (CPL) grant in 2023 and \$70,000 was reserved for restoration at Park Hill and they are focusing on removing an acre of dead ash. Northern Ecological Services was hired, and they took down and burned the trees and planted 100 new trees, including river birch, swamp white oak and St. Croix elm. Kubiak drives by this area often so she can monitor the progress. The Nature Conservancy planted red oak, white pine, and yellow birch in another nearby area for free, and they will monitor the growth and remove the protectors later. Commissioner Raichel said that oaks are slow to grow, so do not worry if it seems like slower progress. Commissioner Lindgren mentioned that there are many downed tubes between the Munger Trail and the campground, and Kubiak said she will see if the Duluth Stream Corps will clean those up.

B. Term Limits

Chair Streitz shared another draft of a letter to the mayor addressing term limits with the commissioners and asked who the letter should come from. Commissioner Schrage said that all the commission members' names should be included.

VII. Staff Reports

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

- Supported Lester Amity Hawk Ridge DNAP partners to get nomination through Parks and Rec Commission and Planning Commission. Approved by Planning. Nomination is scheduled to go to Council on 6/16.
- Mission Forest field work with Clark to determine restoration areas in cooperation with MN Land Trust and MN DNR AOC unit.
- Attended Headwaters' Partnership Meetings - ongoing visioning process.
- Continued work on Section 111 study - waiting for action by USACE.
- Serving as Chair of Lower St. Louis River Habitat Workgroup - next meeting June 5.
- Supported MN DNR in Tischer Creek Partner Meeting - 40 people attended this meeting. Working with DNR to figure out how to get the word out on all of the good work happening in the Watershed. This is part of the Roadmap to Resilience plan / process for Tischer.



NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

June 4, 2025 – 6:00 p.m.
Conference Room 330, City Hall

- Hartley Dam design is funded (for now). Working on developing a project agreement with MN DNR for project management for the design process. Project agreement to be finalized by Sept 2025.
- Meeting with UMD about supporting their research proposal to study impacts of white crack willow on streams.
- Many volunteer events this spring - Loll Designs planted trees west of Lester River Road; Rajala Woods Foundation planted white pine in Amity Watershed near Hawk Ridge; UMD researcher studying fungi and trees in Magney Snively; private citizen germinating eastern hemlock seedlings with plan to plant in City next year.
- Writing draft Magney Snively DNAP Updated Management Plan - next Advisory Committee mtg is June 25.
- Guest Speaker for Conservation Biology class at St. Scholastica.
- Working with City stormwater staff, Hartley staff, DNR, SWCD to secure funding from US Army Corps Section 569 for sediment trap at Northfield street and other actions in order to mitigate sediment and Willow impacts to Tischer Trib in Hartley.

B. Forester's Report (Clark Christenson)

- We have planted 314 trees so far this year, which is a great start but still need to plant an additional 200 this spring.
- Some of the new species we will be trying this year include Northern Empress elm, yellow buckeye and bay leaf magnolia.
- The greenhouse is up and running and we are learning a lot about what to do and what not to do!
- Requests for tree removal have been particularly high this year, undoubtedly due to EAB damage becoming more apparent.

C. Director's Report (Jim Filby Williams)

Filby Williams said there will be an environmental restoration celebration of the Perch lake project with partners next Tuesday, June 10. He said there is increased availability of recreation options like shore fishing, kayaking, and trails.

VIII. Announcements

Vice Chair Schuldt said that she was appointed to the Attorney General's Advisory Task Force on the Future of Minnesota's Water.

IX. Public Comment

None.

X. Adjournment

Vice Chair Schuldt made a motion to adjourn; Commissioner Foster seconded. Meeting adjourned at 7:19 PM.

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