



NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION

MEETING MINUTES

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

I. Call to Order

Chair Streitz called the meeting to begin at 6:01 PM.

II. Roll Call

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

Commissioners Absent: Lori Dando, Mike Raichel, Nancy Schuldt

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

III. Approval of the Agenda

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

Commissioner Sprague arrived at 6:05 PM.

IV. Approval of the June 4, 2025 Meeting Minutes

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

V. Old Business

A. Tischer Fish Kill Update (City Staff)

No update.

B. Advocacy (Chair Streitz)

Chair Streitz said that he will attend the next City Council meeting to speak about the NRC and hopes all the commissioners will take turns attending future meetings.

VI. New Business

A. Hayfield Solar Energy Project – Ted Blenkush, Construction Coordinator, Property and Facility Management

Blenkush described a proposed solar project to take place on approximately 40 acres in the proposed Lester-Amity-Hawk Ridge Natural Area that was previously used as a hayfield. The City would lease the land to Eden Renewables, who is submitting this project to Minnesota Power. This could provide \$1.5 - \$1.8 Million in income for the City over 25 years. Blenkush hopes to hear very soon if we can move forward, and if so, he will meet with the Planning Commission for a special lease permit. The project should be completed by 12/31/28. Commissioner Schrage asked about future site plans at this location and Blenkush said it will be a pollinator garden. Filby Williams said there are concise guidelines for pollinator gardens in state statutes. Commissioner Schrage made a motion to create a resolution in support of following pollinator garden guidelines on this site. Commissioner Sprague seconded. Motion passed unanimously as written:

The Natural Resources Commission urges the City of Duluth to require or encourage the hayfield solar site contractor to meet the criteria in Minnesota State Statute 216B.1642 SOLAR SITE MANAGEMENT for claiming that the site provide benefits to game birds, songbirds, and pollinators.

B. Scotch Pine Treatment – Clark Christenson, City Forester

Christenson said that the pines are heavy with cones on Park Point and he and his team cleared out a lot of brush in the area to make space for white pinecone germination. He treated the scotch pines using a technique called girdling to get rid of some of these to make room for white pines. Secretary Gibbs



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wondered if the scotch pines could be given away for free as Christmas trees during the holidays.

C. Buckthorn Management Event: Goats – Clark Christenson, City Forester

Christenson said a group of goats were brought to Russell Square in Lakeside for a week to help get rid of the buckthorn - they took care of a lot of the germinates and smaller items. The Parks & Recreation Department held an educational event for kids at the field near the goats and had about 120 kids show up. Commissioner Lindgren suggested bringing the goats back in the future instead of using herbicide to treat the regrowth of the invasive species.

VII. Staff Reports

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

- Hartley dam project agreement – moving forward internally – 1st legal review complete.
- GLRI FA 2 invasive species and Focus area 4 habitat and species processes are beginning – hoping to submit Magney Snively forestry project in collaboration with MN Land Trust focus on increasing forest regeneration and protecting identified springs feeding designated trout streams. Other partners are also interested in collaborating with the City on invasives work including the MN DNR and the MN Point SNA.
- Magney plan writing continues with veg and stream assessments complete.
- DNR has applied to OHF, with MN Land Trust and City as partners for Culvert and Forestry work in Mission Creek watershed. A culvert recently collapsed closing a section of the Munger trail for the fall. These are the types of culverts MN DNR wants to replace. This seems like a good, long- term funding partnership for Mission Forest.
- Supporting the Stream Corps - they are planting 30 acres just north of Fond du Lac neighborhood in Mission Forest – this is an ash forest that will soon be dying off. The Stream Corps is holding this grant themselves.
- City wide Native Plant Community Mapping continues by consultant and managed by MN Land Trust to be completed by end of summer.
- Held kick off meeting with consultant who is putting together three forestry prescriptions for us for Mission, Piedmont and Amity Hawk Ridge forested areas to be completed by the end of the year.

B. Forester's Report (Clark Christenson)

- With the dog days of summer upon us we have plenty of requests from the public, lots of ash trees to remove and another dozen projects we would like to get done.
- We were able to find someone to continue updating and expanding the street tree inventory. Adrian is making good progress and providing us with thousands of data points that will one day tell a more complete story of how trees are growing in Duluth.
- Ash removals continue and we can hopefully be down to 650 left at the end of August. We are marking trees in anticipation of removing more this fall.
- Stump grinding continues as we have personnel, but it continues to play second fiddle to many other requests.
- The greenhouse has produced trees that we aren't used to dealing with...basically very tall and spindly. This isn't necessarily a bad thing, but it may require a different approach to planting and staking these trees.
- One of my crew is running a mulching head on a skid steer in select locations. Most of these are aimed at buckthorn removal which we will follow-up with herbicide treatment this fall. One of these locations will



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be the subject of our conversation next Wednesday.

C. Director's Report (Jim Filby Williams)

None.

VIII. Thank you to Departing Commissioners

Kubiak and Filby Williams thanked Commissioners Lindgren and Schrage for their time and talents on the NRC for the past several years.

IX. Announcements

None.

X. Public Comment

None.

XI. Adjournment

Commissioner Lindgren made a motion to adjourn; Commissioner Schrage seconded. Meeting adjourned at 7:16 PM.

Next Meeting – September 3, 2025 at 6:00 PM Conference Room 330, City Hall.