



NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

January 7, 2026, 6:00 PM

City Hall Conference Room 330

Call to Order

Chair Streit called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

Roll Call

Commissioners Present: Tanya Feldkamp, Pam Foster, Judy Gibbs, Kari Hedin, Glenn Merrick, Mike Raichel, Nancy Schuldt, Tiffany Sprague, Andrew Strietz

City Staff Present: Bronwyn Bauer, Clark Christenson, Kate Kubiak, Hank Martinsen

Chair Streit asked all commissioners to briefly introduce themselves since there are three new commissioners starting terms tonight. Then he introduced Hank Martinsen, Kate's new supervisor, who will be joining NRC meetings going forward. Kate's Natural Resources Coordinator position has been moved out of the Parks and Recreation Department to the Property and Facilities Management Department.

Approval of the Agenda

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

Approval of the January 7, 2026 Meeting Minutes

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

Old Business

A. Tischer Fish Kill Update

No update.

B. Advocacy

No update.

New Business

A. City-wide Native Plant Community Projects Results – Maggie Ross, Kelly Beaster, GEI Consultants

Ross and Beaster went through a presentation about a native plant survey they conducted throughout Duluth where they classified native plant communities via desktop review, then field verified. They designated condition rank to each community, marked any state-listed species, and recorded populations of invasive species. They also collected species lists and marked other observations like vernal pool, living ash tree, yellow birch, cedar, leatherwood, or maidenhair fern. They also reported finding rare hemlock and sedges.

B. Carbon Credits Presentation – Michaela Neu, Green Cities Accord

Neu explained that a lack of funding for municipal tree planting in urban areas is having climate related impacts. The program generates new revenue streams for tree planting and maintenance by selling verified carbon offsets from local tree planting projects to organizations to compensate for their unavoidable carbon emissions. She said the program could generate nearly \$80,000 for the City of Duluth over the next five years, to reinvest in planting and maintaining urban trees.

Vice Chair Schuldt supports this project and said it is low risk to the City. Her previous employer participated in a similar program, and it was more successful than expected. Commissioner Raichel said that the 25-year time span for the program seemed very short, he would like to see the methodology for the program, and would like to know who bears the risks. He also offered to provide additional information as he has extensive experience with these types of programs. Christenson said he and his staff would be the ones to collect the data at specified intervals and reported that boulevard trees typically have a 25-30 year lifespan. Commissioner Sprague suggested that approaching strategic local businesses could help push the program toward the finish line. Kubiak noted that she and Christenson have been considering how to move this project forward for the past year and need assistance from the City Attorney's office and administration. Kubiak also mentioned that the carbon credit program, the native plant community data presented by GEI, and some other forestry related projects are coming together simultaneously, and she hopes to capture all of these ideas and projects in a finalized city-wide forest management plan later this year.

Staff Reports

A. Natural Resources Coordinator's Report – Kate Kubiak

- Park Point Community group's project – Restoring Fire to Minnesota Point – providing support with other city colleagues.
- Continuing to Chair Lower St. Louis River habitat Work group – quarterly meeting held Dec. 18.
- Continuing to serve on board of Headwaters partnership (coord. By MN Land Trust) – monthly meetings
- Held inter-departmental staff meeting regarding the possible development of a more formal prescribed fire program in the City. More info to come to NRC at a later meeting.
- Natural resource coordinator position – moved to new office/Dept.
- Updating natural resources webpages.
- Met with MN Land Trust about upcoming Mission Forest Forestry project – Clark's the real hero on this one.
- Met with GEI and MN Land rust to review MPC Mapping Project results (the project on the agenda this evening).

B. Forester's Report – Clark Christenson

- Ongoing winter operations have kept me and my crew busy with anything but tree work. However, I keep plugging along on certain projects.
- Mission Creek has better maps, more detail and clarity, and we will meet with tentative contractors next week.
- We finished our first debris lattice at the top of Mission Creek for a similar but separate project. Mistakes were made, lessons were learned. This will help design contract specs for the rest of the work along Mission Creek.
- We try to prune boulevard trees in the winter, but this winter has been slow for that work. A 1" snow takes as much time from our schedule as 3"-5" of snow. In the past, we have made great progress on maintaining our trees through pruning but until we have dedicated staff for that work in the winter, it's a roll of the dice if we can keep up with our preferred pruning schedule.

Announcements

None.

Public Comment

City Councilor Desotelle wanted to thank the members of the NRC for the work they do and let them know that she will be an advocate while on the City Council. She looks forward to working together.

Adjournment

Chair Streit adjourned the meeting at 7:43 PM.

Next NRC Meeting is March 4, 2026, 6:00 PM, City Hall Conference Room 330