



City of Blaine Anoka County, Minnesota Minutes

Blaine City Hall
10801 Town Sq Dr NE
Blaine, MN 55449

Nat'l Resources Conservation Board

The Natural Resource Conservation Board is an advisory body to the City Council. The Board is charged with recommending acquisition of lands for open space and developing a Natural Resource Plan which includes environmental policy and guidelines for the maintenance and preservation of Blaine's existing and future open spaces and trail corridors. One of the Board's functions is to hold public meetings and make recommendations to the City Council. For each item, the Board will receive reports prepared by City staff, provide the opportunity for public response, conduct Board discussions and make recommendations. The City Council, however, makes all final decisions on these matters.

Tuesday, January 16, 2018

7:00 PM

Council Chambers

1. Call To Order

1. The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m.

2. Roll Call

Others Present: Recreation Manager Shari Kunza and Rebecca Haug, Co-Liaison, Water Resource Manager.

Present: 8 - Chair McKinley, Villella, Rafferty, Perkins, Truchon, Lizakowski, Genet, and Theisen

Absent: 2 - Ruth, and Castillo

3.

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

MOVED by Boardmember Rafferty seconded by Boardmember Truchon, to approve the January 16, 2018 Board Agenda as presented.

Motion carried unanimously.

Aye: 8 - Chair McKinley, Villella, Rafferty, Perkins, Truchon, Lizakowski, Genet, and Theisen

4.

APPROVAL OF THE DECEMBER 19 MEETING MINUTES

Attachments: [12-19-17nrcb.doc](#)

Chair McKinley noted on page one, item 4, should read Chair "McKinley".

MOVED by Boardmember Perkins, seconded by Boardmember Lizakowski, to approve the minutes of the December 19, 2017 Board Meeting as corrected.

Motion carried unanimously.

Aye: 8 - Chair McKinley, Villella, Rafferty, Perkins, Truchon, Lizakowski, Genet, and Theisen

5. Open Forum for Citizen Input

Mr. Larry Sable thanked Boardmember Genet on the wonderful job she did in the presentation to the City Council in December regarding the signage to be placed at the BWS.

Boardmember Genet arrived at the meeting at 7:06 p.m.

Mr. Sable stated Mayor Ryan mentioned the Board is looking for an Eagle Scout Project to build some birdhouses. He has reached out to the Scout Troop to see if any of the boys are looking for Eagle Scout Projects. Mr. Sable requested the NRCB think of any additional Eagle Scout Projects that could be offered.

Mr. Sable commented on the BWS and some trees being cut out. Cutting some of the non-native trees were included in the plan and he does not feel the City should be paying for the replanting of trees. If individuals want trees they should plant them like other residents need to do.

Boardmember Genet requested Troop 509 be reached out to as well for the Eagle Scout projects and she would be willing to act as a liaison.

Boardmember Villella thanked Mr. Sable for his comments on the trees in the BWS.

6.

AUTHORIZE THE MAYOR AND CITY MANAGER TO ENTER INTO AN AGREEMENT WITH THE EDA TO ALLOCATE 14 ACRES OF WETLAND BANK CREDITS FROM THE BLAINE WETLAND SANCTUARY

Ms. Haug reviewed at the December 21, 2017 City Council Workshop, the Council discussed selling 14 acres of wetland credits from the EDA's Wetland Bank to the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) who is acting as the agent for the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) for mitigation of various state roadway projects in our region.

The EDA is considering the purchase at a price of \$54,450 per credit (totaling \$762,300), plus applicable fees at their January 18th EDA meeting. The money from the sale would be transferred from the EDA to the City to offset maintenance and future improvement costs in the Blaine Wetland Sanctuary.

The City Council must agree to allocate 14 acres of like-value wetland credits from the City's Site 7 Wetland Bank for future use by the EDA, at no financial cost to the EDA once the credits are available. There will be 77 available credits available in the Site 7 Wetland Bank.

Staff recommends the NRCB recommend the City Council approve the allocation of 14 acres of like-value wetland credits from the City's Site 7 Wetland Bank for future use by the EDA, at no financial cost to the EDA once the credits are available.

Chair McKinley asked if there were some earlier credits created from earlier restoration work but these are coming from the northern portion. Ms. Haug stated branch three is owned by the City's EDA and those credits are available for release. The Site 7, newly restored area credits are not available for sale yet as some permitting issues are still being worked. Once credits are available for sale 14 of those credits will need to be allocated to the EDA. The NRCB is giving the EDA a loan of 14 credits. The monies will be used for further expansion and management of the BWS.

Chair McKinley asked if the monies would be used for Critical Connections and Ms. Haug stated not necessarily Critical Connections but other entities doing restoration work at BWS. The money will not be specific as to how it needs to be spent.

Boardmember Perkins asked how much of the loan will be paid off and how much will be remaining. Ms. Haug stated the EDA loaned the City \$400,000 so that will go back to the EDA and the remainder will be used for maintenance and work on the BWS or educational programs.

Boardmember Villella asked how this came about and Ms. Haug stated the State (BWSR) approached the City.

Boardmember Lizakowski asked what will be done with the area and Ms. Haug stated we are in charge of this wetland bank. The State will have nothing else to do with it.

Boardmember Theisen proposed eventually a trust be established so the purchase credit can be invested so the dividends can be used. Ms. Haug stated she will check with the Finance Director and report back to the Board.

Boardmember Vilella asked how the purchase price was reached and Ms. Haug stated it is based on \$1.25 sf amount which is very low. Typically, the range is \$1.80 - \$2.00 sf. There was some negotiation but because of the way the States funding is this was the most that could be paid.

MOVED by Boardmember Rafferty, seconded by Boardmember Truchon, to recommend the City Council approve the allocation of 14 acres of like-value wetland credits from the City's Site 7 Wetland Bank for future use by the EDA, at no financial cost to the EDA once the credits are available.

Motion carried unanimously.

Aye: 8 - Chair McKinley, Vilella, Rafferty, Perkins, Truchon, Lizakowski, Genet, and Theisen

7.

CIP FOR OPEN SPACE

Attachments: CIP.pdf
CIP for Open Space.doc

Ms. Haug provided a staff report titled "Appropriate Specific Funds for the Management of the Blaine Wetland Sanctuary and approve the Capital Improvement Plan for the Open Space Fund."

This will go to the City Council on Thursday evening. This has been reviewed before by the NRCB. The Finance Director will present to the City Council.

Forwarded to City Council.

8.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE

Attachments: [Comp Plan Chapter 2.pdf](#)

Ms. Kunza reported WSB has taken the comments from the board and made updates to the Comprehensive Plan. The draft is on schedule for an open house on March 22, 2018. The chapter that pertains to the Natural Resource Board was provided for Board review. This document is still being worked on. Any further comments should be emailed to staff to be passed onto WSB.

Chair McKinley referred to page 25 the sentence that reads "The Board should develop a Natural Resources Plan which contains criteria for all future open space acquisition." Chair McKinley stated she was not aware

of this. She also referred to the mention of the Blaine Airport Rich Fen and stated she was not aware of this either.

Boardmember Vilella stated he enjoyed the last meeting and the discussion about the Comprehensive Plan Update.

Discussed.

9.

REVIEW OF 2017 GOALS AND SETTING 2018 GOALS

Attachments: [2017 2018 goals.docx](#)

Ms. Kunza reviewed every January, the NRCB reviews the past year's goals and sets goals for the next year. The Board achieved several of its goals, including the Blaine Wetland Sanctuary Grand Opening, creating brochure for the BWS, touring open space sites and reporting to board, attending several community events and hosting a Frog Walk. Chair McKinley stated about half of the 2017 goals have been completed. Several of the 2017 goals can be addressed in 2018, such as updating the website, attending additional events, and celebrating American Wetlands Month.

Chair McKinley noted there was no mention of the boardwalk at the BWS in the 2017 goals as it was not on the horizon but was completed.

Staff recommends that the board establish attainable goals for 2018 based on the options presented and other ideas the board may have.

Chair McKinley suggested Boardmember Truchon assist her in reviewing the Open Space Management Plan to determine what has already been completed and actions of what needs to be done. A report will be provided at the February meeting. Every month one area will be focused on and reviewed by the NRCB.

Chair McKinley asked Boardmember Truchon to review the Oaks of Savannah, Hidden Ponds, Laddie Lake and Blaine Wetland Sanctuary. Chair McKinley will review the others.

Chair McKinley referred to item 4. On the 2018 Options for Goals and noted the Parks Department is willing to assist the NRCB on the activities. Boardmember Truchon suggested the Terrene Institute be researched for ideas on American Wetlands Month.

Ms. Kunza stated NRCB members are needed if interested to staff the booth at the City sponsored events.

Boardmember Perkins mentioned the benches that were purchased but have not yet been installed. This could possibly be another idea for an Eagle Scout project. Comments from Mr. Sable were made but were inaudible. Ms. Kunza stated it will be added to the 2018 goals. Boardmember Genet noted one bench in Lochness needs to be replaced.

Boardmember Truchon suggested Infinity Campus be requested to purchase some benches. Staff will research and see how many benches are available. Chair McKinley stated five benches were purchased five years ago.

Discussed.

10.

BLAINE WETLAND SANCTUARY NEIGHBORHOOD UPDATE

Attachments: BWSLandscaping Gate Rev1.pdf

Ms. Haug reviewed at the October 19, 2017 City Council Workshop, the City Council directed staff to set up another meeting with the Blaine Wetland Sanctuary (BWS) Committee to discuss additional landscaping for affected property owners. Since meetings are difficult to set with a committee this size, staff is communicating via email with the neighborhood committee to get feedback on how to proceed.

The following is a partial email sent out to the committee on January 10, 2018:

“ . . . The City Council is planning on installing a fence and a gate along with some landscaping at the maintenance access off Naples Circle. The City Council also wanted to get feedback from the BWS Committee on reimbursing those residents directly impacted by the tree removal. This means those properties where mature trees were removed up to the resident's property line as shown on the attached map. The City would reimburse each property owner up to \$3,500. This additional landscaping would need to be planted on private property and would need to be accessed through private property. Heavy equipment is not capable of making it through the maintenance access are and is not allowed under the permits the City has for the wetland restoration.”

Chair McKinley stated she is against reimbursing each property owner up to \$3,500. She would support offering city-priced trees to the residents.

Boardmember Genet asked if the \$3,500 per resident comes from the NRCB budget and Ms. Haug stated that needs to be determined.

Boardmember Truchon stated she and Boardmember Genet were on the BWS committee and the committee voted against the \$3,500 per property owner affected. Boardmember Genet agreed. She stated there were two property owners that had trees removed from their private property and she would be in favor of replacing trees on their property. There were seven affected property owners indicated on a map provided for the Board. Boardmember Perkins stated the City should pay for the trees for the two property owners. Boardmember Villella stated this sets a broad precedent for the future.

Boardmember Lizakowski asked what feedback was received from the residents and Ms. Genet stated there was some concern about if money was spent already on trees would it be reimbursed and how is it decided who gets trees and who does not. There are still a number of answered questions.

Boardmember Theisen recommend the vehicle is chosen wisely such as tax credit. Ms. Haug stated it would be a reimbursement with receipts for money paid for trees.

Boardmember Truchon recommended that only reimbursement be for the "approved" trees.

MOVED by Boardmember Perkins, seconded by Boardmember Lizakowski, to advise the City Council the NRCB is against the reimbursement for the planting of trees using City funds on private property with the exception of the two properties where trees were removed from their private property.

Motion carried unanimously.

Aye: 8 - Chair McKinley, Villella, Rafferty, Perkins, Truchon, Lizakowski, Genet, and Theisen

Boardmember Theisen stated he does not support the amendment.

AMENDMENT TO MOTION by Boardmember Truchon that reimbursement for trees be only for those trees on the list of species provided by City Staff. The amendment died for lack of a second.

11.

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

Ms. Kunza stated staff has been further defining environmental education programs for the City's open spaces while working with Growing Green Hearts Wargo Nature Center, and other potential partners.

Our environmental education program will begin in May with American Wetlands Month. Events this month will include the following:

- An interactive display at City Hall focusing on wetlands. Displays will be provided by the Anoka Conservation District and the Rice Creek Watershed District.
- Staff will purchase a professionally printed banner supporting AWM.
- An event at the BWS with Growing Green Hearts.
- Educational social media posts regarding the benefits of wetlands and value of the resource in Blaine.
- Resources promoting families to explore the Blaine Wetland Sanctuary on their own.
- A table at World Fest on May 19 (in need of NRCB members to volunteer at this event).
- Promotion of future environmental education programs.

Our environmental education program will continue throughout the remainder of the year with the following:

- Three additional events provided by Growing Green Hearts (dates will be set in February).
- Constructing photo poles along the board walk for park users to take photos throughout the seasons and upload to the City's website.
- Launching the Blaine Wetland Sanctuary web page.
- Contracting with Wargo Nature Center to bring their programs to the BWS and Blaine City Hall.
- Purchasing field notebooks and other useful items to give to the public to promote the Blaine Wetland Sanctuary and environmental education.
- Creating tool kits to donate to Anoka County libraries with field guides, binoculars, and magnifying glasses.
- Promoting "No Child Left Inside Day" on October 10 with daily tips and family challenges.

Chair McKinley asked how this all would be paid for and Ms. Kunza stated some user fees, promotional funding, etc.

Boardmember Genet asked about the outdoor classroom and Ms. Kunza stated that would be blankets on the ground or picnic tables initially.

Discussed.

Adjournment

MOVED by Boardmember Perkins, seconded by Boardmember Truchon, to adjourn the meeting at 8:05 p.m.

The motion carried unanimously.

Aye: 8 - Chair McKinley, Villella, Rafferty, Perkins, Truchon, Lizakowski, Genet, and Theisen