

**City of Blaine
Anoka County, Minnesota**

**Natural Resources Conservation Board
Tuesday, June 21, 2022**

7:00PM
Council Chambers
10801 Town Square Drive

1. The meeting was called to order at 7:00PM.
2. Roll Call – Chair Perkins, Boardmembers Filipi, Genet, Panning, Rafferty, Truchon.

Absent – Boardmembers McKinley and Vedi.

Others Present: Stormwater Coordinator Megan Hedstrom.

3. Approval of Minutes

MOVED by Boardmember Rafferty, seconded by Boardmember Genet, to approve the minutes of the February 15, 2022 board meeting as presented.

Motion carried unanimously.

Boardmember Panning requested a change to the May 17 minutes on Page ___ stating the last sentence of her comment should read, she is tight with her money.

MOVED by Boardmember Rafferty, seconded by Boardmember Genet, to approve the minutes of the May 17, 2022 board meeting as amended.

Motion carried unanimously.

4. Approval of the Agenda

Chair Perkins requested the board discuss Boardmember Genet's eagle scout project as Item 6D, a summary of the meeting Boardmember Truchon had with the Mayor as Item 6E and changes he would like to see made to the board as Item 6F.

MOVED by Boardmember Truchon, seconded by Boardmember Panning to approve the June 21, 2022 board agenda as amended.

Motion carried unanimously.

5. Open Forum for Citizen Input

No one appeared to address the NRCB.

6. New Business

6D. Eagle Scout Project

Boardmember Genet stated her son was looking to complete his eagle scout project, noting he represents Troop #3509. She explained her son would like to construct bat boxes in order to provide a habitat for bats. She noted his plan was to construct four bat houses and to place them in forested areas within the BWS, Pioneer Park or Loch Ness Park. She indicated her son would be using DNR blueprints for the bat boxes. It was noted the bat boxes would be mounted onto 20 foot wooden posts that would be sunk six feet into the ground and would be stabilized with Quikrete. She reported these plans could be changed or adapted per the city's direction.

Boardmember Truchon indicated she believed this was a great idea. She noted Happy Acres Park has had bat boxes in the past.

Boardmember Genet commented the southern portion of the BWS would be a great location for additional bat boxes because bats were in this area and were looking for nesting sites.

Chair Perkins wondered how many bat boxes her son could make.

Boardmember Genet estimated her son would be able to make four to six bat boxes. She noted digging the holes and sinking the poles would be the most labor intensive part of the project. She indicated he was hoping to get a portion of the building materials donated for the bat boxes.

6E. Summary of Meeting with Mayor Sanders

Boardmember Truchon provided the board with a summary of the meeting she had with Mayor Sanders. She stated a subcommittee was set up to address communication between the city council and the NRCB. She explained in the end, only she was able to meet with the mayor. She reported the theme of the meeting was communication and he encouraged board members to reach out to him and the city councilmembers at any time. She discussed the NRCB's meeting schedule with the mayor and he had questions about why the group does not meeting on a monthly basis. She indicated the mayor encouraged the group to meet on a monthly basis even if there was nothing to vote on. She commented she also discussed the BWS pavilion with the mayor, noting she expressed her concerns with parking and the needs for the pavilion to have sides. She stated they also discussed groundwater and the BWS. She indicated this was a very productive meeting and she thanked the mayor for his time.

Chair Perkins thanked Boardmember Truchon for having this conversation with the mayor.

6F. Recommendations for NRCB Board

Chair Perkins stated as the chair he takes full responsibility for the lack of communication for this group. He explained he had a few recommendations for the NRCB and suggested the group hold standing monthly meeting going forward.

MOVED by Chair Perkins, seconded by Boardmember Truchon to recommend the NRCB hold standing monthly meetings.

Motion carried unanimously.

MOVED by Chair Perkins, seconded by Boardmember Panning to inform the city council that the NRCB was not in favor of the current BWS pavilion design and requested that the board work with staff and the consultant to create a learning/nature center.

Boardmember Filipi asked why the NRCB wanted to have a learning center instead of a pavilion.

Boardmember Truchon discussed the goals within the city's 2020 comprehensive plan, which included open spaces and the creation of a wetland park with a nature center and trails. She reported she has been discouraged about the plans for the pavilion and the high costs, but noted a learning center has always been the plan for this area.

Boardmember Genet commented the long-term plans for the BWS always included an interpretive center for outdoor learning, with Springbrook or Wargo Nature Center being the lofty goal. She understood the site had limitations due to the property having no water or sewer. She reported it has been a priority of the board to have a learning center at the BWS for the past 20 years in order to provide programming and a field trip space for children in the community.

Further discussion ensued regarding the history of the BWS and the learning center.

Boardmember Panning stated the board should have provided more clear guidelines when directing staff on the building designs.

Boardmember Genet suggested the subcommittee continue in order to keep the nature center moving forward.

Chair Perkins discussed the public hearings that were held and noted feedback was received from residents on this facility as well. He understood costs were a concern for the city, but he would still like to see a learning center completed within the BWS.

Boardmember Truchon commented another thing that has gotten away from the board was how to start a foundation in order to assist with the funding for this project.

Boardmember Panning supported the board asking more questions about how to start a foundation. She discussed the cost of maintaining the BWS and other park properties in perpetuity. She reported the wetland credit sales were to be used for the BWS. She indicated she would like to revisit this topic further at a future NRCB meeting.

Boardmember Truchon supported the board receiving more information regarding the finances as well.

Chair Perkins thanked the board members for the great conversation.

Motion carried unanimously.

MOVED by Boardmember Truchon, seconded by Boardmember Genet to recommend the NRCB subcommittee reconvene in order to meet with staff and the architect to discuss the future plans for the BWS structure.

Boardmember Genet asked if the board was able to gather more members from the community to serve on this subcommittee. Ms. Hedstrom commented she did not know the rules about residents participating in subcommittees but stated she would research this matter and would report back to the group.

Boardmember Genet recommended this subcommittee also look into how to create a foundation. The board supported this recommendation.

Motion carried unanimously.

MOVED by Boardmember Truchon, seconded by Boardmember Genet to recommend a subcommittee of the NRCB be created to further investigate the finances and creation of a foundation to support the BWS.

Motion carried unanimously.

6A. Motion 22-119, Discussion on Future Structure at the Blaine Wetland Sanctuary

Ms. Hedstrom discussed the timing and potential future structure at the Blaine Wetland Sanctuary. It was noted staff will be scheduling an upcoming tour of the Springbrook Nature Center for the July NRCB meeting.

Chair Perkins reported the subcommittee would be able to bring forward the NRCB's clear desires for the BWS structure with staff and the design architect.

Boardmember Truchon indicated the board was not interested in a larger parking lot or a pavilion structure that would be open for rental. She noted the board was hoping for a safe crossing to reach the BWS from the other side of Lexington Avenue. She thanked the architect for designing a beautiful structure, but noted the board was looking for a learning center and not a pavilion.

Boardmember Filipi asked if it was possible to put the learning center at another location within the BWS.

Chair Perkins reported this space was set aside for the learning center.

Boardmember Genet indicated there was a house adjacent to the BWS that would provide a great option for a learning center because the property already had water and sewer.

Chair Perkins discussed how this structure would represent the city and he wanted to take full advantage of all of the natural resources within this learning center.

Further discussion ensued regarding the cost to bring utilities to the BWS structure site.

Boardmember Panning supported the subcommittee seeking sponsors for the BWS learning center. She recommended work that

was being done on the design of the pavilion be put on pause for the time being. She requested the city council be invited to attend the Springbrook Nature Center tour.

MOVED by Boardmember Genet, seconded by Boardmember Panning, to recommend progress be stopped on the pavilion plans until July or early August when the NRCB subcommittee can meet with staff and the architect.

Motion carried unanimously.

6B. Motion 22-118, Discussion on the RFP for the Blaine Wetland Sanctuary Trail System

Ms. Hedstrom reviewed the draft of the RFP for the Blaine Wetland Sanctuary Trail System with the board. It was noted the RFP would be sent to Stantec because they were the consultant who performed the original master plan. She indicated the council also recommended the RFP include a feasibility study that would include the expansion of the parking at the 109th parking lot. Staff anticipated the trail system would take five or six years to complete.

Boardmember Truchon asked if this plan would give up the least amount of wetland credits. Ms. Hedstrom reported this was the case.

MOVED by Boardmember Truchon, seconded by Boardmember Genet, to recommend the city proceed with an RFP that would amend the existing Blaine Wetland Sanctuary Master Plan to include the new trail drawings.

Boardmember Genet questioned why the parking lot off 109th Avenue was being recommended for expansion. Ms. Hedstrom reported staff received direction from the council in June to have the consultant look into the feasibility of an expansion in order to see what the cost may be.

Boardmember Truchon asked if there was any on-street parking available. Ms. Hedstrom explained a limited number of on-street parking would be available along the east side of Okinawa.

Boardmember Genet believed that parking for volunteer or other events should be done at the trailhead and not at the lot along 109th Avenue, which should serve as a secondary parking site.

Boardmember Panning reported if the trailheads were all in, there would be additional parking locations to enter the BWS.

Chair Perkins asked what the cost would be for the feasibility study on the parking lot expansion. Ms. Hedstrom explained the RFP was in draft form at this time, but noted the parking lot expansion could be made an alternate bid.

Boardmember Truchon stated she would like to restate her motion to include this recommendation from staff.

MOVED by Boardmember Truchon, seconded by Boardmember Genet, to recommend the city proceed with an RFP that would amend the existing Blaine Wetland Sanctuary Master Plan to include the new trail drawings, to include a feasibility study on the potential expansion of the parking lot off 109th Avenue as an alternate bid within the RFP.

Motion carried unanimously.

Further discussion ensued regarding the future timeline for the BWS trail system project and the signage that should be posted.

6C. Motion 22-117, NRCB Updates

Ms. Hedstrom provided the board with an update on the following projects:

Sunrise Ponds Trail

The first phase of construction has been completed for the Sunrise Ponds Trail. Staff would like to bring the board to the site before going to the Springbrook Nature Center in July.

Wetland Credit Update

To date, the city has received 39.735 credits out of a possible 81 credits from the Site 7 Wetland Bank. The city receives these credits to sell when specific metrics regarding plant diversity and invasive species management are achieved in the wetland restoration projects currently underway in the Site 7 wetland.

The city's Site 7 bank received a release of an additional 12 credits in August 2021 that are now available for sale. A breakdown of credit status, including the approval of the 0.7 credit purchase agreement approved on June 6, can be seen in the table.

Total	Sold	Purchase Pending	Available
39.735	30.1265	7.9329	1.6756

Please note, when Site 7 Wetland Bank was created, the pro forma was based on the sale of wetland credits as a unit cost of \$1.75-\$2.00 per square foot. Currently, credits are being sold at \$2.50 per square foot.

Blaine Wetland Sanctuary Monument Sign Lights and Landscaping

Staff met with the electrician at the Blaine Wetland Sanctuary to install lighting on both sides of the monument sign. Once this has been completed landscaping will be the final piece to this project.

Pioneer Park

Staff discussed Pioneer Park with the council at a workshop in January and the consensus of the council was to support the removal of dead and diseased trees within the park, but council indicated they would like to decide on future wetland bank before undertraining any project. It was noted the council would be touring Pioneer Park in August and the NRCB would be discussing Pioneer Park further.

7. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:23PM.