



City of Blaine Anoka County, Minnesota Minutes - Final

10801 Town Square Dr.
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 opens 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, July 17, 2012

7:30 PM

Council Chambers

1. Call To Order

The meeting was called to order at 7:32 p.m.

2. Roll Call

Also Present: City Councilmember Kathy Kolb; Staff Liaison, Jim Hafner; and Recording Secretary, Beth Bostrom.

Present: 7 - Chair McKinley, Kustermann, Rafferty, Schrunck, Castillo, Truchon, and Gunter

3. Approval of Minutes

Chairman McKinley noted that under 5.d on page 4, the last sentence of the second paragraph should be moved to the next paragraph as a comment made by Boardmember Truchon: "Boardmember Truchon ~~she~~ suggested geocaching."

Moved by Schrunck, seconded by Rafferty, that the Minutes be Approved as Amended. The Motion was adopted unanimously.

4. Approve Agenda

Chairman McKinley noted that Council Liaison Kolb from District 3 is present. She asked that item 6.3, Environmental Policy, be moved up under new business as the first item.

Moved by Boardmember Gunter, seconded by Boardmember Truchon to approve the July 17 Board Agenda.

Motion carried unanimously.

5. Open Forum for Citizen Input

There was none.

6. New Business

6.c Report from Environmental Policy committee

Chairman McKinley commented that the environmental policy committee did not have a chance to meet last month. She spoke to City Councilmember Kathy Kolb who is present tonight and will discuss what was decided by Council and answer any questions.

City Councilmember Kathy Kolb explained that she is the City Council liaison to the NRCB. She mentioned that Council had a discussion regarding policy and Open Space where they reviewed the role that the NRCB plays. She brought this topic up in a workshop meeting and questioned how it was defined as there had not been a discussion on this recently. She mentioned that this Board was intended to have more responsibility. She reviewed that Council decided documents need to be reviewed on the history of the Board. She reported that they want to review how Council sees the NRCB and then have a joint meeting. She commented that they would decide where both sides see the NRCB and then come to a joint decision. She commented that they would like to have a joint meeting before year end. She commented that as a Councilmember it is very important to her to preserve open space and preserve green space and to have a safe environment. She thanked the Board for contacting her to get her involvement. She suggested that Blaine could be a green community in the future but there is not a consensus on this. She added that someone recently asked what a rain garden is. She observed that open spaces and parks are well used. She noted that there are missing picnic tables and benches which need to be addressed. She added that having many benches is important. She expressed interest in having a wetland park some day. She asked if there are questions.

Boardmember Truchon commented regarding a template she found that could be used as a starting point for creating an environmental policy. She suggested that this could be used in a workshop discussion. Councilmember Kolb commented that she is not sure what Council's role will be in making policy but they will come to some decisions and have a joint meeting to work further on their ideas. She complimented that the NRCB is valuable and their work is appreciated. She complimented Jim Hafner, the Staff Liaison,

because of the good feedback she hears about him.

Boardmember Truchon thanked Councilmember Kolb for her work on the wetland park as they are continuing to develop it.

Chairman McKinley asked Boardmember Truchon if there is additional information for the subcommittee to review. Boardmember Truchon stated that she will wait on this pending the meeting with Council.

Boardmember Rafferty explained that he is continuing to work on the history of the Board and will be updating the web site with this information.

Discussed.

6.a Report on NRCB booth at the Blaine Blazin' Festival

Chairman McKinley reported that the festival attendance was lower this year. She added that there were comments and interesting feedback received at the booth. She commented that there was a lot of positive feedback about the expanded recycling. She noted that people were interested in the buckthorn display.

Boardmember Castillo arrived at 7:50 p.m.

Chairman McKinley reported that on Earth Day and at the booth she promoted an expanded Adopt-A-Park program. She stated that she had a call from a Target coordinator who expressed interest in employees participating in an Adopt- a-Storm water pond. She reported that she had contacted the Park and Recreation Director, Jim Kappelhoff, to pursue this further. Boardmember Truchon reported that at the festival she talked to a lot of families who had an opportunity to ask her questions.

Discussed.

6.b Report on Laddie Lake trillium plants

Chairman McKinley stated that the Laddie Lake trillium plant project has been completed for the year. She commented that Boardmember Rafferty helped her with the project last week. She commented that there is additional overgrowth and the plants have completely withered down making them hard to find. She reported that they moved an additional 10 plants. She commented that they are leaving the flags in and will check on the area in the spring. She thanked Boardmember Rafferty for his help on this project.

Boardmember Truchon asked if the trail around Laddie Lake is actually private property. She commented that she did a report on the area and stopped where the sign for private property is posted. Chairman McKinley commented that beyond the sign is private property but the power line angles back to the west and the trilliums are located some distance up to the north.

Discussed.

6.d Report on SHIP grant process

Chairman McKinley stated that she could not attend a meeting that was recently held on the SHIP grant. She commented that she heard feedback from the meeting that trails and sidewalks are being studied between Highway 65 and University Avenue so that maps could be developed for residents of the mobile home parks. She stated that she forwarded on Boardmember Truchon's idea of adding bike racks and providing a patch for using the trails. She commented that Gretchen, the representative, offered to check into it. Boardmember Truchon clarified that she suggested a passport, which could be marked by an area business.

Chairman McKinley stated that she was told the bike rack at the library would be an issue for the county. She reviewed that the idea behind the grant is to get people moving in the community without the use of their car. She suggested calling Tom Godfrey with further ideas.

Discussed.

6.e Discussion on web site and newsletter items

Chairman McKinley stated that she is very happy with the Blaine newsletter article on the NRCB. She thanked Boardmember Truchon and the Staff Liaison again for their work on it. She suggested that they talk further on what will be written up for the next newsletter, which covers September/October and needs to be completed in August. The Staff Liaison commented that the article needs to be completed by the end of July.

Boardmember Truchon suggested writing about Laddie Lake in the newsletter. She offered to work on writing an article. Boardmember Gunter recommended adding details in the newsletter that a non-internet user would find helpful like types of plants and features of the open space.

Boardmember Truchon offered to write about Kane Meadows and Laddie Lake. Chairman McKinley suggested promoting Laddie Lake as it is a

beautiful park in the city that she believes is underutilized.

The Staff Liaison reviewed the newer features to the Open Space website.

Chairman McKinley confirmed that they will feature Laddie Lake and Lochness Park (which has a rain garden) in the next newsletter.

Chairman McKinley asked about the group photo and whether it is on the website. The Staff Liaison stated that he needs a digital copy.

Boardmember Schrunk offered to provide a copy for the Staff Liaison. Chairman McKinley confirmed that all Boardmembers are okay with their picture being shown on the website.

BOARD CONSENSUS was reached to display their picture on the website.

6.f Proposal for further restoration work at Pioneer Park

Chairman McKinley commented that there is a handout from Critical Connections, which gives a management proposal. She reported that restoration work has been ongoing for several years. She confirmed that the proposal was anticipated in the budget. The proposal states that work is not to exceed \$9,500.

The Staff Liaison stated that Critical Connections has been doing some wetland improvement and this fall they will do followup for buckthorn. He commented that there is a proposal for Area F to do a controlled burn and follow-up herbicide treatments for buckthorn.

Moved by Boardmember Castillo, seconded by Boardmember Truchon, to advise the City Council that the Critical Connections proposal for management at Pioneer Park has been approved.

The motion carried unanimously.

6.g Reports from board members on open space visits

Chairman McKinley asked to go first as she has two reports. She is covering former Boardmember Kustermann's report. She reviewed her first report, which is on the two open space parcels in the northeast quadrant in Blaine. She provided a map of the site, which is also on the website. She referred to pictures of Site 5, which is on 131st Avenue off Lexington. She commented that when oak wilt was discovered here quite a few trees were removed and

ongoing monitoring of the area has been done. She noted that it is a remote place that can be easily accessed from the street. She suggested leaving the area alone for the time being until a development is put in to the south at which time she suggested a trail. She referred to a picture of fern growth in the middle of the parcel. She commented that Site 12 is on Lever Street. It was purchased when developers were buying up volumes of land. This is an isolated parcel and cannot be reached without crossing private property in front. She noted that last year the area was too wet to visit but this year it is drying and she could get in. She commented that she got in to see the pond, which is very pretty.

Chairman McKinley commented that the Wetland Complex and the Oaks Savannah are her other reports. She commented that Site 13 is not in the management manual because it was added later. She commented that it goes along with Site 7. She commented that Site 13 was the last parcel obtained. It is on Lexington Avenue and is a former home site. She reported that the structures are removed and there are three boulders in the front by pine trees. She suggested that eventually this would be a good location for an interpretive center and parking lot. Councilmember Kolb commented that Council has discussed moving the Finn Farm building across to the Wetland Complex for use as an interpretive center. She commented that this would be the smaller building.

Chairman McKinley commented that the smaller building is the pump house where milk was kept. She commented that there will be a trail system in the Wetland Complex eventually. Boardmember Truchon commented that this site has not been surveyed for management.

Chairman McKinley continued her report by commenting on a map. She noted that she has pictures of Site 13 on Lexington and in the woods it is very thick, slopes down steeply and is a wetland. She commented that Site 6 is called the Oaks Savannah. She noted that this is a small parcel. She added that there is a paved trail, which was added a few years back as well as a wood chip trail. She suggested that the woodchip trail needs maintenance because it is becoming overgrown with thistles. She commented that there were a lot of wildflowers blooming. She stated that no parking is available. She commented that this area is not used much by the general public but is used a lot by the neighborhood. She reviewed that a few years ago much buckthorn was removed. New trees and shrubs have been planted and are doing well. She commented that Site 7 is a large open space parcel and is a wetland.

Boardmember Truchon inquired about a small, triangular area noted as open space. The Staff Liaison stated that there are spaces like this that are park land and belong to the city but they are not designated open space and are not

in the management plan.

Chairman McKinley stated that Site 7 is under study with some areas restored with native plants. She gave two suggestions. The first is that the conservation easement sign is way off the trail and out of view when coming on the trail from the left side. She suggested moving the sign closer to the trail. The Staff Liaison stated that the sign marks the boundary of the conservation easement and cannot be moved.

Chairman McKinley commented that the trail, as it goes by a slope in East Lake Park, is a very wet area. She suggested that this would be a good location for a rain garden. Boardmember Truchon commented on an area where dumping has taken place. She stated that a neighbor is mowing a trail and dumping back in the wetland. She noted that this is along the paved loop.

Councilmember Kolb suggested being proactive and sending a letter asking for people who have land bordering open space to help keep the area preserved. She commented that they could talk about the history of the open space and the benefit of taking care of it. She suggested being proactive instead of reactive and thank people for their efforts in maintaining the area. Boardmember Truchon suggested hosting Earth Day in this area for the purpose of education.

Boardmember Schrunk commented that she was asked if people can mow an area by their property, which is city property. Councilmember Kolb stated that mowing an area outside of a city easement has been discouraged. She stated that property owners are not allowed to mow anywhere by the water.

Chairman McKinley asked to follow up with Councilmember Kolb on the letter writing idea. Councilmember Kolb agreed.

Boardmember Schrunk presented her report on Lochness Park. She commented that she worked to find out who planted trees on the entrance driveway for Lochness Park. She commended the effect. She showed pictures of the bridge and the water. She showed a picture of the rain garden. She showed a picture of residents playing disc golf. She wrote a report on March 21, 2012. She commented that it was a dreary day. There were people eating lunch and ten cars were in the parking lot. She reported that she was there again close to noon on May 19 and the Blaine triathlon was going on. She went on June 13 and there were 20 cars in the lot. She commented that formerly the park was called garbage hill. The original plan was to use the hill for skiing and then it was used for sledding. The sledding was stopped after children were hurt with items coming through the snow. She commented that she found the park well maintained, clean and welcoming.

Boardmember Gunter reported that she visited Pioneer Park. She chatted with a few park users, six in total. They reported all loving the park as it is close to their neighborhoods and a new development. She reported that there is more than one entrance. She relayed a concern that weeds are coming in on both sides of trails. She commented that by riding a bike you get hit in the head by tree limbs. She noted that they are working on redoing a soft trail. She commented that they are planting more trees to hide the new houses, which are being built. She reported that the trees off of 125th have a great amount of variety and nice, large trees, which adds to the parks beauty. She noted that a bench needs repair. She reported that mosquitos are abundant.

Boardmember Truchon reported on Laddie Lake Park. She reported that her husband, Dan, took the photos. She commented that the park has some good signage. She explained that on June 26 over the noon hour she visited the park and went for a walk. She reported it is a very nice park. She noted there are two areas to access the park. She reported that the parking lot has space for 15 cars. She added that there is a walk-in entrance also. She commented that there is a sign to watch for coyotes. She asked that there be better signage for the walk-in entrance to the park. She observed that there were a variety of ages enjoying the park. She commented that there is a blue building and two barriers, which are first visible. She followed the trail to the left to a beautiful shelter, which does not have picnic tables or benches. She followed the trail and went to the restoration site. This is the Oaks Savannah restoration site that slopes up into the forest. She commented that buckthorn is visible on each side, which has been addressed in previous years. This is north on the trail. She commented that on 89th, her husband, Dan, found a walk-in entrance by a trail. This is across from the fire station. She commented that there is a wetland visible, which she did not walk into. She reported that toward the lake she passed another shelter, which has no picnic tables, and there was one bench, which they sat on. She commented that they saw one light pole. She noted that they walked as far as the private property sign. Chairman McKinley commented that there is an easement for the trail on the private property; the sign says to stay on the trail as there is private property on both sides and the trail continues on out to Lincoln Street.

Boardmember Truchon commented that they saw another bench by the parking lot so there were two total seen in the park. She commented that the mowing did not go down to the water's edge, which was nice to see. She suggested that water runoff could go where the slope is. She expressed concern that the stormwater could go into the lake. She requested that an area for a picnic be created. She suggested signs near the entrances, picnic tables, benches and additional lighting as improvements. She commented that there is buckthorn on the openings, which is possibly already being addressed. The Staff Liaison stated that as part of the restoration work the buckthorn will be addressed.

Boardmember Castillo reported on Hidden Ponds. He provided pictures, which started with a trail from Ulysses and showed the SHIP grant sign. He showed pictures of a pond, the woodchip trail on the opposite side from the controlled burn, thistles and weeds by the trail, two bucks and a fawn, and the burned open space. The Staff Liaison stated that the burn was done about a week ago and herbicide was applied about a month prior to that. He noted that this was in preparation for a prairie restoration.

Boardmember Castillo commented on pictures of thistle on the woodchip trail, the hidden pond, a neighboring yard that was mowed up to the pond, and a compost pile near the lake at a resident's property off of 117th. The Staff Liaison commented that the compost pile is on county property.

Boardmember Castillo reported that there was some debris on the trail which may have been from the storm the night before. He reported that there were new trees planted along the woodchip trail. He commented that the shelter looked well maintained. He indicated that he went on Saturday in the heat and no other residents were in the park. He suggested that a pamphlet could be posted on the shelter of what new plants were put in the park. He reported that there was no public dumping. He asked whom he would speak to in public works to follow up on what plants were put in. The Staff Liaison noted that Tim Bezdek is the contact.

Boardmember Rafferty commented that his report is on Kane Meadows. This was his first visit to the area. He went on July 6 around 10:30 a.m. in 90 degree weather. He commented that he did not see any residents. He started in the park and saw the largest cottonwoods he has seen. He visited the observation deck, which had limited views because of the many trees, which need to be cut down. He walked along the trail to the east park and around to Flanders on the trail loop. He commented that he drove to Coral Sea Court to get on a trail at the south and east side of the open space. He reported on the bridge from Coral Sea Street. He stated that there is a trail along the south and east part which is as far as can be travelled. He reported that there is a bench here, which could use paint. He noted that an area is private property and not accessible. He commented that the trails were well maintained. He suggested that maintenance is needed to make the observation deck usable by removing vegetation, which obstructs the view. Chairman McKinley commented that she will provide a list of maintenance items to public works.

Chairman McKinley stated that by September they need to talk about their CIP. She asked if the areas toured need any management work or a trail. She added that they will repeat tours of areas next year. She asked that Boardmembers keep their report copies as a reference.

7. **Other Business**
Other Business

Boardmember Truchon commented that former Boardmember Ochocki talked about friends who are twins and into photography and are opening their home and gardens for a viewing tour.

Boardmember Castillo commented that a resident asked him why the woodchip trails are not marked as she is a runner who would prefer to use woodchip trails. The Staff Liaison commented that most of the trails are paved.

Chairman McKinley asked about replacing the vacant Boardmember spot. The Staff Liaison reported that he will get an ad in the newsletter and official newspaper to work on a replacement.

8. **Adjournment**

Moved by Castillo, seconded by Schrunk, that this Meeting be Adjourned. The Motion was adopted unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 9:26 p.m.