



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, November 20, 2012

7:30 PM

Council Chambers

1. Call To Order

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 p.m.

2. Roll Call

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

3. Approval of Minutes

3.a Minutes from meeting of September 18, 2012

Boardmember Truchon requested a change on page 3, paragraph 9: "...bikers to go from the mobile home park to ~~anyplace~~ 95th Avenue safely."

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

3.b Minutes from meeting of October 16, 2012

Chairman McKinley requested a change on page 1, paragraph 1: "...due to lack of a quorum the business meeting is cancelled." She requested to add the following sentence to this same paragraph: Staff requested to provide an update on projects for the year.

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

4. Approval of Agenda

The Staff Liaison stated that he has an added item under Other Business and under the CIP discussion.

Boardmember Truchon stated that she will inquire about trail information for the winter months and will ask about the December meeting.

Moved by Truchon, seconded by Schrunk, that the agenda be Approved. The Motion was adopted unanimously.

5. Open Forum for Citizen Input

There was none.

6. New Business:

6.a Open Space Improvement Project Update

Chairman McKinley asked staff to review this for members who were not present last month.

The Staff Liaison commented that he will review the Open Space areas and work that was completed in the prior year. He explained that improvements cover the previous years for the areas described. He commented that at Hidden Ponds there was buckthorn removal, the addition of a trail and replanting. He added that between the playground and wooded area work was begun this year on prairie restoration. He added that this work will continue next year. He added that for the Oak Savannah there was buckthorn removal and replanting. He noted that for 131st Street there was buckthorn removal completed 2 years ago but no additional work this year. Trails will be considered following completion of the development south of this parcel. For Laddie Lake work included buckthorn and locust removal in the dunes area and replanting and restoration in the oak savannah area. This will come up in the 2013 CIP discussions. The Staff Liaison added that Kane Meadows had buckthorn removal. He explained that the controlled burn was delayed due to the dry conditions. He noted that for Pioneer Park the ongoing wetland improvements will continue. He explained that Site 7 is the large area off Lexington Avenue. He added that two years of clearing and one year of restoration work was completed. He stated that a review of the area finds it to be doing very well. He noted that no reseeding has been needed since the natural regeneration has been so successful. He commented that an interpretive center is being discussed for Site 7. He reminded the Board that Councilmember Kolb mentioned the Council is interested in having an interpretive center, which is encouraging.

Boardmember Schrunk asked about removing thistle and funding to address it. She asked if it can be mowed as a means of controlling it. She reported seeing it in the hills at Little League Park and noted that it gets worse every year. The Staff Liaison stated that addressing it is a budget issue. He commented that thistle spreads easily, is small and wind born.

6.b Status of Open Space Fund Account

Chairman McKinley commented that there was a handout in September on the Open Space Fund. The Staff Liaison reviewed that the September balance was \$622,430. He reviewed the encumbered amounts and items approved by the Board are noted. He commented that there were projects through 2015. He explained that \$428,685.78 is available for projects. He noted that for the CIP \$108,000 is dedicated which can be added to the available funds as it will go toward specific projects.

6.c 2013 CIP Discussion

Chairman McKinley stated that Boardmembers were asked to bring ideas for the 2013 CIP. She requested that money to be set aside for kiosks. Boardmember Castillo asked about handout distribution boxes.

Boardmember Gunter provided an example information box, which she picked up at Menards. She suggested that it would be very useful and confirmed that it has a lid so it is covered. It can be attached to a pole or to a post of wood or metal. She explained that they are \$14 each. Chairman McKinley supported this as a starting idea.

Boardmember Gunter suggested using this at Site 7 initially to provide some information. Boardmember Castillo suggested putting the information box up for a trial period with 75 flyers and checking it weekly to monitor use.

Chairman McKinley recommended using this at Pioneer Park, and at the wetland off East Lake Park. She suggested Kane Meadows. Boardmember Truchon suggested using one at Hidden Ponds.

Boardmember Castillo stated that when he did his report on Hidden Ponds there was a new trail that goes to where the burning was. He stated that he contacted the person who did the planting and was told that there was not a list of what was planted there. He explained that some research will need to be done for an informational flyer. The Staff Liaison stated that Prairie Restorations, Inc. did some work and would know exactly what was planted.

He noted that the Parks Department planted several trees and shrubs, which were left over from the plant sale, and Tim Bedzek would know what was planted there. Chairman McKinley suggested Boardmembers continue to think on their role in this project so they can each decide what part they would like to be involved with.

Boardmember Truchon suggested consideration of adding a trail from the Harpers Street neighborhood into Pioneer Park. She confirmed that residents have asked about this. She added that they currently walk along Highway 14 into The Lakes. The Staff Liaison stated that there is a way to go to the east into a park area and a neighborhood park is being built that they have access to. He confirmed that it will take a lot of time to gain access to Pioneer Park for them. He commented that trails are always part of a development and will be added.

Boardmember Gunter commented that at the new park at 109th and Lexington she recommended adding observation decks to view wildlife. She recommended using the information boxes there.

Boardmember Gunter inquired about the Lochness Park fishing area which has thick weeds making fishing difficult. The Staff Liaison stated that if the city wanted to do some aquatic plant management here they would need to obtain a DNR permit.

Boardmember Gunter asked about adding benches to the budget. She suggested hard metal benches, which have a plastic coating over them. She noted that they do not require maintenance for a very long time. She explained that she has seen these at airports. She offered to research their cost. The Staff Liaison stated that the city has likely used these and would have a record of the cost.

Boardmember Truchon stated that Laddie Lake Park does not have seating in the shelters. She asked if city staff would have recommendations on where to place benches.

Boardmember Gunter recommended replacing some benches. She suggested that Pioneer Park benches be reviewed to consider replacement.

Boardmember Truchon asked about adding picnic tables at Laddie Lake. Chairman McKinley questioned whether their funds could be used to purchase these. She stated that benches are a different type of item.

The Staff Liaison stated that the city should have picnic tables available to put at Laddie Lake. He commented that there may be a reason they are not there. He suggested asking the Park Department about this.

Chairman McKinley stated that the Park Department should pay for benches. Boardmember Truchon suggested two picnic tables at Laddie Lake.

Chairman McKinley stated that Kane Meadows should have several more benches as it is a large area to walk around. She offered to put benches in the 2013 CIP but asked how much they cost.

BOARD CONSENSUS was reached to put \$2,000 in the 2013 CIP for benches.

Chairman McKinley asked how much 2013 CIP money to set aside for information boxes. A hundred dollars was discussed.

Boardmember Truchon asked about the cost of trail signs. The Staff Liaison stated that the Park Department handled this and they cost a few hundred dollars each.

Boardmember Truchon suggested adding signage where restoration is occurring like at Laddie Lake, Hidden Ponds and possibly Pioneer Park. The Staff Liaison stated that this type of sign may cost more if it has a design and layout on it.

Boardmember Truchon suggested a simple sign identifying the area as a prairie restoration project. She recommended also placing information boxes to give some details. The Staff Liaison stated that simple signs may only cost \$50 each.

Boardmember Truchon suggested signage regarding restoration at Site 7, Pioneer Park, Kane Meadows, Laddie Lake and Hidden Ponds. She recommended putting \$1000 aside for this considering that signs may cost \$100. She asked staff to find sign examples for their consideration. The Staff Liaison agreed.

Chairman McKinley suggested discussing the signage further. She confirmed that \$100 will go toward information boxes. She suggested using \$1,500 for signs and information boxes together for the CIP.

BOARD CONSENSUS was reached to set aside \$1,500 in the 2013 CIP for information boxes and signage. It was agreed to set aside adding kiosks for the time being.

Chairman McKinley confirmed that \$2000 will be used in the CIP for benches.

BOARD CONSENSUS was reached to set \$2000 aside in the 2013 CIP for benches.

The Staff Liaison reviewed that Prairie Restorations, Inc. gave estimates for continued work based on what was done so far. He stated that contract work is complete. He added that continued work for restorations is being recommended. He commented that Hidden Ponds has thick overgrowth of Siberian Elms by the ponds. He stated that the recommendation is to take out the Siberian Elms around the ponds so the water can be seen. Management will be done in this area. He stated that cut wood can be chipped on site and added to the existing soft trails in the woods. This work would cost \$10,000. Chairman McKinley stated that the pond is not Open Space and it is not in their Open Space Management Plan. She explained that it is city land. She asked if the funds need to come out of their budget. She agreed that improvements need to be made and supports them.

The Staff Liaison stated that this is not park land either. He commented that Open Space is city land. He stated that the Open Space fund paid for the trail around the water. He reported that this project would not be paid for out of the general fund. Chairman McKinley stated that she just wanted to clarify this and is not opposed to the project.

The Staff Liaison stated that continued prairie management at Hidden Ponds is recommended for \$1000. He commented that ongoing management in the wooded area is \$750 for Hidden Ponds. He commented that after 2013 he and Prairie Restoration staff agree this work will be considered maintenance work and not management. He stated this includes buckthorn. He explained that maintenance work is paid for out of the general fund. He reviewed that in 2014 and beyond most of these items with buckthorn will be maintenance. In the future they should consider around \$1,000 every other year for maintenance. He commented that this does not include prairie restoration work for the next few years. He explained that in the Laddie Lake Park restoration area they will do mowing and some treatments for \$2,600. This included locust treatment. Buckthorn removal will be needed in an area more recently purchased. He commented that this cost \$4,200 and totals \$6,850. He commented for Kane Meadows the burn will occur in the spring, which was on the previous contract. He added next fall buckthorn management will cost \$2,200. He noted that for the Oaks Savannah some followup buckthorn work for \$750 will need to be done. He noted that 131st needs to be addressed again to be sure there is no more buckthorn and respray it. Chairman McKinley reviewed that the total of all proposed work is \$22,400.

The Staff Liaison commented for Aquatone Park some buckthorn removal was done last fall and the cost split with the Park Board. He added that Prairie Restorations made a suggestion for this prime area. With more clean-up and a

trail this area could be a nice amenity. He commented that some Councilmembers would like to see continued improvement in this area. It is recommended that a trail loop be added through the woods. He stated that this could be used for Blaine Blazin' 4th, by people from the Senior Center, and all visitors to the area. He stated that he spoke to Park and Recreation Director Kappelhoff regarding this trail and splitting the project with the Park Board. He added that they have put this out for bid and received three quotes. The Prairie Restoration bid came in at \$12,500 and the others were higher. He commented that they recommend accepting Prairie Restoration proposal. Work would begin over the winter and continue in the spring. Box elder and remaining buckthorn would be removed. A natural woodland look would be maintained. The Staff Liaison explained that wood cut from the site would be chipped for trails. A trail would be made that weaves around and stops at the starting point. He asked for a recommendation supporting this project.

Motion by Castillo, seconded by Boardmember Gunter to accept all of Prairie Restorations work for 2013 and for the Aquatore project to be shared equally with the Parks Department.

Motion carried unanimously.

The Staff Liaison asked how the Board would like to proceed if the Park Board does not have money available. Boardmember Truchon stated that this project fits with their goal.

BOARD CONSENSUS was reached to approve the project even if the Park Board is not willing to pay for it.

The Staff Liaison stated that this was discussed with the Parks director and bids requested so that it could be on the Council agenda for December 6, following approval by the NRCB and Parks boards. This will allow the contractor to start when they are available and continue to work through the winter. He noted that this availability resulted in a 20 percent discount by the low bidder as it keeps the contractor busy through the winter.

The Staff Liaison confirmed that the Board is willing to move forward. He suggested they could continue the discussion in January if it became necessary. He confirmed that all projects over \$10,000 need to have Council approval.

7. Other Business

Boardmember Truchon suggested putting additional trail information in the

city newsletter if there is room for it. She asked if during winter the trails are open for walking and how this could be addressed in the newsletter. The Staff Liaison confirmed that some trails are plowed and others have been cut back due to budget cuts. He recommended adding information on what trails are available in the newsletter. He commented that the first priority is to plow the streets and then work on sidewalks and trails.

Boardmember Truchon asked about not meeting in December. She asked if this will work for staff. She inquired if there will be an issue that is hard to deal with if they do not meet. The Staff Liaison commented that they do not need to meet in December. He explained that the Park Board does not meet in December.

Chairman McKinley asked that in January Boardmembers come prepared to discuss the information boxes and where to locate them.

The Staff Liaison stated that Boardmembers Castillo, Truchon and Chairman McKinley are up for reappointment next year. Their letter of intent needs to be received at the end of the month. He added that District 1 still has a vacancy.

The Staff Liaison stated that earlier this year or last year there was property for sale near Bridgewood church, which has now gone into tax forfeit. He added that the large parcel is still owned by the family. He noted the smaller parcels and the largest of the 3 parcels are in forfeit. He stated that if the city is interested the property can be withheld from public sale by the County. He explained that this would connect to where their restoration is taking place. He added the Park Board is not interested in the property. He noted that costs to obtain the property would need to come from the Open Space fund. He explained that the property size is 17.5 acres altogether. He commented that the home on the property was built in 1968. He asked if the Board is interested. If so, the City notify the County of their interest.

MOVED by Boardmember Truchon, seconded by Chairman McKinley, to acknowledge to the City Council that they have an interest in buying the Lexington Avenue tax forfeiture property.

Motion carried unanimously.

8. Adjournment

Moved by Castillo, seconded by Truchon, that this meeting be Adjourned. The

Motion was adopted unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 9:09 p.m.