



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, May 20, 2014

7:00 PM

Council Chambers

1. Call To Order

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

2. Roll Call

Roll Call - Chair McKinley called the roll call. Those present include: Boardmembers Anderson, Castillo, Gunter, Rafferty, Ruth, Truchon, Villella, Chair McKinley; Staff Liaison, Jim Hafner; and Recording Secretary, Debbie Wolfe. Boardmember Perkins - arrived at 7:30 p.m.

Others Present - Ally Czechowicz - Stantec, Stuart Krahn - Stantec, and Jason Husveth - Critical Connections Ecological Services

Present: 9 - Chair McKinley, Villella, Rafferty, Ruth, Perkins, Truchon, Gunter, Castillo, and Anderson

3. Approval of Minutes

Chair McKinley noted in the roll call and item #6 Boardmember Gunter's name was misspelled. Item #2 roll call - Anderson and Ruth should be deleted from those present in the first roll call as they had not yet received the Oath of Office.

Motion

4. Open Forum for Citizen Input

There was none.

5. Approval of Agenda

Chairperson McKinley stated she has some announcements under
Other Business as does Boardmember Villella.

Motion

6. New Business

6.a Presentation of Draft Concept Plan for Site 7 Improvements

The Staff Liaison stated Stuart Krahn, Ally Czechowicz from Stantec, Inc. and Jason Husveth from Critical Connections Ecological Services, Inc. are at the meeting to present the draft concept. They will make the presentation to the City Council on June 6 and the final design will come before City Council on June 19, 2014 for approval.

Mr. Krahn stated they are happy to assist in planning for the future of this parcel. He reviewed the project goals and planning considerations, design elements and considerations, Site 7 concept master plan, and next steps.

Mr. Krahn reviewed the user groups for the site. He provided a site access parcel analysis. There would be two access points one off 109th and the other off Lexington. Two portions of the site have been delineated for wetlands. Next steps would be to do some further wetland delineation on the site.

Mr. Krahn reviewed the design elements and other considerations stating the design elements are the nature center, trails, wildlife viewing opportunities, interpretive signage, seating and gathering areas. He provided comparison photographs of other nature centers and briefly described what each provides.

Trails on Site 7 would be both hard and soft trails. The soft trails are less expensive. The hard trails would be ADA accessible and would provide the backbone system of the facility. There would be wildlife viewing opportunities with a variety of options to allow visitors to experience nature. He showed examples of interpretive signage. Seating/Gathering areas examples were also shown.

Boardmember Vilella asked why Tamarac Nature Center was not described. He asked how that Nature Center would compare to Site 7. Mr. Krahn stated he does not have much information on that nature center. Boardmember Vilella asked that Stantec do some research on Tamarac. Mr. Krahn stated he will research and develop the comparative criteria for Tamarac.

Mr. Krahn presented the Site 7 Open Space Master Plan.

Boardmember Truchon asked if the east-west trail would be hard or soft surface trail. Mr. Krahn stated that would be a hard ADA accessible surface. They are looking at minimal footprint options to make it ADA accessible.

Boardmember Villella asked how many bridges would need to be constructed. Mr. Krahn stated they are looking at a few sites.

Staff Liaison stated a lot of the Board prefers not to have hard surface trails. He stated the City would receive some opposition if there were not some hard surface ADA trails in a loop. This would be a focal area for residents. Options are being researched to provide a hard surface. Stantec has looked at the most feasible locations for the trails. It is important to some trail segments that are ADA compliant.

Mr. Krahn indicated there are a number of trails shown in the concept and all do not need to be constructed. The future athletic complex is to the east off Lexington. There is adjacent open water habitat areas which could be included in the site.

Boardmember Perkins arrived at the meeting at 7:30 p.m.

Mr. Krahn showed North and South maps. He indicated wildlife, bird-watching, plant viewing areas. There would be an "Island Hopping" theme to the area using trails to go from upland island to upland island. He referred to trails "H" and "K" which would act as an access to the area for the neighbors. The 899 elevation contour represents the upper limits of the wetland areas. The north-south connection to the area is very important. There would be some constructed open water areas.

Mr. Jason Husveth stated they looked at vegetation for the 500 acre site. The area to the south is currently a low quality cattail marsh. It is very overgrown and scarification and really shallow excavation could be done. The open water would be 6-24" deep. The surface of the peat would be worked to obtain the goal of an open water area in this area. It would add habitat for wildlife.

Boardmember Anderson asked what the current water level is and Jason stated he does not know what the current elevation is and when they go from concept to detail they will work with the realities of the site.

The Staff Liaison stated the Council was very clear when this was approved, they wanted some open water habitat.

Boardmember Truchon stated she is concerned about the bird breeding habitat and there shouldn't be trails everywhere so there are some undisturbed nesting places. The Staff Liaison reminded the Board this

is concept at this point and once the major trail connections are decided the remaining connections can be determined.

Boardmember Perkins asked if excavating would add to the budget significantly. Staff Liaison stated it would not be significant.

Boardmember Anderson stated a land survey would need to be done first to determine excavation.

Staff Liaison stated this would be a destination for school groups because of the natural features.

Boardmember Anderson asked how many hours it would take for school kids to view the area. Mr. Krahn stated it is approximately a 2 mile walk from the drop-off area to the open water.

The Staff Liaison stated there is a parking lot in the concept closer to the open water area.

Boardmember Perkins suggested a loop be used rather than using one path both ways. Mr. Krahn stated the soft paths could be utilized.

Boardmember Ruth asked if it would be feasible to create a hard surface loop in the northern portion of the South concept. He asked what consideration is for the width of the trails as far as recreation options. The Staff Liaison stated it would be walking trails rather than bike trails. No dogs would be allowed. It would be a good place for snowshoeing or cross country skiing.

Boardmember Villella stated he feels Stantec has done a great job. He emphasized this needs to be the destination where schools want to bring their kids. The Staff Liaison stated that would take time - this will evolve over the next few years. It would be a modular approach with more programs and features added in the future.

Boardmember Gunter stated she would like this to be very accessible for handicapped people and a destination for handicapped schools as they have no where else to go.

Mr. Husveth stated there are great examples of Anoka County vegetation and nature. This could be a destination for adults as well to observe natural communities and wildlife.

Mr. Krahn reviewed the next steps as phasing plan, cost estimates, programming, habitat restoration and management considerations.

Boardmember Truchon stated she hopes tours of the nature area can be done.

The Concept Plan will be presented to City Council at their workshop on June 5. NRCB members are invited to attend. A public open house may be held to introduce the concept to the public before construction begins.

6.b Discussion on Trails

Chairperson McKinley provided a drawing of the current trails. The County is upgrading County Road 14. This will include more trail connections. There would be a complete trail from 35W to Bunker Lake Blvd.

Boardmember Perkins raised a safety concern with the park just south of the airport north of 85th (Xylite Park), is a high traffic road. There is sidewalk south of that area and he would like to see the access to the park made safer. This park is not currently connected. The Staff Liaison stated sidewalk may be difficult to put in that area and possibly a striped crossing would be preferred. A bike trail may be another option.

Boardmember Villella stated this is more for the Park Board.

Chairperson McKinley stated we deal with Open Spaces. The Park Board has responsibility for trails through parks.

Motion

Chairperson McKinley referred to parcel on 131st Avenue and stated this has just been left alone. Development is occurring in that area and grading has been done. Roads will begin construction soon. At the time the land was obtained the developer had offered to put a trail from the development to the parcel.

Boardmember Perkins asked if this was included in the development plan and Chairperson McKinley stated it is included.

The Staff Liaison stated the plat has been approved for that area.

Chairperson McKinley stated she is working on naming of trails. She presented the history of The Heritage Trail. This would be 105th on Radisson Road to Bunker Lake Blvd.

Boardmember Truchon stated she feels that is a good name for the trail.

Chairperson McKinley asked Jason Husveth if he had a recommendation for the trail in Kane Meadows to name the trail.

6.c Update by Boardmembers on Information Pamphlets

Boardmember Truchon distributed the Laddie Lake Park information pamphlet she prepared.

Chairperson McKinley stated a box is needed to hold these information pamphlets.

The Staff Liaison will purchase four clear boxes from Menards for the pamphlets.

Motion

6.d Discuss Possible Logo for the NRCB

Chairperson McKinley stated at the last meeting someone talked about developing a logo for the NRCB.

Boardmember Truchon showed samples of logos she was working on.

Chairperson McKinley asked if the Council would be in favor of the board having a logo.

The Staff Liaison stated it would depend on how it was to be used.

Boardmember Anderson stated there may be a conflict with the Board having their own logo.

6.e Reports on Earth Day and Green Expo

Chairperson McKinley stated Earth Day was a great success. The weather was perfect and there was a great turnout. She showed photographs of the Day. A resident has adopted the park and will keep the willows down and work on the buckthorn.

Chairman McKinley stated the NRCB was present at the Green Expo. She and Board member Ruth tended the booth.

6.f Tour of Laddie Lake Park - June NRCB Meeting

Chairman McKinley stated that for the June NRCB Meeting Boardmembers are to meet at Laddie Lake Park at 7:00pm and then return to City Hall for their regular meeting at 8:15pm.

7. Other Business

Boardmember Villella reported on the City of Blaine 50th Celebration Committee. There are 20 members of the committee. The actual city birthday is December 4, 2014. They plan to have a year of celebration after that. There will be monthly events. They plan to involve schools, churches, chamber of commerce. They want to brand the City with this in some way. He reviewed some of the ideas from the Committee. He was concerned that he did not have enough city history under his belt and asked if any other Boardmembers wanted to take his place on the Committee. The Board assured him that he was doing a fine job and they supported him.

Chair McKinley showed a copy of the Blaine Newsletter regarding the wetlands articles.

Chair McKinley stated the Blaine Central Lions Club is adopting Fort Lions Park. On May 31, they will be replenishing the woodchip berm and replacing 6 dead shrubs.

June 27-29 is the Blaine Festival. A booth site has been requested for the NRCB.

Jason Husveth suggested Site 7 have a name as we move from concept to more detailed plans. He feels suggestions for the name should come from the NRCB. Blaine Wetlands Sanctuary was suggested. Jason suggested the NRCB submit names for the Council to consider.

Motion

8. Adjournment

Adjourned