



City of Blaine Anoka County, Minnesota Minutes - Final

10801 Town Square Drive
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, September 15, 2015

7:00 PM

Council Chambers

1. Call To Order

1. The meeting was called to order at 7:03 p.m.

2. Roll Call

Others Present: Recording Secretary, Debbie Wolfe

Present: 6 - Chair McKinley, Villella, Rafferty, Ruth, Truchon, and Gunter

Absent: 3 - Perkins, Castillo, and Commissioner Anderson

3. Approval of Minutes

Chair McKinley corrected under item 6.c. the last sentence to read
"Chair McKinley will try to contact a neighborhood resident for his
suggestion for a trail name."

**MOVED by Boardmember Rafferty, seconded by Boardmember Truchon to
approve the minutes of the August 18, 2015 Board Meeting as corrected.**

Motion carried unanimously.

Aye: 6 - Chair McKinley, Villella, Rafferty, Ruth, Truchon, and Gunter

4. Approve Agenda

**MOVED by Boardmember Gunter, seconded by Boardmember Truchon, to
approve the September 15, 2015 Board Agenda as presented.**

Motion carried unanimously.

Aye: 6 - Chair McKinley, Villella, Rafferty, Ruth, Truchon, and Gunter

5. Open Forum for Citizen Input

There was none.

6. New Business

6.a Continued Discussion of Blaine Wetland Sanctuary Concept Plans

Chair McKinley stated two weeks ago Boardmembers Truchon and Chair McKinley attended a meeting with the developers. Chair McKinley is very impressed with the developers. The developers asked whether the City would prefer a linear design or a cluster type design.

Chair McKinley noted she visited **Schaar's Bluff Gathering Center** near Hastings off Highway 42. She stated the location provides a fantastic view of the river below and a huge concrete map of the converging rivers has been created at the entrance to the building.

The building design is of the "Modernistic Style" with a simple but soaring interior. The main entry has several displays of historic information, but are hard to read (info is printed on the glass front with a picture behind it. The entry has a small office on the left side with restrooms and canteens beyond that. Two big doors open to a large glass-walled party room, which is why it is named a gathering center.

Out in front are several large patches of native plantings, along with a large manicured field containing a few historic signs of the area (one explains how the spring and the lake were drowned out by the installation of Lock & Dam #2 downriver).

There are multiple trails leading away from the building-many paved to welcome biking use but some are well groomed rustic trails as well. A metal bridge structure spans a deep gorge between 2 hills behind the building. The Mississippi River Regional Trail can be accessed from here. The wooden west side of the building is nearly covered with vining foliage. There is an on-site wind turbine and several pole barn buildings near it, probably for equipment storage and management uses.

Boardmember Truchon stated the developer was asked to make sure the BWS building is sustainable. Chair McKinley stated Schaar's Bluff Gathering Center was more of a gathering place than a nature center.

Chair McKinley also visited the **Eastman Nature Center** and provided the following summary. Located in the Elm Creek Park Reserve of the Three Rivers Park District on Elm Creek Road in Dayton. Floor to ceiling glass walls allow for great viewing of the outdoors.

An interior wall has glass aquariums of living fish, turtles and snakes and glass aquariums on stands in the hall hold salamanders and frogs. Another wall has pictures and information on frogs and butterflies.

A children's play area is in the middle of the large foyer. A children's Nature Exploration area is outside along one of the trails from the building.

Two large rooms with a moveable divider are in one area of the building and a large classroom is in another area. Off of the foyer is a small conference room with a small library space. An observation area overlooks a small pond on the back side. A lower level on one end opens to a door to the outside and to one of the many trails in this park.

Chair McKinley encouraged the Boardmembers to visit this site if they are given the opportunity. She would consider this more of a linear design. Boardmember Truchon noted there is an area for bird watching off the second level.

Chair McKinley visited the Oakdale Discovery Center located in the Oakdale Nature Preserve of the City of Oakdale on Hadley Avenue North and provided a summary of her observations.

This is a hilly and heavily wooded area and the building just seems to melt into its environment. A large fire pit with wood benches is off to one side and a large open shelter with picnic tables is located on a hill opposite the Center. A historic old schoolhouse sits off to the side of the entry road.

All of the center's buildings are connected by a glass-walled foyer with a huge stone fireplace inside and a patio outside. A plot of native wildflowers and grasses graces the front on the right side.

Inside and to the right of the foyer is a large "Discovery" room filled with unique displays:

- A live honey bee colony outside a large window with an info display inside.

- Insect x-rays
- Animal skulls
- A “touch table” of shells, snake skins, turtle shells, pine cones & skeleton pieces
- A table of mounted small animals and birds and larger animals on the walls.

To the left of the foyer and on the walls of the hallway are art displays which rotate periodically. A large open room for gatherings, meetings, etc. is located in this section and features tall windows overlooking the outdoors.

Plots of native wildflowers are in bloom and everywhere. Between the two rooms an elevated boardwalk extends out to the wooded area behind the building. A tiered seating area located up a slope with a small stage at the bottom can be seen on the right side from this boardwalk. A snack bar, gift shop, info desk is located within the foyer, which is spacious and accommodating for groups of visitors.

Chair McKinley stated the Oakdale Discovery Center is more a cluster design. It appears to be a number of buildings but when inside everything is connected.

Boardmember Vilella stated from a sustainability point multiple buildings would be difficult with HVAC and other systems.

Boardmember Truchon noted the Oakdale Center is a very wooded and hilly area unlike the BWS area. Stantec is requesting input on what the City wants for their BWS building. Boardmember Truchon suggested the Board develop a list of wants to be given to Stantec. Stantec is envisioning approximately 6600 sf including:

Exhibit Space - 1200 sf
Assembly Space - 1200 sf
Classroom - 1200 sf
Lab - 1200 sf
Office - 300 sf
Bathroom - 600 sf
Kitchen - 600 sf
Storage - 300 sf

Boardmember Truchon stated she would like to call the US Fish and Wildlife Service as to what could be studied in the BWS and what equipment would be needed. She stated possibly the building could be called a “science center or natural science center”. If some science

studies could be done on the site that would make it a unique location.

Boardmember Villella stated the national parks have visitor's centers. These visitor's center provide educational opportunities, science related studies, and have access to trails. It would be nice if it could be tied in with the University of Minnesota. Boardmember Truchon suggested or the Native Plant Society.

Boardmember Truchon stated she went to St. Croix Falls visitor center and that serves as a center for study of the St. Croix River.

Natural Resources Conservation Board "Wants" for the BWS Building

- Glass wall seeing the wetland below ground as well as above ground and to see the roots of the plants.
- Room to study the science of the area.
- Classroom Connection to schools of what is going on - use technology.
- Visual displays and highlighting wetlands.
- Information on species in the wetlands.

Boardmember Truchon there is a wetland area in Bloomington. Sponsors could be sought for monies for the BWS. Boardmember Ruth suggested a site plan would need to be available when looking for sponsors.

Chair McKinley asked Boardmembers again to visit any of the areas mentioned and bring back ideas for the Blaine Wetland Sanctuary.

Boardmember Truchon suggested some communication go out to residents about the BWS. Chair McKinley suggested the website and the newsletter.

Discussed.

6.b Suggested Names for Trails

Chair McKinley stated she has been in contact with Jason Hanson, resident in Kane Meadows for a suggestion for the trail name but she has not heard back. Regarding the Heritage Trail, Jim Hafner will bring it up to the Council in their October workshop.

Discussed.

6.c Preliminary Discussion on 2016 NRCB CIP

Chair McKinley asked the Board to start thinking about the CIP for 2016. She will ask Jim Hafner for input on items that should be

considered. Discussions will be held in October on the CIP and it needs to be finalized in November since there is no NRCB meeting in December.

Chair McKinley will ask Jim Hafner about the NRCB's share of park dedication funds.

Discussed.

7. Other Business

Chair McKinley will speak with Jim Hafner about the plaques on the kiosks honoring the Eagle Scout who built the kiosks.

Discussed.

8. Adjournment

MOVED by Boardmember Truchon seconded by Boardmember Villella, to adjourn the meeting at 8:05 p.m. The motion carried unanimously.

Aye: 6 - Chair McKinley, Villella, Rafferty, Ruth, Truchon, and Gunter