



City of Blaine Anoka County, Minnesota Minutes - Final

Blaine City Hall
10801 Town Sq Dr NE
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 open 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, February 21, 2017

7:00 PM

Council Chambers

1. Call To Order

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

2. Roll Call

Others Present: Staff Liaison Jim Hafner and Recording Secretary Debbie Wolfe.

Present: 10 - Chair McKinley, Villella, Rafferty, Ruth, Perkins, Truchon, Gunter, Castillo, Wilder, and Lizakowski

3. Approval of Minutes

MOVED by Boardmember Rafferty, seconded by Boardmember Perkins, to approve the minutes of the January 17, 2017 Board Meeting as presented.

Motion carried unanimously.

Aye: 9 - Chair McKinley, Villella, Rafferty, Ruth, Perkins, Truchon, Castillo, Wilder, and Lizakowski

4. Approval of Agenda

MOVED by Boardmember Perkins, seconded by Boardmember Gunter, to approve the February 21, 2017 Board Agenda as presented.

Motion carried unanimously.

5. Open Forum for Citizen Input

Boardmember Lizakowski arrived at 7:05 p.m.

Mr. Mohamad Odele, 3557 117th Lane NE, asked about the timeline for the concerned residents to get answers regarding the Wetland Sanctuary.

Mr. Steve Mikrot, 11828 Naples Circle NE, stated there was concern about the water table and he asked is there a specific authority that will address water table issues. Mr. Hafner stated Council will be addressing that issue.

Chair McKinley stated she lived in Blaine for 42 years and her property was surrounded by farmland. Twenty years ago, everything changed with the building boom in Blaine. All the farms around her disappeared. It was an adjustment for her and she came to accept the change. She admires the Lakes Development. She is asking the residents to give the project some time as it develops. The houses were constructed in 2008 - 2016 in the Lakes area. Chair McKinley stated 64 acres had been purchased by the Open Space Bond Fund in 2003. The developer knew about the wetland.

Boardmember Truchon arrived at the meeting at 7:12 p.m.

The NRCB was set up by the City Council. Chair McKinley provided a brief history of the open space. As of now, there are almost 700 acres of open space land in Blaine.

Mr. Hafner stated the open spaces and parks in City of Blaine have been adopted by resolution of the City Council. These open space and parks cannot be changed. Aspen Woods was the name of the development named by the developer. The developer can call it whatever he wishes as long as it meets the requirements of the City.

Mr. Rianetshena Cheng 3527 117th Lane, stated when he purchased his home in 2011 it was listed as a wooded lot. There are currently no trees in his backyard. His property line was crossed with the construction.

Boardmember Perkins stated there was concern about communication and the City Council is working on communications and the issues raised. If residents were told something by the builder that was not true, the issue needs to be raised with the builder. If an individual property was trespassed on that should be remedied by the City.

Mr. Antonelli, 3563 117th Lane NE, stated he has the largest lot in the cul-de-sac. He purchased the lot because it was a wooded lot and the house was repositioned to take advantage of the woods. He appreciates

the wetland is being restored but nature should be let do what nature does best. He does not appreciate the communication process and how things were done. He tried to find this meeting tonight and it is not easy to find. Mr. Hafner stated this is a standing meeting that is on the City website. He suggested emails be sent to neighbors.

Ms. Janice Dunstan, 3563 117th Lane NE, stated if the notices are put on the website she will make sure everyone in her community sees the notice.

Mr. Antonelli stated there has been a problem in the way the wetland has been cleared. They are currently restoring their property they came within 15 feet of his property and cut down 20 trees. There are no trees remaining along the boundary. He asked who oversaw the contractor clearing the trees. Something needs to be done and who they should contact.

Boardmember Truchon stated she has found how the process works. She walked the property over the weekend and saw many people out there. As much information as possible will be put on the website. This site is very high on the list of State wetland restorations. She assured the project will be done very well and the plan has been in the works for many years. She asked the residents to learn more about the project.

Boardmember Perkins requested verification that the boundaries were not adhered to and received none. Mr. Antonelli stated he supports the restoration of the wetland but does not like the way it is being done. Boardmember Truchon suggested any concerns be documented and submitted to the City.

Mr. Cheng stated all residents present are here because they have been violated.

Mr. Odele stated the Board needs to listen. All these residents are coming with the same message. A list was handed to the City listing the issues. He asked how the issues will be addressed. The buffer zone was not accurate and was violated. He asked who is accountable for which trees were removed and who did the environmental assessment. The list has been submitted with no answer. He looked on the website and Facebook and didn't see the meeting. He learned of the meeting from a neighbor.

Boardmember Villella stated the NRCB is an advisory board and they have no direct power. He asked if the City came onto all the properties and the residents responded not all. The Mayor told Ms. Dunstan to come to the NRCB and discuss the issues. Mr. Hafner stated the Council is working on

the issues and will have another meeting with the neighborhood March 29, 2017. This will be communicated.

Boardmember Ruth asked who the residents bring their complaints to that items were removed from their backyards. Mr. Hafner stated the survey has been done showing the property lines and signs have been posted. A survey company did the survey. Mr. Antinello stated some of the signs are on private property.

Ms. Dunstan asked if the conservation easement is outside the private property and Mr. Hafner stated the easement is not on private property. The conservation easement abuts the private properties.

Mr. Tim Kunkle, Naples Circle asked what agencies are involved and how the wetland will be monitored. Mr. Hafner explained the process briefly. The Wetland Conservation Act of MN must be first, then Army Corp of Engineers reviews. That process took over 2 years to gain approval. Every year for five years the consultant for the City files a report of the field work. Mr. Kunkle asked which agency is ultimately responsible for maintaining the wetland and Mr. Hafner stated the City is. Mr. Kunkle stated one of the methods of containing native species is to raise water levels. Mr. Hafner reviewed the wetland restoration done on 117th Avenue. There have been no issues. No hydrology work is being done on this project. No water would be impounded. Mr. Kunkle stated he hopes that will be very clear that no water will be impounded. Mr. Kunkle asked if it common practice for the City to change open space and Mr. Hafner stated the City adopted an open space management plan (adopted 2007 - 2008) and it includes recommendations from management on open space sites around the City. Some of these areas are overgrown with native invasive species. Mr. Kunkle asked if developers have been told of the plan and Mr. Hafner stated he does not know if developers were specifically told but the plan is available on the website. It is up to the developer who is aware of the City's requirements to advise their customers. Mr. Hafner stated this area has always been considered wetland. Open space is undeveloped land. The project area is primarily wetland. Mr. Hafner stated communication is two-way and developers need to ask questions and communicate conditions.

Mr. Mikrot stated a push communication (such as a flyer in a mailbox) would have brought out the same outcry from the residents. The Council and some of the NRCB is very defensive. The residents near this area should have been communicated to. Mr. Hafner stated the City Newsletter is sent to every home in Blaine. The Council is looking at how

communication is being done. There was no mention of clear cut or tree removal available. Mr. Hafner stated he has received many calls from residents asking about the wetland area after reading about it in the newsletter. Mr. Mikrot stated they purchased wooded lots on purpose. He asked if the City has gone to the developer and told they were misrepresenting. Mr. Mikrot asked the City to contact Hanson Builders. Mr. Hafner stated all the tree removal has been done. Mr. Mikrot asked how many trees were to be removed. None of the trees were cut down from their private lot.

Ms. Peggy Kunkel, 11832 Naples Circle NE stated it appears the NRCB is empathetic to the situation. She was just walking through Bunker Hills wetland area and the beauty of a wetland does not compare to the beauty of trees before they were removed. Boardmember Villella stated the restoration plan is for the water and to make the wetland functional to increase the quality of the groundwater for the entire City. Mr. Hafner stated the water in the wetland has no effect on the drinking water in the City. A wetland is multi-faceted. Ms. Kunkle stated she has not seen any deer in the last few weeks.

Chair McKinley stated the deer are still in the area. She handed out wetland information to the residents present.

Ms. Colleen Groves, 11800 Naples Circle, asked about the filling of the ditches, and whether it was before or after the project was started. Mr. Hafner stated Councilmember Hovland was referring to the culvert that was lowered due to court action. There will be a cleaning of the ditches from the north of the wetland site almost to 109th. There has been no filling of the ditches.

Ms. Dunstan asked if an engineering survey was done by the agencies and Mr. Hafner stated field study was done. She could not find anything that stated thousands of trees were being removed. Currently there are lakes in the upland area that were not there before. She is concerned about the water levels. She stated she called Mr. Hafner when she saw the red flags and was told a few trees were being removed that were invasive. She called again when the trees were being removed next to her property. Mr. Hafner stated he spoke with the consultant about oak trees being taken down and he was told the oaks removed were not in good condition. The system is uplands and lowlands and that is how it is being managed. The trees in the loop were not removed. The trees left standing today were never planned to be taken out.

Mr. Mikrot asked if the NRCB will make a recommendation to the Council regarding access. The Council will make the final decision. Mr. Hafner stated the access recommendation will be provided to Council prior to their work session.

Chair McKinley stated she would like to come to the association meeting. Boardmember Perkins stated residents are encouraged to apply for a NRCB position.

Mr. Hafner stated all the trees have been removed. The piles of brush will be removed or burned. Work will be done this spring and summer to monitor the growth of the native plants by the consultant. There won't be noisy equipment as the heavy work is done. The mowing is done. There are some shrubs and grasses that will grow somewhat high. Mr. Hafner stated to his knowledge only management was done on City property. The boardwalk should be completed by mid-April. The residents were encouraged to call the Police or City Hall if they see things going on in the wetland area that should not be happening.

6. New Business

6.a Blaine Wetland Sanctuary Project Update

Staff Liaison Hafner reviewed the updated has been presented in the previous portion of the meeting.

Informational; no action required.

6.b BWS Sign

Boardmember Perkins worked on the frame for the sign and Chair McKinley dropped it off at public works. The braces will be added and held down with sandbags. Chair McKinley is worried to put the sign up while the well is still being drilled. The well should be done in 2-3 weeks, weather permitting. The sign can be put up as soon as the well is done and the big equipment is out of the area. Mr. Hafner needs to send public works (Steve) an email as a work order to put up the sign.

Boardmember Villella asked who is replacing Mr. Hafner when he retires. Mr. Hafner stated Stephen Higgins will manage the project. Shari Kunza will be the staff liaison for the NRCB. Boardmember Villella suggested Jason Husveth come to the next Board Meeting to communicate to the residents. Mr. Hafner is putting together a packet of information for the Council work session. The most viable access point is off Naples Circle. The Council will develop a proposal to help remedy the situation with the

residents.

Discussed.

6.c Open Space Fund Update

Staff Liaison Hafner provided an estimated revenue expenses for the NRCB: Open Space along with the wetland credit estimate. An updated map of the site was also provided showing two trails. Mr. Hafner reviewed the report in detail. Jason is working to obtain a grant from Great River for approximately \$200,000. A condition of the grant is that it would need to be used within 18 months and would require a \$50,000 match. Corporate sponsorships of the project are being researched.

Boardmembers Castillo and Gunter left the meeting at 8:45 p.m.

Boardmember Lizakowski stated she would like to see communication improved and the NRCB can make recommendations for that going forward.

Boardmember Truchon stated it would be nice for the Council to create a united front. No false hope should be given to the residents. Mr. Hafner stated the Council has not sat down and discussed this. The residents have been given the opportunity to express their concerns which will be looked at by Council at their work session.

Boardmember Villella commended Mr. Hafner on his interactions with the residents this evening.

Discussed.

6.d 2017 NRCB Goals

This will be discussed at the March meeting.

7. Other Business

The benches were purchased and Mr. Hafner asked for some direction on where they should be placed. Two should be put in Kane Meadows, one replacement in Pioneer Park, one on East Lake Park on the east side of the loop, and the fifth tbd by Mr. Hafner.

There will be a retirement party next Tuesday, February 28, 2:30 - 4:00 p.m. at City Hall.

Informational; no action required.

Adjournment

MOVED by Boardmember Perkins, seconded by Boardmember Villella, to adjourn the meeting at 9:00 p.m.

The motion carried unanimously.

Aye: 9 - Chair McKinley, Villella, Rafferty, Ruth, Perkins, Truchon, Castillo, Wilder, and Lizakowski