



City of Blaine Anoka County, Minnesota Minutes

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, October 17, 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: Recreation Manager Shari Kunza and Rebecca Haug, Co-Liaison, Water Resource Manager.

Present: 9 - Chair McKinley, Villella, Rafferty, Perkins, Truchon, Castillo, Lizakowski, Genet, and Theisen

Absent: 1 - Ruth

3.

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

MOVED by Boardmember Villella, seconded by Boardmember Theisen, to approve the October 17, 2017 Board Agenda as presented.

Motion carried unanimously.

Aye: 9 - Chair McKinley, Villella, Rafferty, Perkins, Truchon, Castillo, Lizakowski, Genet, and Theisen

4.

APPROVAL OF THE SEPTEMBER 19, 2017 MINUTES

Attachments: [09-19-17nrcb](#)

Chair McKinley noted on page two the minutes were approved as amended. She also questioned on Item 9 Open Space Budget whether “City’s Rain Gardens” should be listed. Ms. Haug stated it has been part of the Board’s oversight.

MOVED by Boardmember Rafferty, seconded by Boardmember Truchon, to approve the minutes of the September 19, 2017 Board Meeting as amended.

Motion carried unanimously. Boardmember Perkins abstained.

Aye: 8 - Chair McKinley, Villella, Rafferty, Truchon, Castillo, Lizakowski, Genet, and Theisen

Abstain: 1 - Perkins

5. Open Forum for Citizen Input

No one appeared to address the Commission.

6. OPEN SPACE PROGRAMMING

Co-Liaison Haug reviewed staff met with Heidi Ferris, Growing Green Hearts on September 27, 2017 to discuss the next steps for programming at the City’s Open Space Areas. Ms. Ferris is in the process of putting together a contract proposal with recommendation to have two 1-hour meetings with staff and two members of the NRCB to develop a plan. Boardmembers Truchon and Villella have expressed interest in participating in these two meetings. The first program discussed was to have a snowshoe walk at the Blaine Wetland Sanctuary on February 24, 2018. Staff will work with Anoka County Parks to rent snowshoes for people who do not own them. Another event discussed is “Stories in the Rocks” which would be geared towards educating the public about the local geology. A date for this event has not been set. Staff recommends the NRCB approve the contract and next steps for working with Ms. Ferris. The hope is to have a five-year plan to include all the open spaces within the City.

It was agreed to table approval of the contract with Growing Green Hearts until it is provided for Board review.

Tabled for review.

7. OPEN SPACE REPORT

Boardmember Rafferty provided a report on Laddie Lake Open Space and Park. It had been emailed to Boardmembers prior to the meeting. Photographs were also shown of the area.

Boardmember Villella had emailed his report on Kane Meadows some time

ago.

Ms. Kunza stated it can be added to the next meeting's agenda.

Boardmember Lizakowski reported on Oaks Savannah. She will send the written report and photographs to the Board.

Boardmember Perkins provided an overview of the 131st area. He had previously presented his report at the June Meeting. Chair McKinley stated a neighbor near the area has been watching for Oak Wilt. Some Burr Oaks have been replanted. Boardmember Villella asked if the area would be opened up with the planned development of Lever Street. Chair McKinley stated it is land locked but when development comes to that area a trail easement will be provided. Boardmember Villella recommended that be reminded to the developer.

Boardmember Castillo will report on Lochness at the next meeting.

Chair McKinley presented a written report on Pioneer Park which was distributed at the Meeting. She also provided a map of the area and the history of Pioneer Park. She will pass onto Public Works on some items that need attention. The plaque recognizing Josh Bostrom for his Eagle Scout Project was not posted. Boardmember Truchon stated these were good reports and she is happy the Board came back with reports and suggested we work with Parks and Public Works on getting the items done that need to be done. Chair McKinley stated she will be making a list of items that need to be done at Pioneer Park. Boardmember Truchon stated she would like to have a schedule developed to address the items that need to be done.

Discussed.

8.

OPEN SPACE CONTRACTS

Attachments: [2017 City of Blaine Letter](#)
 [Aquatore Dog Park](#)
 [Hidden Ponds Park](#)
 [Kane Meadows](#)
 [Laddie Lake Park](#)
 [Oak Savanna](#)

Ms. Haug reviewed the City has been contracting with Prairie Restorations, Inc. (PRI), Critical Connections Environmental Services (CCES), and Minnesota Native Landscapes (MNL) to manage its open spaces for the past 5 years or so. Some of the areas have been managed longer and some

shorter. Staff requested new quotes from the companies to continue the management efforts in the City's Open Spaces.

The proposal provided by PRI was provided for Board review. MNL and CCES were not able to provide their proposals due to wrapping up their field season work. Staff was informed the proposals should be ready by the November NRCB meeting.

Prairie Restorations, Inc. has been maintaining the following:

- Aquatore Park
- Laddie Lake
- Oak Savannah
- Hidden Ponds Park
- Kane Meadows Park

Their proposal recommends different management for each area and has a yearly total for work. Staff recommends the NRCB recommend the City Council approve the contract for Prairie Restorations, Inc. to continue management of the five open spaces.

Chair McKinley asked about the Dog Park at Aquatore and noted that is park land not open space. The NRCB was to share the cost for creating the trail and removing the buckthorn with the Park Board. The NRCB ended up with the entire bill. She asked why open space funds are being used for Aquatore Park. Boardmember Villella stated it was his understanding when it became a dog park the Park Board was officially taking Aquatore Park over. Chair McKinley noted there is oak wilt in Aquatore which would be handled by public works.

Ms. Haug stated she can have Prairie Restorations remove the Aquatore Park portion from their proposal and discuss with Park Staff.

Chair McKinley referred to Hidden Ponds and indicated the actual open space on the map. She questioned whether tamaracks were planted instead of prairie. Ms. Haug stated she can ask Prairie Restorations to amend the contract for that area as well and ask for an update on the tamaracks. She will get a revised contract to come back for Board recommendation for approval.

Boardmember Perkins noted on Kane Meadows park history there was a statement they were uncertain as to who seeded the prairie edge along the walking trail. He asked staff to find out who did it. Ms. Haug will research and report back at the next meeting.

Chair McKinley mentioned at Oaks Savannah the trees that were planted, a lot of them died.

Boardmember Theisen stated for construction projects there are usually consulting firms that do oversight and verify if the work plan is followed. He wondered if there is City staff that would check to make sure items are completed. Ms. Haug stated typically there is a check and balance once the work is done that it was done as planned.

Boardmember Truchon suggested at an upcoming meeting the Management Plan be reviewed especially for some of the newer Boardmembers and possibly update the Plan.

Chair McKinley asked that Minnesota Native Landscapes (MNL) provide a report on what they have been doing in the City with the rain gardens and stormwater ponds along with their proposal at the next meeting.

Boardmember Truchon stated the Board toured the rain gardens that were established along with Jim Hafner some time ago.

Discussed.

9.

BWS COMMENTS

Ms. Kunza stated there have been a number of meetings with Councilmembers Clark and Jeppson with the Blaine Wetland Sanctuary Neighborhood. A proposal will go before City Council with a revised estimate of \$50,000 which includes buffering along the homes where trees were removed on Naples Circle and 117th Lane NE and includes fencing with a gate along the area where the BWS abuts Naples that will be used as a maintenance access. The estimate is based on drawings and price costs from Stantec Engineering and consists of 32 Overstory trees and 62 Understory trees that are suited for the wetland soils. If Council approves the proposal the trees will be ordered in the winter and planted in the spring.

Ms. Kunza stated Staff will be attending the City Council Workshop on October 19, 2017 to discuss options for the screening at the BWS.

Boardmember Perkins asked if feedback from Army Corp of Engineers has been received regarding the plantings or from any other State Departments that have looked at the plans. Ms. Haug stated they would be reviewed but if the trees were planted in the areas indicated, it would not affect the plans. The timeline should not be impacted if they are placed on

the outside edge of the restoration area.

Boardmember Castillo asked if the trees would be planted before being reviewed by the agencies. Ms. Haug stated she hopes they will have a better idea of where the trees will be planted shortly after the Council Meeting and that can be submitted to the permitting agencies.

Boardmember Villella asked if the trees would be on the resident's side of the property line or the City's side of the property line and how close to the wetland. He asked if Jason Husveth was consulting regarding the tree planting. Chair McKinley asked if Jason was consulted. Ms. Kunza stated she does not believe Jason was consulted as the City was consulting with Stantec as to what trees are good for a wetland.

Boardmember Perkins stated he believes the reason for the trees was for privacy for the residents and asked if there have been any objective evaluations done for privacy impacts for these residents. He feels if the purpose is for privacy screening he does not feel this plan would provide for that. Ms. Kunza stated the area identified is what the neighborhood committee has recommended. These were the homes most impacted with the removal of the trees.

Boardmember Theisen stated he feels the trees should be planted as far away from the property so the City does not incur any additional liabilities for any sort of property damage. Chair McKinley stated that is a thought that needs to be kept in mind.

Boardmember Truchon commented on Boardmember Perkins question regarding an objective evaluation for the privacy impact. She stated she went on the walks with the committee and there was a consensus among the neighborhood group that more screening was needed but there was no consensus among the Council or herself representing the committee. She did not agree with the committee's consensus that more screening was needed.

Boardmember Genet stated she does not know who put forward the recommendation for screening because the recommendation for screening was not the recommendation of the entire committee. Ms. Kunza stated this is what Staff was directed to do by the City Council.

Councilmember Genet asked where the \$50,000 would come from and would it be from the NRCB budget. Ms. Kunza stated that would be decided by the Council.

Chair McKinley referred to an email composed by Boardmember Villella on September 20, 2017. Chair McKinley would like the Council to have that email. Boardmember Genet stated she also composed an email. Chair McKinley asked the Board if they can attend the Council Workshop on Thursday evening at 6:30 p.m. Chair McKinley also re-wrote a letter and sent it to the Mayor and Council. Ms. Kunza stated she scanned Chair McKinley's letter and emailed it to the Council the same day. Ms. Kunza will add Boardmember Villella and Genet's emails to the Council packet along with any other documents the Board wishes.

Boardmember Truchon stated she called her City Councilmembers but neither returned her calls.

MOVED by Boardmember Villella, seconded by Boardmember Genet, to communicate to the City Council that the NRCB is firmly against the planting of trees in the BWS for privacy buffering.

Boardmember Truchon suggested an amendment requesting the City Council continue the restoration project as approved by the Council and permitted by State and Federal Agencies without any changes with the exception of the gate and fencing required for the maintenance road.

AMENDED MOTION MOVED by Boardmember Villella, seconded by Boardmember Genet, to communicate to the City Council that the NRCB is firmly against the planting of trees in the BWS for privacy buffering and we advise the City Council to continue the restoration project as approved.

Amended motion carried unanimously.

Aye: 9 - Chair McKinley, Villella, Rafferty, Perkins, Truchon, Castillo, Lizakowski, Genet, and Theisen

Boardmember Theisen noted going forward more trails and more construction will be added so this is setting precedents now and in the future and would amount to much more money.

10.

COMMUNICATIONS

Ms. Haug reviewed the following communication items:

Tour City property north of 109th and south of Branch 3 - November NRCB Meeting. Jason Husveth stated it would be a good time for a tour as most of the leaves will be down and easier to see.

Grant opportunity for the area north of 109th and south of Branch 3 - Jason Husveth will discuss.

Contracts from CCES and MNL - These will be brought back for Board

review at the November meeting.

Interpretive Sign Presentation - November - More information should be available from Anoka-Ramsey for the November meeting. Boardmember Genet stated there are eight interpretive signs that her students are working on. There are two public open forums scheduled and the NRCB is invited. They are Tuesday, October 31 9am - 11:30am and Thursday, November 9 1pm - 3:30pm at Anoka Ramsey Community College - Room S130. Feedback on the signs will be received from the attendees.

Informational; no action required.

Adjournment

MOVED by Boardmember Perkins, seconded by Boardmember Truchon, to adjourn the meeting at 8:10 p.m.

The motion carried unanimously.

Aye: 9 - Chair McKinley, Villella, Rafferty, Perkins, Truchon, Castillo, Lizakowski, Genet, and Theisen