



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, September 18, 2018

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, Rafferty, Perkins, Truchon, Genet, Theisen, Varian, Vede, and Panning

Absent: 1 - Villella

3. Approval of the Agenda

Chair McKinley added an item under Communications.

MOVED by Boardmember Truchon, seconded by Boardmember Theisen, to approve the agenda as presented.

Motion carried unanimously.

Aye: 9 - Chair McKinley, Rafferty, Perkins, Truchon, Genet, Theisen, Varian, Vede, and Panning

4. Approval of Minutes

Chair McKinley noted on page one, last sentence the word "and" should be removed before a 20-acre parcel was purchased.

MOVED by Boardmember Rafferty, seconded by Boardmember Varian, to approve the August 21, 2018 Minutes as amended.

Motion carried unanimously.

Aye: 9 - Chair McKinley, Rafferty, Perkins, Truchon, Genet, Theisen, Varian, Vedi, and Panning

5. Open Forum for Citizen Input

No one appeared to address the Board.

None.

6. PARKS MASTER PLAN UPDATE AND STAKEHOLDER MEETING

Mr. Robert Slipka from WSB provided an update to the Board regarding the Parks Master Plan. He encouraged discussion and feedback from the Board about what they would like to see moving forward in the park system. He noted this is a 9-month undertaking and will go into more detail than a Comprehensive Plan. WSB has received input from four City events. The number highest responses received were the request for more splashpads, beach spaces, more playground areas, natural trails and boardwalks and fishing. They will engage public at the Expo. An online engagement tool will also be utilized. A master plan update is being done for Aquatore Park and Happy Acres Park. They have met with various groups within the city for input. He requested NRCB input.

Boardmember Truchon stated she would like to see when developments come the natural areas will be retained and the City will take good care of the natural spaces. Mr. Slipka stated Blaine has a large number of parks which take a lot of maintenance to maintain the parks. He stated diversity in parks is important. Boardmember Truchon stated parks should not be over managed and maintain portions of parks for wildlife and natural areas. She suggested accepting land in lieu of money for future developments. Wildlife corridors could connect the natural areas. Educate the residents on the importance of the value of natural areas. Mr. Slipka asked if there is a particular park with a building for programming and Boardmember Perkins stated the plan is for the Blaine Wetland Sanctuary (BWS) to have a nature center building.

Boardmember Varian referred to the Parks, Open Space and Trails map and noted the BWS is not indicated on the map. Lochness is a special use park.

Boardmember Genet asked if stakeholder feedback top 10 requests is something that is not currently in Blaine, does that mean they will be added. Mr. Slipka stated they were asked what was wanted that they may have

seen in other communities.

Boardmember Varian gave her idea of what a Master Plan is and it is looking at the future and money is not considered at this point. Mr. Slipka stated some dollar amounts are indicated on those requests with a lot of interest and gave an example of another splashpad. Boardmember Varian stated she would like people to respond not thinking of the cost. She believes there needs to be a walkway between the Lexington Athletic Complex (LAC) and BWS which is a costly item. She asked if sidewalks should be part of this Master Plan. Mr. Slipka stated sidewalks can be used to link trails. Boardmember Varian suggested Blaine consider sidewalks in the plan as there have been discussions for years regarding sidewalks. Boardmember Varian suggested more undeveloped natural areas.

Chair McKinley asked how input was received from the groups he met with and Mr. Slipka stated a good mix of demographics in groups were sought and input was received during those events. Residents were notified to go to the website to provide their feedback. Input will be taken until the end of October.

Boardmember Truchon asked Mr. Slipka if every open space area was visited. Mr. Slipka stated he believes he has seen all, as escorted by Nate. She suggested principles such as less mowing, less pesticides be included in the Master Plan. She suggested the surrounding areas outside of the map be planned for connections to from Blaine. Mr. Slipka stated the Comprehensive Plan include the regional connectivity.

Boardmember Theisen requested the names of the open spaces be written on the maps.

Boardmember Varian stated a safe crossing between LAC and the BWS is necessary.

Boardmember Vedi stated he has biked a lot in Blaine and there are other dangerous intersections and he would like to look at the big picture as to what is connecting parts of Blaine to other parts via trails and sidewalks. He also suggested signage along trails on how to connect to other areas.

Chair McKinley asked Mr. Slipka how further input from the Board should be communicated and Mr. Slipka suggested talking to City staff, putting it online or contacting Mr. Slipka directly.

Boardmember Panning stated she is concerned about hard surface run-off and collection points for waste recycling.

Boardmember Truchon asked that some of the trails be maintained in the winter months.

Boardmember Varian stated a lot of residents don't understand what open spaces are or their purpose and it would be nice to have a definition available.

Boardmember Rafferty suggested focusing on operations of what we have now as far as parks and trails.

Boardmember Perkins suggested more connections, safety concerns and highlighting the open spaces and the names of them.

Boardmember Genet stated the biggest things for her would be connectivity, safety and adaptability. She especially likes the idea of soft trails. She will make notes on the website.

Boardmember Theisen commented maximizing the amount of bio-diversity and the elimination of mowing not necessary in some parks. He would prefer recreational hardscapes be limited to sidewalks and organized play areas.

Chair McKinley suggested if Boardmembers have comments they can be relayed to Mr. Slipka at the Blaine Block Party.

Discussed.

7.

PRICE OF CREDITS FOR SITE 7

Ms. Haug stated staff has been informed that the first 15% (approximately 12 acres) of the wetland credits at Site 7 in the Blaine Wetland Sanctuary should be available in the next month. Staff has received inquiries as to what price the credits will be sold at. The current market rate average is \$1.85 per square foot, highest sold is \$2.50 per square foot. Staff's recommendation would be to sell the credits between \$2.00 - \$2.50 per square foot depending on the amount of credits being purchased, higher rate for less credits and lower rate for larger credit purchases. The reasons for the recommendation for going a little higher than the average is because of the types of wetlands the City is restoring and to pay back the \$400,000 loan from the Economic Development Authority (EDA) sooner.

The NRCB recommendation may also want to make exceptions for credits

purchased by a government agency to charge a lower than average rate. This was the case with the wetland credit purchase by the State of Minnesota earlier this year.

The type of wetland in Site 7 is more high quality. Ms. Haug explained the wetland banking law and process.

Boardmember Varian asked who Blaine is competing with in selling the credits. Ms. Haug stated the developers must first try to replace within the County, then the Watershed District. There are only a few banks left in this area.

Boardmember Theisen asked if pricing is adjusted based on the type of development. Ms. Haug stated the City did sell many credits to the State of Minnesota at a lower price.

Boardmember Truchon stated she believes the fen area in the BWS is of very high value and the City should be asking a higher price. Ms. Haug stated the way the State has the wetland banks set up does not identify a fen.

Boardmember Theisen asked if credits are sold to the State is there a way to use the State's resources to help maintain the area for example the burn crews. Ms. Haug stated she is not aware of that but it is something to consider.

Motion by Boardmember Genet, seconded by Boardmember Truchon to recommend the City Council sell the credits between \$2.00 - \$2.50 per square foot depending on the amount of credits being purchased, higher rate for less credits and lower rate for larger credit purchases making exceptions for credits purchased by a government agency to charge a lower than average rate.

Motion carried unanimously.

Aye: 9 - Chair McKinley, Rafferty, Perkins, Truchon, Genet, Theisen, Varian, Vedi, and Panning

8.

CONTINUATION OF RESTORATION ACTIVITIES TO THE SOUTH AT THE BLAINE WETLAND SANCTUARY

Ms. Haug reviewed at the August 21, 2018 NRCB Meeting, the Board toured the southern half of the Blaine Wetland Sanctuary with Jason Husveth, Critical Connections Ecological Services, CCES. During the tour, it was discussed that the City has been approved to receive a Lessard-Sams Grant to restore the southern half of the Blaine Wetland Sanctuary which would require additional tree and brush removal and raking and mowing of the understory vegetation to open up the native seed

bank. The project will need to go out for bid to determine who would put the plan together and do the restoration work. The ideal time to do the restoration work is in December - January. The work could be combined with the completion of the restoration work in Site 7 to reduce mobilization costs. Staff plans to hold a couple of public meetings and send out notifications to the neighboring properties prior to any work beginning.

Ms. Haug requested the NRCB makes a recommendation to the City Council that the City accept the Lessard-Sams Grant and go out for bid for the plan and restoration work.

Chair McKinley stated she was very impressed with the tour and plans going forward.

MOVED by Chair McKinley, seconded by Boardmember Truchon, to recommend the City Council accept the Lessard-Sams Grant and go out for bid for the plan and restoration work.

Motion carried unanimously.

Aye: 9 - Chair McKinley, Rafferty, Perkins, Truchon, Genet, Theisen, Varian, Vedi, and Panning

9.

COMMUNICATIONS

Ms. Kunza provided updates on the following:

Aveda Opportunities - Boardmember Panning stated last spring her company took busloads of employees to a park in Andover. She would like to see the City of Blaine do something similar along with other employees in the business park. She suggested during April (Earth Month) she work with staff and Great River Greening to get this set up.

BWS Video - Ms. Kunza shared the video of the BWS. This will be added to the Blaine website. The video will be available at the Block Party.

Educator Open House - This was held on September 10. Ms. Kunza provided photographs of the event. The next session is September 20.

Animal Track Stenciling - This was done on September 8 by a group from Christ Lutheran Church. The spots for the photo poles are being marked for the Eagle Scout and Larry's project.

Boardmember Truchon thanked staff and Growing Green Hearts for their work on the programming on the boardwalk.

Research by SLP Students - They are doing research as part of an AP

Science Course. Ms. Haug will visit the class in the next few weeks.

Maintenance Entrance Gate has been installed. Photographs were provided for the Board. The association next to the gate has requested to mow the grass in front of the gate and an agreement is being written between the association and the City. Boardmember Truchon suggested the association be informed with information about the area they are mowing and when they should be mowing. She would not be in favor of the association just mowing it. She thinks it should be left the way it is. Boardmember Varian suggested giving an informational session before the agreement is signed to make them aware of the native vegetation. Boardmember Genet added an information session would be beneficial. She would recommend it be left alone. They had indicated they didn't want to see the gate. Boardmember Perkins asked if mowing that area would have any impact on the wetland credits and Ms. Haug stated this is not part of the credits. Boardmember Theisen suggested if mowed it should be any wider than the width of a mower. There is a sidewalk across the street. Boardmember Vedi stated the association most likely has a 3rd party mower who would also need to be educated.

Boardmember Perkins asked about the developer building off Radisson Road and what they are doing to replace the wetlands and Ms. Haug stated they have purchased wetland credits.

Chair McKinley stated she has a table at the Block Party on Weds between 3-7pm. She would appreciate if other Boardmembers could help man the table. Boardmembers Truchon, and Varian offered to help.

Discussed.

Adjournment

MOVED by Boardmember Perkins, seconded by Boardmember Genet, to adjourn the meeting at 8:30 p.m.

The motion carried unanimously.

Aye: 9 - Chair McKinley, Rafferty, Perkins, Truchon, Genet, Theisen, Varian, Vedi, and Panning