



City of Blaine Anoka County, Minnesota

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Legislation Details (With Text)

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ITEM: 5.2 **ENTER AGENDA SECTION HERE-** *Nate Monahan, Program Supervisor*

OPEN SPACE UPDATE

CITY TO INITIATE NEW OPEN SPACE IMPROVEMENT

Since the late 1990's the city of Blaine has made a commitment to purchasing and preserving open space areas within the city borders. Efforts have resulted in 13 areas totaling over 800 acres to be officially designated as Open Space. In 2008, the City implemented an Open Space Management Plan designed to control invasive plant species in the open spaces, promote restoration of native plant species and develop public use and appreciation of these significant areas. To date, management projects have been successful with the exception of two areas where projects have not been started as yet. One is a landlocked area that is waiting for development to make access feasible and the other is an area named Site 7 in the management plan.

Site 7 is approximately 500 acres in size and contains a mix of wetlands and uplands that are home to a diverse inventory of wildlife and native plant species, some of which are endangered or threatened. The location is north of 109th Ave. and west of Lexington Ave. in east Blaine. It is bordered on the north and east by Anoka county Ditch 53-62, on the west by residential development and extends south to 109th Ave.

Site 7 has been envisioned as a potential destination for nature lovers and an example of pre-development Anoka Sand Plain ecosystem. Beginning with control of invasive species, the project would restore the native diversity of plants and plant communities and add amenities such as trails and bird watching stations. The project would also include the construction of a nature center, providing interpretative services and educational programs.

The project process began in January of this year with a request for proposal for conceptual design services circulated to qualified contractors. The City Council awarded a contract to Stantec, Inc. at the March 20 council meeting. Stantec has included Jason Husveth (Critical Connections Ecological Services) as part of their team for this project. Jason has

completed numerous restoration projects in Blaine and is currently working on the wetland banking project located in the center of Site 7. A conceptual design will be complete by mid-summer this year and will be unveiled for public viewing. Bids for final design will go out in late fall 2014 with construction expected to begin in 2015. Trail heads/parking areas and some trails will be in the initial phase with succeeding phases to include the various amenities, vegetation restoration and the nature center. Completion of the entire project is estimated for 2019 - 2020.

Funding for the project will be entirely from the Open Space and Trails Fund which is funded solely by Park Dedication Fees. The total project cost is estimated to be between \$950,000 and \$1Million. No General Fund tax dollars will be used for this project.

Under a separate project, the NRCB is initiating a second wetland banking project. The site is located at the north end of Site 7 and adjacent to the current wetland banking project. Two contractors submitted bids with the award going to Jason Husveth (CCES). The purpose of this project is to create additional wetland credits that will be banked and sold to generate revenue for the Open Space fund.

This additional revenue is necessary to maintain the improvements made to the open spaces in connection with the Open Space Management Plan. State Statute does not allow the use of Park Dedication fees for maintenance. Open Space improvements are reaching the point where future work would be considered maintenance. Having the revenue generated by the sale of wetland credits would mean no General Fund dollars would be used. It is anticipated that approximately 97 acres of credits would be created as a result of this project. At current market rates for an acre of wetland credit, the net revenue potential is about \$4Million.

The project is currently moving through the permit phase which could take a year or more. Work on the ground will begin no later than 2016, sooner if possible. Project completion is scheduled for 2020. Credits could be available for sale as soon as 2017.

Information