

Natural Resources Commission

Meeting Minutes February 3, 2021 (WebEx)

Attendance: Commissioners: Judy Gibbs, Brandon Krumwiede, John Lindgren, Nancy Schuldt, Tiffany Sprague, Brian Fredrickson, Mike Schrage, Brandon Van Tassel, Mike Pennington.

City Staff: Diane Desotelle, Natural Resources Coordinator; Jennifer Ondrik, Administrative Clerical Specialist; Clark Christenson, City Forester; Jim Filby Williams, Director of Property, Parks & Libraries; Jim Shoberg, Senior Parks Planner.

Call to Order:

The meeting started at 6:03 p.m.

Forest Revitalization Projects

Clark Christenson, City Forester, gave a comprehensive overview of the Forest Stand Revival projects planned for 2021. He explained that the first steps are thinning and removing identified Pine and Aspen stands in five different zones throughout Duluth including: (1) Amity Creek, (2) Hawk Ridge, (3) Hartley, (4) Enger Tower & Golf Course, (5) Lake Superior Zoo & Spirit Mountain. Clark shared detailed maps of each zone and described in detail the desired outcomes and proposed actions for each stand. In all, the City is proposing to revitalize 108 acres of Duluth's 10,000 acres of green space. A copy of the PowerPoint can be found here: <https://duluthmn.gov/media/WebSubscriptions/196/20210204-196-12464.pdf>

Clark will be looking for recommendations from the Natural Resources Commissioners in March and is scheduled to present to the Parks Commission on March 10th.

Natural Resource Coordinator Report (Diane Desotelle)

Diane updated the Commission on her work over the past month on three main projects:

St. Louis River Project Area - Acquisition of Tax Forfeit Lands

Developed the initial parcel list using the guidelines adopted by the NRC and sent the listing to St. Louis County. Next steps are conduct a large scale appraisal process of the agreed upon parcels.

Strategic Land Re-alignment project and City Parcel selection

This effort is meant to preserve and permanently protect and designate lands. A Memorandum of Agreement was signed in January by both the City Council and the St Louis County Board. An initial parcel list was then sent to county staff on January 22nd for review. Diane explained that the City was divided into project areas and the list of parcels are located in 4 project areas: (1) Lester/Amity, (2) Hartley, (3) Piedmont, and (4) Mission Creek. Next steps are to obtain and review the estimated market values and continue to negotiate with St. Louis County staff on a final draft. Diane will continue to update the Commission as this project progresses.

Natural Resources Management Program Plan

Diane shared some of the processes and concepts the she and the technical team will be following related to the NRMPP. Diane explained the stacked ranking system that will be used in the analysis of lands and described the process the team will use to categorize lands to aid in prioritization and management decisions. This prioritization will help the team assign people (staff, contractors, partners, & volunteers) to conduct work and assign funds to these projects. Diane also shared that the EPA continues its work on drafting a decision support tool that will

allow the City to document how and why we are making these natural resource decisions. Diane will provide a more in-depth presentation of the NRMPP to the Natural Resource Commission in March.

Forester's Report (Clark Christenson)

Clark reported that he and his crew have started on boulevard tree pruning around Morgan Park. In addition they were able to conduct some maintenance activities on the newly planted White Pine stand near Minnesota Point.

Directors Report (Jim Filby Williams – Director of Property, Parks, & Libraries)

Director Filby Williams updated the Commission that the City recently received confirmation from FEMA of nearly \$300,000 award to pay for a coastal hazard assessment and project development study that will evaluate vulnerable stretches of shoreline with public infrastructure. These funds will pay for the development of mitigation strategies that will allow the City to compete for subsequent federal grant requests. As part of this award, the City will be working with a selected organization on community outreach and engagement. The RFP for the engineering services is expected to be ready in the next month and the project will get started early this summer.

Announcements

None

Adjournment:

There was a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:27, M/S/C.