

# Natural Resources Commission

## Meeting Minutes April 6, 2022 (Virtual Meeting)

**Attendance: Commissioners:** Mike Schrage, Brandon Krumwiede, Judy Gibbs, John Lindgren, Nancy Schuldt, Tiffany Sprague, Brian Fredrickson, Allison Ray.

**City Staff:** Kate Kubiak, Natural Resources Coordinator; Clark Christenson, City Forester; Jim Filby Williams, Director of Property, Parks & Libraries; Jennifer Ondrik, Administrative Specialist.

**Guests:** Martha Minchak - Assistant Area Wildlife Manager at MN DNR; Tim Beaster - Conservation Specialist with South St. Louis SWCD; Tom Keefe – Goose Management Consultant

### Call to Order:

The meeting started at 6:08 p.m. Kate Kuibak, the City's new Natural Resource Coordinator, introduced herself to the Commission and gave an overview of her past work experiences.

### Old Business

None

### New Business

#### Miller Creek Realignment Project

Tim Beaster, Conservation Specialist with South St. Louis SWCD, gave a brief overview of the Miller Creek Realignment project. He explained that his intent of presenting to the Commission was to seek permission to harvest a threatened stand of Balsam Poplar and Aspen trees in the project area and to use these trees in the planned nature-based design for the stream restoration. Using these trees would save significant costs to the project. He shared his professional opinion that this stand of trees is unlikely to survive once the groundwater elevation rises as these species are not tolerant of high water. In addition, he described the projects intent to re-establish more native plant communities with longer-lived tree species including cedar, tamarack, black spruce, balsam fir and yellow birch.

Commissioner Fredrickson made a motion to allow the harvest of the identified tree stand to be used as large woody debris for the stream restoration work. Commissioner Shultz 2<sup>nd</sup>. **VOTE: 8 – yes; 0 – No.**

**Motion carries.**

### Goose Management

Tom Keefe, Wildlife Consultant, was hired by the City to study and prepare a goose management plan. The purpose of this plan is to enable the City of Duluth to manage a growing Canada goose population within the urban areas of the city and in the St. Louis River estuary within the city. This plan will provide management options to reduce Canada goose impacts to the wild rice restoration efforts in the St. Louis River estuary and to identify other potential areas (parks, trails, green spaces...) within Duluth where geese pose concerns with habitat degradation, public safety issues and/or human use conflicts.

Martha Minchak, Assistant Area Wildlife Manager at MN DNR, indicated that it would be beneficial if the city ordinance that prohibits the discharge of firearms within city limits be modified. Currently hunting is not permitted on the Minnesota side of the river but is legal and common on the Wisconsin side.

Kate will be working with Tom on the draft plan that will be sent to the Commission prior to the May meeting for review. In addition, Parks will be holding a few public information sessions on this topic before asking both the Commission and City Council to approve and adopt a final plan. This timeline is uncomfortably tight as a plan must be approved by both entities in order to obtain the necessary permits for removals.

### **Natural Resource Management Program Plan Funding Discussion**

Per the Commission's request, Director Filby Williams gave an overview of the City's longstanding annual budgeting practices for the Parks and Recreation Division, inclusive of the Natural Resources program. He shared that the issue is a disparity in the way the Parks and Recreation Division budget is constructed. For all City divisions and departments except the Parks and Recreation Division, the City begins the annual budget process by automatically adding funds equal to the projected year-over-year growth in personnel costs. By not doing the same for the Parks and Recreation Division, the City effectively reduces the purchasing power of the annual Parks and Recreation Division budget by \$70,000 to \$100,000 per year. Commissioners offered to help draft a resolution conveying their recommendation that the City use a uniform budget process for all City divisions and departments including the Parks and Recreation Division.

### **Natural Resources Coordinators Report**

Kate has been busy with City onboarding activities and will have more to report on next month.

### **Forester's Report**

Clark reported that he and his crew have been busy with pruning efforts and they are getting ready to plant trees.

### **Director's Report (Jim Filby Williams – Director of Property, Parks, & Libraries)**

Due to time constraints, Director Filby Williams and City staff will be meeting with the NRC Executive Committee on proposed changes to the NRC structure and will report on any anticipated changes at next month's meeting.

### **Announcements**

Nancy announced that there is a Wetlands Specialist position available at Fond du Lac.

The Commission will be working to fill Mike Pennington's now vacant seat over the next few months.

### **Public Comment**

Barb Huberty, MPCA AOC Coordinator, informed the group of an upcoming public meeting.

Louise Levy expressed frustration that licensed tree care companies are not listed on the City's website free of charge and asked the Commission to communicate support to change this with the Clerks office and City attorney.

### **Adjournment**

There was a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:58, M/S/C