



NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes September 6, 2023
Duluth City Hall, Conference Room 330

I. Call to Order

Chair Lindgren called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m.

II. Roll Call

Commissioners Present: Lori Dando, Pam Foster, Judy Gibbs, John Lindgren, Nancy Schuldt, Tiffany Sprague, Andrew Streit

Absent: Mike Schrage

Staff Present: Allison Brooks, Clark Christenson, Kate Kubiak, Sam Singer, Jim Filby Williams

III. Approval of the Agenda

Vice Chair Schuldt made a motion to approve the agenda; seconded by Commissioner Dando. Unanimously approved.

IV. Approval of the June 7, 2023 Meeting Minutes

Commissioner Dando made a motion to approve the June 7, 2023 meeting minutes; seconded by Commissioner Foster. Unanimously approved.

V. Annual Meeting – NRC Officer Nominations

Discussion and nominations were held for the annual NRC officer elections. All three officers confirmed willingness to maintain their respective positions: Chair John Lindgren, Vice Chair Nancy Schuldt, and Secretary Judy Gibbs.

Commissioner Sprague made a motion to re-elect the officers as discussed; seconded by Commissioner Streit. Unanimously approved.

VI. Old Business

A.) Tischer Creek Hartley Pond Feasibility Study – Bimonthly informational update

Kubiak stated that the consultants continue to make progress on the Feasibility Study. The Study and a report by the DNR are on track for completion in October. There will be two public informational meetings this fall in October and November. The timeline for the City, NRC, and Parks & Recreation Commission (PRC) to identify a recommended action will be extended to allow for presentations at spring meetings. Opportunities for public comment will route through the NRC and PRC systems. There were no questions.

VII. New Business

A.) Proposed Focus Watersheds - Informational

Kubiak proposed identifying three watersheds within Duluth for focusing efforts to build upon existing restoration and improvement efforts. The three proposed focus watersheds include Amity, Tischer, and Keene Creeks.

- Amity is impaired for turbidity, and was selected for Section 319 small watershed focus program funding by the MN Pollution Control Agency (MPCA). With this funding, the local South St. Louis Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) will have dedicated funding in the amount of \$200,000 biannually for sixteen years to address impairments. Only 35 watersheds in the state have been selected for this funding opportunity. Commissioner Foster asked about the matching capabilities for the funding. Kubiak responded that the funds could be used by the SWCD to match other funding



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and increase financing for restoration projects. The SWCD has identified restoration opportunities to address the turbidity impairment.

- Tischer is impaired for E. Coli contamination. There are an array of planning and stormwater projects already active in the watershed including the Creek running through Hartley Park, which is a designated Duluth Natural Area, the DNR completing a Roadmap to Resilience, and the collaborative Tischer Creek & Hartley Pond Feasibility Study. There is significant energy from multiple agencies towards restoration efforts, but a lack of funding for implementation at this time. Chair Lindgren added that St. Louis County is also currently designing a stormwater project as part of the Woodland Avenue reconstruction which will include stormwater treatment in Hartley Park. Williams commented that one of the purposes of adopting the Natural Resources Management Program Plan was to make investments in identified natural resource priority areas and streamline efforts. Identifying focus watersheds would support this goal.
- Keene is impaired for E. Coli and chloride. The MN Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) has selected Keene as a priority watershed in the St. Louis River One Watershed One Plan, which is the only creek in the City selected. There is implementation funding available through BWSR to support restoration efforts. In 2020, the MPCA completed a Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategy (WRAPS) report for select urban creeks including Keene, Tischer, and Amity. Restoration opportunities have been identified in Keene and there are now funding sources to support implementation.

Vice Chair Schuldt commented that she appreciates seeing Duluth as an active partner in restoration efforts. Chair Lindgren commented that there are a lot of planning efforts and the City has partners that are interested in moving forward on restoration efforts. There were no additional questions.

VIII. Staff Reports

A.) Natural Resources Coordinator Report

Kubiak commented that she is planning for the second annual Natural Resources Management Program partners meeting for this fall. Commissioner Sprague mentioned that there are conferences being held locally the last week of October for consideration with timing of the meeting. Secretary Gibbs asked if there was progress on updating the Magney-Snively Forest Preserve management plan. Kubiak responded that the Sustain Our Great Lakes grant awards have not yet been announced.

B.) Forester's Report

Christenson stated that there will be an Arbor Day celebration on September 14 at Merritt Park in conjunction with a Parks & Recreation public orchards information evening. Commissioner Sprague asked how many public orchards the City has. Christenson responded that there is a map on the Edible Duluth webpage which identifies locations and varieties, but some of them may no longer be producing fruit. Commissioner Streit asked what activities are most time consuming currently. Christenson responded that responding to EAB remains the most time intensive task, including ordering replacement trees and coordinating removal of effected ash trees, he is also working with other City staff on submitting grant applications and reporting for active grants. Supply of replacement trees continues to be a challenge. Commissioner Foster asked if the City is pursuing starting its own nursery. Christenson replied that it would be good and that staff are pursuing funding for it.



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C.) Director's Report

Williams commented that preparing budgets for next year is a primary focus at this time. If successful, the Parks Levy referendum would have contributed over \$1,700,000 per year to restore capital for park and natural resources needs. Williams is working internally to secure funding where the referendum funding was not realized, including restoring \$250,000 for Parks Capital, which funds natural resources projects, too. The City has submitted two letters of intent to apply for climate resiliency funding through the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, one letter was for approximately \$75,000,000 for green infrastructure along the North Shore. The second letter was for \$15,000,000 and, if funded, it would be the City's match for the Army Corps work for the Section 111 study. Full applications, if invited to apply, would be due in February. The timing may be beneficial to allow for a remedy identification for the Section 111 study. Secretary Gibbs asked if beach nourishment was still a proposed remedy. Williams responded that the Army Corps is still looking at a variety of remedies. There have been two previous Section 111 studies completed in the 1970s and 2001, but the City did not have the required local match to implement the remedy. Chair Lindgren asked what the outcome could be if there continues to be no action. Williams responded that the erosion will continue to impact the shoreline, including yards, homes, and the road in the coming years. The shoreline has been supplemented with dredgings historically in an attempt to keep up with erosion. Chair Lindgren asked where the dredgings come from, and Williams responded that the dredge material from the industrial channel is not always of good quality. Future nourishment would likely need to source sand. The placed dredged material has a three-to-five-year lifespan. There were no additional questions.

IX. Announcements

None.

X. Public Comment

Louise Levy spoke on the upcoming MN Society of Arboriculture fall conference which will be held in Duluth in October.

XI. Adjournment

Commissioner Sprague made a motion to adjourn; second by Commissioner Foster. Unanimously approved.

Meeting adjourned at 6:55 p.m.

Next Meeting - Wednesday, October 4, at 6:00 p.m. in Duluth City Hall, Conference Room 330.