



# NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION

## MEETING MINUTES

February 7, 2024 – 6:00 p.m.

Lakeside Conference Room 430, City Hall

### I. Call to Order

Chair Lindgren called the meeting to begin at 6:00 PM.

### II. Roll Call

Present: John Lindgren, Nancy Schuldt, Judy Gibbs, Tiffany Sprague, Andrew Streitz, Pam Foster, Mike Schrage, Lori Dando, Mike Raichel, Jim Filby Williams, Kate Kubiak, Sam Singer

### III. Approval of the Agenda

Commissioner Streitz made a motion to approve the agenda; seconded by Commissioner Sprague. Unanimously approved.

### IV. Approval of the December 6, 2023 Meeting Minutes

Vice Chair Schuldt made a motion to approve; seconded by Commissioner Raichel. Unanimously approved.

### V. Old Business

None

### VI. New Business

#### A. 2024 Natural Resources Work

Kubiak showed a map of Nature Conservancy projects planned for 2024. The projects will include underplanting of ash dominated forests to maintain canopy cover when ash trees die from emerald ash borer damage. Kubiak referenced a stream restoration project recently completed along Mission Creek. Mission Creek has a lot of sand and gravel, and as a result of a recent storm, restoration work was partially compromised. Funding dedicated towards Natural Resources projects will be used to plant riparian area with plugs of white pine and cedar.

A previously awarded Great Lakes Restoration Initiative from the EPA to support the Duluth Natural Resources Program is expiring this year. Remaining funding on the grant will support invasive species removal on Duluth Natural Area Program lands. Buckthorn, knotweed, and honeysuckle removal will take place in Hartley Park, Chambers Grove, and Munger Landing. Kubiak stated that a portion of the 2024 Natural Resources funding may also be used to complete a few controlled burns, remove invasive knotweed, and control baby's breath on Minnesota Point sand dunes.

Chair Lindgren asked about city's process for maintenance after buckthorn removal. Director Filby Williams confirmed that the secondary maintenance treatment typically occurs 1-3 years after removal. Funders in the past have been reluctant to fund the maintenance treatment and have been working with funders to at least partially support the maintenance treatments. Most often with grants we are doing the initial treatment on some and follow-up treatment on others.

Commissioner Gibbs asked about Hennepin County court case that could set precedent affecting the sale of tax-forfeit property. Director Filby Williams confirmed that the city has closed on the sale of more than 90% of the tax-forfeit property identified for acquisition and preservation. The parcels excluded from the sale went tax forfeit more recently, and their acquisition will be foregone until resolution of the supreme court case dealing with the sale of forfeit tax land.

Chair Lindgren asked about the City's relationship with CISMA. Kubiak explained that the City hosts CISMA and she is on the leadership team. CISMA is a collaboration of the city, county, and other area partners. Funding for CISMA is tentative right now. Commissioner Gibbs mentions CISMA may end up being housed at Minnesota Land Trust.

Kubiak shared that the 2023 controlled burns went well. Controlled burn locations in 2024 may include Jefferson



## NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION

### MEETING MINUTES

February 7, 2024 – 6:00 p.m.

Lakeside Conference Room 430, City Hall

Park, Sister Cities Garden, and between Bayfront and Pier B. Whether the burns move forward will depend on conditions. Kubiak is working closely with the Fire Department.

Kubiak went on to highlight ongoing work in the city with other partners including Hartley Pond and Tischer Creek Dam Feasibility Study, Buckingham Creek restoration, stormwater infrastructure construction in Irving Park, updating the Magney-Snively Management Plan, and Mud Lake remediation.

Commissioner Raichel worked with Nature Conservancy on projects last year and will likely participate this year again. Commissioner Sprague shared that NRRI maintains a chronology site near Mission Creek and encouraged people to take photos and participate in documenting the stream channel and vegetation over time.

#### **B. 2024 NRC Meeting Schedule and Tentative Topics**

Chair Lindgren presented the 2024 NRC Meeting Schedule and tentative topics. Commissioner Sprague suggested the green infrastructure code audit be the topic for the November or December meeting. Kubiak confirmed NRC officers to be elected at the September meeting.

Chair Lindgren read the Commission's purpose as identified in the commission's bylaws. Director Filby Williams reaffirmed the purpose of the NRC is to advise on different recommendations and projects brought to the NRC. Chair Lindgren suggested an NRC focus this year on addressing the tree cages and tubes from previous restoration projects. Director Filby Williams suggested that the Commission consider what to do about tax forfeit lands that are environmentally sensitive, but are beyond the capacity of the city to acquire and protect. The NRC could consider providing guidance on how the future ownership and use of those lands could be beneficial despite not being acquired and protected by the City.

## **VII. Staff Reports**

#### **A. Natural Resources Coordinator's Report – Kate Kubiak**

- Continued participation in the Minnesota Point Floodplain Challenge group.
- Completed Public Lands Exchange transaction and paperwork. Paid County.
- Participation in Headwaters Partnership – interviewed consultants for pre-design of 2 future projects.
- Continued support of MN Point and Section 111 erosion study with US Army Corps of Engineers.
- Writing Requests for Bids and Requests for proposals for 2024 natural resources work.
- Working with the Stream Corps at Kingsbury Forest and Hartley to remove invasives under our SOGL grant.
- Working with the Duluth Fire Dept on cross-departmental controlled burns training and implementation.
- Continued support of CISMA and future planning.
- Planning of upcoming Hartley Dam Feasibility Study Public and administrative processes.
- Held annual meeting of the Arrowhead Bowhunters Alliance group in January.
- Continuing as Vice-Chair of the Lower St. Louis River Habitat Work Group.

#### **B. Forester's Report – Clark Christenson**

This winter has generally been very good to us and we have been able to get a substantial amount of pruning done. In another week we should be done with Woodland and move on to Hunter's Park west of Woodland. We've also been able to grind a substantial number of stumps in anticipation of planting this next spring. We were also able to spend a day pruning young white pine on Park Point. Pruning young white pine helps prevent blister rust which can be a major source of mortality.



## NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

February 7, 2024 – 6:00 p.m.

Lakeside Conference Room 430, City Hall

---

### **C. Director's Report – Jim Filby Williams**

We purchased public lands with funds and support of state statutes, requiring the management of the lands purchased. It was the intent of the NRC and the Council to align the management of those parcels with those requirements by designating most of the acreage, not all, as either part of the St. Louis River Natural Area or designated as park lands. Consistent with the NRC ordinance, the NRC will be asked to approve the parcels to be designated at part of the St. Louis River Natural Area. It will likely take multiple meetings to approve the different parcels due to the quantity and variety involved.

### **VIII. Announcements**

None.

### **IX. Public Comment**

League of Women Voters Observer present at the meeting also volunteers with the city of Duluth invaders. Stated it would be nice if the Duluth invaders had more support from the City, and had more volunteers and enthusiasm. Director Filby Williams acknowledged the opportunity to continue supporting Duluth invaders program going forward.

### **X. Adjournment**

Commissioner Schuldts made a motion to adjourn, Commissioner Sprague seconded. Meeting adjourned at 7:26 PM.

Next Meeting – March 6, 2024 Lakeside Conference Room 430, City Hall