City of Blaine
Anoka County, Minnesota
Minutes
Nat'l Resources Conservation Board

Blaine City Hall
10801 Town Sq Dr NE
Blaine MN 55449

The Natural Resource Conservation Board is an advisory body to the City Council. The Board is charged with recommending acquisition of lands for open space and developing a Natural Resource Plan which includes environmental policy and guidelines for the maintenance and preservation of Blaine's existing and future opens spaces and trail corridors. One of the Board's functions is to hold public meetings and make recommendations to the City Council. For each item, the Board will receive reports prepared by City staff, provide the opportunity for public response, conduct Board discussions and make recommendations. The City Council, however, makes all final decisions on these matters.

Tuesday, February 15, 2022 | **7:00 PM** | **Council Chambers**

1. Call To Order

The meeting was called to order at 7:00PM.

2. Roll Call

Roll Call - Chair Perkins, Boardmembers Genet, Panning, Rafferty, Trippler, Truchon.

Absent - Boardmembers Filipi, McKinley, Vedi.

Others Present: Recreation Manager Nate Monahan and Adjunct Members Drew Brown.

Present: 6 - Rafferty, Chair Perkins, Truchon, Genet, Panning, and Trippler

Absent: 3 - Vice Chair McKinley, Vedi, and Filipi

3. Approval of Minutes

3.-1 Approval of the January 18, 2022 NRCB Minutes

Attachments: 01-18-22 NRCB

MOVED by Boardmember Truchon, seconded by Boardmember Rafferty, to approve the minutes of the January 18, 2022 Board Meeting as presented.

Motion carried unanimously.

Aye: 6 - Rafferty, Chair Perkins, Truchon, Genet, Panning, and Trippler

Approval of Agenda

The agenda was approved as presented.

4. Open Forum for Citizen Input

No one appeared to address the NRCB.

5. New Business

5.-1 Presentation: Carrie Taylor from Anoka Conservation District

Mr. Monahan stated Carrie Taylor from Anoka Conservation District had a presentation for the board.

Carrie Taylor, Anoka County Conservation District representative, introduced herself to the board and stated she works on water quality and habitat related issues. She discussed several projects Blaine may be able to work in conjunction with the county with. She reviewed maps of the county and described the native plant communities in Minnesota, noting Blaine had a very rare plant habitat. She discussed the rare species found only in Blaine and commended the city for protecting these species. She reported on the Lawns to Legumes and Habitat Enhancement Landscape pilot programs that allows residents to create a pollinator friendly habitat areas on their property. She discussed how these programs were assisting with bringing back the rusty patched bumble bee, which was an endangered species. Outreach efforts for these programs were discussed with the Board. A list of noxious weeds found in Anoka County was reviewed with the group, along with the county's efforts to salvage rare plants. She commented further on the efforts of the county to and noted there was always a need for volunteers to assist with furthering the conservation districts efforts.

Boardmember Truchon thanked Ms. Taylor for her detailed presentation. She asked how residents could learn more about the discussed programs. Ms. Taylor encouraged residents to email her directly for further information.

Boardmember Genet recommended information regarding these programs be placed on the city's website. She suggested scout groups, churches, youth groups or others organizations seeking volunteer hours be considered for the Lawns to Legumes program.

Chair Perkins thanked Ms. Taylor for the detailed presentation from the Anoka Conservation District.

5.-2 Blaine Wetland Sanctuary Pavilion and Restroom

Mr. Monahan provided the board with a presentation regarding the Blaine Wetland Sanctuary Pavilion and restroom project. The presentation included updates regarding design options and cost estimates. It was noted the city council reviewed this information at the February 14, 2022 Workshop and provided direction and feedback for this project. Staff advised the board on the outcomes from the Council's discussion stating staff has been asked to explore cost savings measures for the project which include reducing the size and footprint of the pavilion, exploring alternative building materials, exploring expanded parking lot options, requesting an alternate bid for utilities including sewer and water; and requesting an alternate bid for restroom facilities. Staff reported the city council approved a consulting contract for $110,500 with WSB and Associates for the project.

Boardmember Genet asked if the pavilion would have lights and power. Mr. Monahan reported this would be included.

Boardmember Genet questioned if the city was looking for short-term or long-term savings for the project. Mr. Monahan anticipated the council was looking for both, but mostly short term at this point.

Boardmember Genet stated solar panels may be a good option for the top of this pavilion. Mr. Monahan indicated he could discuss this option with the consultant.

Boardmember Panning questioned why the board was not asked to participate in the design of the pavilion. Mr. Monahan stated the experts were asked to create a design for the pavilion and staff would be taking feedback from the board to provide to the consultants.

Boardmember Panning expressed frustration that none of the board's recommendations were taken into consideration within the proposed plans. She indicated this was a very expensive project and she was not impressed by the proposed design at all. Mr. Monahan stated a pavilion with sides was looked at but would not be pursued because then the structure would need sprinklers.

Boardmember Trippler asked why the bathrooms were so far away from the pavilion. He suggested the restroom location be reconsidered. He agreed the structure did not come back as he thought it would. He feared the structure, as proposed, was not practical.

Boardmember Truchon commented she had the same concerns as Boardmembers Trippler and Panning. She anticipated it would be difficult to use this space year round without having walls. She indicated she would like to see the restrooms attached to one end of the pavilion with a wall of storage. Mr. Monahan stated he could make this suggestion to the consultant.

Boardmember Truchon agreed solar panels would be a great addition to the pavilion and encouraged staff to look into this option. She stated she also supported staff speaking with Anoka County to see if a tunnel could be installed under Lexington Avenue, especially since utilities will be brought in from this area. Mr. Monahan explained there may be issues with permitting and ponding with Anoka County.

Boardmember Genet indicated she also supported a tunnel being installed under Lexington Avenue.

Boardmember Panning stated she would like the pavilion to resemble a teaching facility more than an open air shelter.

Boardmember Trippler suggested some sort of temporary, moveable partition walls be considered for the shelter to make it more useable in inclement weather.

Chair Perkins stated the city has the opportunity to take advantage of solar and wind on this property. He recommended the restrooms be moved closer to the pavilion and questioned if a septic or compostable toilet should be considered for cost purposes. In addition, he stated the city could consider a rainwater catching system to provide water for the facility/sprinklers.

Mr. Monahan thanked the board for their feedback on this project.

5.-3 NRCB Updates

Attachments: BWS Monument Sign

Mr. Monahan provided the board with an update on the following projects:

Blaine Wetland Sanctuary Monument Sign
The sign has been completed except for lighting and landscaping around the sign that will happen this spring.

Boardmember Truchon requested pollinator friendly and native plantings be installed around the monument sign. She believed this would be a good demonstration on the city's part for Blaine residents. Mr. Monahan stated this was a great idea.

Boardmember Genet recommended native plantings be the default for plantings around city signs.

2022 - 2026 Open Space Capital Improvement Budget
Adopted by the City Council as recommended by the NRCB. The City Council has requested a future workshop discussion in regards to the Pioneer Park Tree Project.

Branch 3 and Site 7 Wetland Bank Amendments at Blaine Wetland Sanctuary
Staff is working with the state agencies on amending the wetland banks to allow for trails. Once wetland banks are amended staff will begin the process of hiring a consultant to update the future trail connections throughout the Blaine Wetland Sanctuary.

NRCB Speaker Series
The board has asked for a discussion on having an ongoing educational speaker series and where it could be hosted.

Boardmember Genet suggested the series begin as part of the NRCB meetings and go from there. She suggested the board consider having speakers come in quarterly.

Boardmember Truchon stated once the pavilion is built, this would be a great space for educational speakers. She indicated a great speaker in the community would be Jason Husveth.

Chair Perkins recommended this topic come back to the board on a monthly basis for continued discussion and planning.

Lochness Park Rare Grass & Lexington Cove Outlot
Staff provided an update from the discussion brought up at the January NRCB Meeting.

Adjournment

Chair Perkins adjourned the meeting at 8:15PM.