



City of Blaine Anoka County, Minnesota Minutes

Blaine City Hall
10801 Town Sq Dr NE
Blaine MN 55449

Nat'l Resources Conservation Board

The Mayor has signed a declaration allowing members of the council, staff, and the public to attend meetings remotely via Zoom due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Public comment options prior to the meeting must be received by noon on April 20. Email comments to: nmonahan@blainemn.gov or 763-785-6151.

Zoom is for members of the public who want to comment remotely during the meeting on an agenda item. Join Zoom Webinar at <https://blainemn.zoom.us/j/96645088266>

Ways to watch if not commenting on an agenda item: BlaineMN.gov/Video or North Metro TV on Comcast, Apple TV, or Roku

Questions? Email - Communications@BlaineMN.gov

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 open 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, January 19, 2021

7:00 PM
Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, city meetings will be held as virtual meetings until further notice.

1. Call To Order

The meeting was called to order at 7:00PM. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic this hybrid meeting was held virtually.

2. Roll Call

Others Present: Water Resources Manager Rebecca Haug, and Recreation Manager Nate Monahan.

Present: 8 - Villella, Rafferty, Perkins, Truchon, Genet, Theisen, Vedi, and Tripper

Absent: 3 - Chair McKinley, Panning, and Syed

3. Approval of Minutes**3.-1****APPROVAL OF THE OCTOBER 20, 2020 NRCB
MINUTES**

Attachments: [10-20-20 nrcb](#)

Boardmember Truchon stated she was marked absent at this meeting, but noted she had listened to the entire meeting after not being able to log in. Ms. Haug explained she would speak with the City Clerk to see how to handle this matter.

MOVED by Boardmember Rafferty, seconded by Boardmember Trippler to approve the minutes of the October 20, 2020 Board Meeting as presented.

A roll call vote was taken. Motion carried unanimously.

Aye: 8 - Villella, Rafferty, Perkins, Truchon, Genet, Theisen, Vedi, and Tripper

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

MOVED by Boardmember Rafferty, seconded by Boardmember Trippler to approve the January 19, 2021 Board Agenda.

A roll call vote was taken. Motion carried unanimously.

4. Open Forum for Citizen Input

No one appeared to address the NRCB.

5. New Business**1.-2****RECOMMENDATION TO APPROVE NRCB 2021 GOALS**

Mr. Monahan reviewed the 2021 goals with the NRCB. He explained many of the items on the list were carried over from 2020 due to the pandemic. He commented on the development of the BWS structure at the Lexington Avenue parking lot. It was noted the City still needs sponsorship for three of the interpretive signs within the BWS. The continued efforts within the BWS and Pioneer Park were described at length with the Board and staff recommended approval of the 2021 goals.

Boardmember Rafferty supported the Board doing park tours again in 2021.

Boardmember Truchon stated she would be happy to report on one of the City's parks.

Boardmembers Theisen and Villella supported the Board completing park tours as well.

Boardmember Tripler stated he would be comfortable completing park tours after he receives a vaccination, or completing the tour alone and not in a large group.

Boardmember Genet suggested each Boardmember complete a park tour alone this year, due to COVID-19. Ms. Haug stated staff has a list from previous years and the Boardmembers could revisit the parks they have visited in the past. She indicated staff could make a cheat sheet as well for each park.

Chair Perkins supported staff completing a cheat sheet for each park as this would assist the Boardmembers in completing a park tour. Ms. Haug reported staff could complete the inspection on the BWS, due to the sheer size of this park.

MOVED by Boardmember Truchon, seconded by Boardmember Rafferty, to approve the NRCB 2021 Goals as discussed.

A roll call vote was taken. Motion carried unanimously.

Aye: 8 - Villella, Rafferty, Perkins, Truchon, Genet, Theisen, Vedi, and Tripper

1.-1

NRCB UPDATES

Attachments: [2021 - 2025 Open Space CIP Budget](#)
 [BWS Southern Portion Restoration](#)
 [Main St Wetland Mitigation Bank](#)

Mr. Monahan updated the NRCB on the following:

2021 - 2025 Open Space Capital Improvement Fund Budget

Mr. Monahan reported the Open Space CIF budget was approved by the City Council on December 21, 2020. The City Council directed additional funding as a placeholder for future trails in 2022 - 2025. Staff is currently working on hiring a consultant for the Sunrise Ponds trail and continuing to finalize details with SRF consultant on the entrance sign for the BWS on Lexington Avenue. The structure at the BWS will be brought forward to a future City Council Workshop for discussion on how to proceed.

Boardmember Truchon discussed how the City had to agree with the Army Corps of Engineers and other state agencies that the City would guarantee its budget until 2029. She questioned if the City had placeholders in place for the budget. Ms. Haug reported this was a requirement with the Army

Corps of Engineers and the City had placeholders within the budget to show the City's long-term commitment to the BWS.

Blaine Wetland Sanctuary Southern Portion Restoration

Ms. Haug explained restoration activities are underway in the southern portion of the Blaine Wetland Sanctuary. The weather has allowed for the haul roads and staging areas throughout the site. Tree cutting and chipping started on January 4, 2021. Work in the buffer areas began on January 11, 2021. The devastation of the impact from the Emerald Ash borer beetle is very evident throughout the site. The contractor will remove the dead and diseased ash trees throughout the BWS this winter.

The biggest challenge for the contractor has been from the public using the site to walk, bike, and snowshoe. The city has installed signs stating "Wetland Habitat Restoration No public Access" at North Oaks Park and at the project access on 109th as people were using the area as a parking lot. Residents are also using the haul road to the northern portion as a trail so additional signs will be going up along the trail in the northern portion requesting the public to stay on designated trails. The operators of the tree cutting and chipping machines cannot always see people since their equipment is so large. The contractor is hoping to have the southern portion work and the ash tree removals complete at the BWS by early March. All work is weather dependent. Additional work at the BWS such as herbicide applications and prescribed burns will continue on a regular basis at the site every year.

Boardmember Genet discussed how many people were snowshoeing through the BWS this winter.

Boardmember Truchon commented on the EAB concerns within the BWS. She questioned if it would be of benefit to get the neighbors educated and involved. Ms. Haug stated there would be value in this. She suggested the City also work with the conservation district to see if there was funding available for cost share with the neighbors that have been impacted by EAB. She reported the contractor has spoken to some of the neighboring homeowners and offered to help neighbors identify what tree species were on their property.

Boardmember Truchon suggested identification information also be placed on the City's website.

Chair Perkins recommended a brochure be created as well.

Boardmember Genet suggested QR codes be placed within the park to provide the general public with the most up to date information on plants and plant identification.

Proposed Main Street Wetland Mitigation Bank

Ms. Haug reported the city submitted a conceptual mitigation plan for the Main Street Wetland Mitigation Bank to the regulatory agencies this past

summer. The regulatory agencies are the Coon Creek Watershed District, MN Board of Water and Soil Resources, MN Department of Natural Resources and the Army Corps of Engineers. The agencies reviewed the concept mitigation plan and submitted comments to the city. The consensus from the agencies is the project is viable to be permitted as a wetland bank.

The project goal is to return a portion of wetland in Pioneer Park to its original condition, before it was impacted by historic ditching, encroachment of invasive or weedy species, or the suppression of natural processes that once naturally maintained wetland habitats and diversity.

To achieve this objective within a portion of Pioneer Park, a variety of wetland restoration methods will be used. The changes that can be expected to see are the removal of dead, diseased, or weedy tree species (i.e. green ash with emerald ash borer, box elder, aspen), removal of non-native shrub species (i.e. common and glossy buckthorn), removal of weedy grasses (i.e. reed canary grass), the use of mechanical equipment such as mowers, targeted herbicide application, seeding of native species, and the use of prescribed fire. All of these methods will help bring back the natural functions and diversity of the Pioneer Park wetland system.

The revenue generated through wetland banking projects is used by the city for improving, maintaining, and augmenting our parks, trails, and open spaces. The next step in the process is to meet with the city council and determine if a formal wetland bank application should be prepared and submitted for consideration by the regulatory agencies. The process of establishing a wetland bank is lengthy and there will be ample time for residents to provide comments on the project prior to the start of any restoration work. The current plan does not include any restoration work to the east side of the existing trail within Pioneer Park and does not include the entire park area. The plan does include an additional boardwalk along the western side of the wetland restoration area.

Boardmember Truchon asked if any neighborhood meetings have been held. Ms. Haug stated neighborhood meetings have not been held. She explained staff was wading through the application process and for Council direction prior to moving forward with neighborhood meetings.

Boardmember Truchon requested the NRCB continue to meet even if there are items that do not require a vote. She believed this would keep the Boardmembers connected and able to discuss and plan for future items.

Boardmember Tripler stated if staff needed feedback from the Board it

would be good for the group to meet otherwise, he did not believe it was necessary to hold meetings to see if there were items to talk about.

Chair Perkins explained he could check in with the Boardmembers to see if there were items to discuss prior to canceling future meetings. The Board supported this recommendation.

Ms. Haug reported she would be presenting information on the City's wetland bank at the February 1, 2021 workshop meeting. She invited the Boardmembers to attend if interested.

Boardmember Genet encouraged staff to keep neighbors informed this winter when trees will be cut down within the BWS.

Adjournment

MOVED by Boardmember Trippler, seconded by Boardmember Genet to adjourn the meeting at 7:47PM.

A roll call vote was taken. The motion carried unanimously.

Aye: 8 - Villella, Rafferty, Perkins, Truchon, Genet, Theisen, Vedi, and Tripper