



City of Blaine

Natural Resource Conservation Board

March 19, 2024 | 7:00 PM
Blaine City Hall
10801 Town Square Drive NE
Blaine, MN 55449

MINUTES

1. Call to Order

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

2. Roll Call

Present – Chair Rafferty, Boardmembers Anderson, Genet (arrived at 7:13PM), Panning, Truchon.

Others Present: Stormwater Coordinator Megan Hedstrom.

3. Approval of Minutes

- 3.1. 2024-698 Approval of NRCB Minutes for November 21, 2023
Sponsors: Megan Hedstrom, Stormwater Coordinator

Boardmember Anderson requested a change to the minutes on Page 3, under Item 5.2 that Army Corps of Engineers be corrected.

MOVED by Boardmember Truchon, seconded by Boardmember Panning, to approve the minutes of the November 21, 2023 board meeting as amended.

Motion carried unanimously.

4. Open Forum for Citizen Input

No one appeared to address the NRCB.

5. New Business

5.1. 2024-699 Blaine Wetland Sanctuary Consultant for Wetland Bank and Trail Development
Sponsors: Megan Hedstrom, Stormwater Coordinator

Stormwater Coordinator Hedstrom provided the Board with an update on the latest progress on finalizing the hiring of a consultant once agreements are made with the regulatory agencies for the Blaine Wetland Sanctuary Wetland Bank and Trail Development. She explained staff has been working for the past year to get approvals in place. She reported the city was struggling to meet the metrics within the wet meadow area. She explained consultants would be attending the April NRCB meeting to provide the Board with further information.

Boardmember Panning stated the Board requested to review the RFP and RFP responses at past meetings and this did not occur. She questioned what consultant the city has been working with. Ms. Hedstrom explained staff has been working with BWSR, the watershed district and the Army Corps of Engineers.

Boardmember Panning commented on how it was unfortunate that there had been delays in the work within the wetland sanctuary because this has led to the spread of some unwanted species. She stated she looked forward to hearing from the consultants in April.

Boardmember Truchon noted the city's wetland credits were currently frozen. Ms. Hedstrom reported this was the case. She indicated once a workplan was in place and a contractor on board the credits could be opened by BWSR for some sales. She explained the Army Corps certified credits would be held until a monitoring report was delivered, which would occur in the fall.

Boardmember Anderson supported staff having consultants attending the April NRCB meeting for discussion purposes. Ms. Hedstrom stated she was hoping to have a contract executed in May in order to have work beginning in June.

Boardmember Genet asked when the city last did any invasive control in the wetland sanctuary. Ms. Hedstrom stated maintenance last occurred in the spring of 2023, noting a brief herbicide treatment was conducted.

Boardmember Genet indicated a lot of time has been lost and the invasive species would have spread over the past year.

Boardmember Truchon questioned if the city of Blaine would depend on the consultants or would there be a staff person that would have biology knowledge. Ms. Hedstrom explained the 2024 budget did not include the hiring of another staff person to oversee this project.

Boardmember Andreson inquired if the county had a staff member that could assist with this work. Ms. Hedstrom stated the Anoka County Conservation District has some staff with knowledge on this topic and they have been helpful to the city.

Boardmember Anderson recommended a representative from the Anoka County Conservation District be invited to attend the April NRCB meeting.

5.2. 2024-700

NRCB Updates

Sponsors: Megan Hedstrom, Stormwater Coordinator

Ms. Hedstrom provided the board with an update on the following items:

Honoring Dottie McKinley - Staff was investigating ways to honor Dottie McKinley, noting Boardmember McKinley passed in January after a battle with cancer. She reported a memorial bench would be placed in the community in her honor.

Boardmember Truchon recommended the memorial bench be placed in Pioneer Park.

Appointments and Reappointments of Board Members - Staff explained reappointments to the NRCB would be made in April. She noted Boardmembers Truchon and Rafferty had reapplied for their positions.

Boardmember Genet explained she missed the window to reapply for the Board as she was on vacation.

Volunteer Opportunities - Staff was promoting Earth Day volunteer opportunities noting clean up events would be held in April and May. She commented on her cleanup plans for Hidden Ponds Park.

Boardmember Genet suggested trail cleanups also be included in the Earth Day volunteer opportunities. Ms. Hedstrom thanked Boardmember Genet for this great suggestion and stated she would speak with the parks department regarding this idea.

Boardmember Truchon supported staffs plans for Hidden Ponds Park as the cleanup efforts would assist in improving the water quality of the pond. She recommended early events be planned going forward for Hidden Ponds Park.

Boardmember Genet questioned when the garlic mustard would be pulled. Ms. Hedstrom hoped to have this work completed in mid to late May.

BWS Buckthorn Biochar Project - Staff provided the Board with information on how a biochar product could assist with filtering phosphorous and e coli out of the water column. She explained several watershed districts were monitoring the use of this product and the results have been promising. She commented on how Great River Greening completed the burning of buckthorn in biochar kilns within the BWS. It was noted the material generated from the burn has been spread back into the watershed area. Based on the success of the first event, she anticipated future burns would occur within the BWS.

Boardmember Anderson asked if there were better times of the year than others to remove buckthorn. Ms. Hedstrom stated the late fall and winter was the best time to remove buckthorn because there were fewer berries. She commented on how the burning of buckthorn within the biochar kilns was so hot that all matter was destroyed and the buckthorn could not be spread.

Signage at Lochness Park Updated Signage - Staff provided an update on the proposed signage for the Aristada Longispica, which was an endangered species found in Lochness Park. She reported seeds have been harvested from the site and seeds have been replanted within this park. She noted the replanting has been really successful. She thanked the public works department for their assistance with the project. She stated the Anoka County Conservation District has funding available for the signs.

Boardmember Genet commented on the information that would be included on the sign regarding the sand plain.

Rain Garden Signage - Staff commented on the proposed rain garden signage that was being pursued by staff. She noted the city was contracting with Metro Blooms on this project.

Boardmember Truchon stated she would like to discuss a potential sign near the BWS boardwalk to inform people of the importance of the wetland bank. She commented on how there was a lot of trash, cigarette butts and wrappers surrounding the boardwalk. She reviewed potential statements that be made on the sign to encourage residents to pick up after themselves. She suggested volunteers be pursued to cleanup around the boardwalk in May.

Boardmember Genet commented on how putting language in economic terms may make the wetland bank more valuable and respected to the public. She stated she was discouraged by the amount of dog waste and garbage in the wetland.

Boardmember Panning suggested the proposed sign be an eagle scout project.

Chair Rafferty supported this recommendation noting there was a small kiosk sign at Laddie Lake Park that was an eagle scout project.

Boardmember Anderson suggested the recommendations regarding this sign be forwarded to staff.

Boardmember Truchon passed along her notes and recommendations to Ms. Hedstrom.

Chair Rafferty asked if the city still had the park ranger program in place. Ms. Hedstrom stated she would speak with the parks department regarding this program.

Laddie Lake Park Improvements - Staff explained the shelters at Laddie Lake Park had been removed. She commented further on the improvements that would occur within this park, which included the removal of the ash trees in the park. She stated potential prairie restoration work was also being considered for 2025.

Boardmember Truchon supported the city pursuing prairie restoration work within Laddie Lake Park.

No Mow May - Staff discussed the managed native lawnscape statute that was approved by the State of Minnesota, noting native landscapes would now be allowed over an entire yard

and not just in a controlled bed in the rear yard. She explained staff would be launching this new ordinance in May versus pursuing a formal "No Mow May".

Boardmember Anderson questioned if the city could be more restrictive than State Statute to not allow non-native species within the native lawns. Ms. Hedstrom explained this question was asked of the legal team and staff was told the city could not be more restrictive. She reported the code enforcement team would like these areas to be delineated in order to manage creep.

Boardmember Truchon asked how the city defines natural landscaping. Ms. Hedstrom described how State Statute and the city define natural landscaping.

Boardmember Truchon suggested only native plantings be recommended. Ms. Hedstrom explained the city can recommend native species be planted, but could not require. She stated she would forward the draft ordinance language to the Board once it was complete.

Boardmember Genet thanked staff for their efforts on the new ordinance. She recommended the application process not be overly onerous.

Boardmember Anderson anticipated this ordinance could lead to disagreements between neighbors because there would be those who want to maintain their Kentucky blue grass while others would be pursuing native lawns.

Native Turf Conversion Locations - Staff explained the city would be pursuing grant opportunities for additional native turf conversions. She requested the Board provide her with ideas on where native turf conversions could occur throughout the community in open spaces or city parks.

6. Adjournment

Chair Rafferty adjourned the meeting at 8:35PM.