



City of Blaine

Natural Resource Conservation Board

January 21, 2025 | 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 – Boardmembers Anderson, Dahl, Panning, Truchon.

Absent – Chair Rafferty.

Others Present: Stormwater Coordinator Megan Hedstrom.

3. Approval of Minutes

- 3.1. 2025-15 Approval of October 15, 2024 NRCB Minutes
Sponsors: Megan Hedstrom, Stormwater Coordinator

Boardmember Truchon requested a change to the minutes under Item 6.1, noting her comment should reflect when the open space plan was created after the 2020 comp plan was adopted the goal of the city was to reach a population of 70,000 residents. She explained this goal has been changed to 90,000 residents and she believed further discussions should be held regarding the open space in the northeast corner of Blaine.

Boardmember Anderson recommended under Item 6.1, under the motion on the same page, that BWS be changed to Blaine Wetland Sanctuary for clarity purposes.

Boardmember Anderson suggested under Item 6.3, he recommended Board be capitalized.

MOVED by Boardmember Truchon, seconded by Boardmember Dahl, to approve the minutes of the October 15, 2024 board meeting as amended.

Motion carried unanimously.

4. Approval of Agenda

The agenda was approved as presented.

5. Open Forum for Citizen Input

No one appeared to address the NRCB.

6. New Business

- 6.1.** 2025-16 Contract with ISG for Monitoring and Maintenance Planning for the Blaine Wetland Sanctuary Wetland Bank (Site 7)
Sponsors: Megan Hedstrom, Stormwater Coordinator

Stormwater Coordinator Hedstrom stated Council approved a contract on December 2, 2024 with ISG for monitoring and maintenance planning and review for the Blaine Wetland Sanctuary Wetland Bank, in the amount of \$111,125. Council originally authorized a contract for completion of restoration work with the goal of generating wetland credits at the March 20th, 2014 meeting. This project is focused in the Blaine Wetland Sanctuary, specifically the Site 7 Wetland area located near the current trail system. A wetland bank was then established with regulatory authorities and restoration efforts began in 2014. The original contractor completed restoration work through 2022 ultimately assisting the city in generating 39 out of a possible 81 credits. Conversations with the Army Corps of Engineers and the Board of Water and Soil Resources have continued since that time and a request for proposal was sent out to solicit a new proposal for future restoration planning in the Blaine Wetland Sanctuary at the Site 7 Wetland Bank.

Ms. Hedstrom explained two proposals were received and deemed complete, varying from an annual average total of \$22,575 per year to \$48,209 per year. ISG Inc submitted a proposal deemed complete by staff for a total of \$27,475 for start up and monitoring in 2025, and \$21,350 for management and monitoring in 2026-2029. The proposal includes evaluation of the current status of Site 7 and completion of a work plan for future restoration efforts to continue making progress towards generating the remaining 41 wetland bank credits. Once a restoration plan has been provided by the consultant, the city will competitively bid this plan with restoration experts to be completed. If this consulting contract is approved, a future contract will be brought forward by staff prior to the completion of any restoration efforts on site. This project is proposed to be funded through the Open Space Fund. The approved 2024 and the proposed 2025-2029 capital improvement budgets can adequately fund this proposal. By motion, the City Council authorized a contract with ISG in the amount of \$111,125 for maintenance of the Blaine Wetland Sanctuary. In addition, authorize a 10% contingency to bring the total project budget to \$122,237.50 and authorize the City Manager or their designee to sign all change orders up to the authorized project budget amount. Staff noted she has the comments from the Board and explained this contract would kick off tomorrow noting a teams meeting

would be held at 12:45PM.

- 6.2.** 2025-17 Contract with Stantec for Professional Design Service for the Blaine Wetland Sanctuary Trail Development Project
 Sponsors: Megan Hedstrom, Stormwater Coordinator

Ms. Hedstrom stated City Council approved on December 2, 2024 a contract for Professional Services for preliminary design and preparation plans and specifications for construction of the Blaine Wetland Sanctuary Trail Development Project. The Engineering Department has received proposals for the development of a preliminary design followed by plans and specifications for the construction of additional trail system throughout the Blaine Wetland Sanctuary. The preliminary proposed route can be seen on the attached Proposed Trail System drawing. This plan is subject to change based on preliminary design investigation, funding, and community input.

Ms. Hedstrom explained the city received 4 proposals from local consultants for this project ranging from \$89,000 to \$339,812.50 for the preliminary design and production of plans and specifications. Stantec has provided the proposal in the amount of \$89,000. Staff has reviewed the submitted proposal and determined that the fees are justified and reasonable. After completion of the preliminary design and of the plans and specifications, a contract for construction would then be ordered to bid by the City of Blaine. Final project costs would be brought to Council during this process for final approval. Depending on timing and workload, construction administration is planned to be handled in house by staff. This project is proposed to be funded through the Open Space Fund. The approved 2024 capital improvement budget can adequately fund this proposal.

Ms. Hedstrom reported the contract, including contingencies for engineering services as proposed, is within the approved 2024-2025 consulting budget of the proposed project. This project was previously identified in the 2024-2028 Capital Improvement Program as "Blaine Wetland Sanctuary Trail Development", which was adopted by the City Council via resolution 23-207 on December 18, 2023. The 2024 CIP includes \$1,000,000 for consulting services and for Phase 1 construction. If this consulting contract is approved, Phase 1 construction costs will then be identified in 2025 once plans and specifications have been developed and competitively bid. Additional consulting, construction, and contingency costs for future phases after preliminary planning work is completed will be reviewed with Council during the Open Space Fund capital budget discussions for the 2026 budget preparation.

Ms. Hedstrom explained by motion, the City Council authorized to enter into a contract with Stantec in the amount of \$89,000 for preliminary design and preparation of plans and specifications for the Blaine Wetland Sanctuary Trail Development project. In addition, authorize a 10% contingency to bring the total project budget to \$97,900 and authorize the City Manager or their designee to sign all change orders up to the authorized project budget amount.

Boardmember Truchon inquired if all of the trails would be boardwalk. Ms. Hedstrom commented on how gravel could be brought in for the the upland areas, which would be a great cost savings measure for the City.

Boardmember Panning questioned how many ash trees would have to be removed from the upland area. Ms. Hedstrom noted there were a couple of large dead trees in the southern portion that would remain for habitat, but explained the significant sized dead trees would be removed for safety purposes.

Boardmember Anderson asked if the City would be hiring a forester. Ms. Hedstrom reported this was the case, noting the City Council approved the hire of a City Forester in 2025.

Further discussion ensued regarding the potential need for a burn within the Blaine Wetland Sanctuary for safety purposes and the need for parking on the south side.

Boardmember Panning stated she was disappointed with the fact these trails were not in place before the surrounding houses were built. She believed there was enough upland for trails to be put in place.

Boardmember Truchon questioned if a spoil pile had to be put in near the parking lot or could the dirt be taken off site. Ms. Hedstrom indicated she did not see the need for any large piling areas from the watershed for the ditch along this specific section.

Boardmember Truchon requested the previous trail alignment be reconsidered. She did not believe it made sense to put a boardwalk through the center of the wetland, but rather wanted to see the trail go around the wetland. Ms. Hedstrom stated she could run the numbers for the trail using upland versus the wetland so see if there is a cost savings going to the west.

Boardmember Anderson commented he understood the City already had BWSR and Corp of Engineer approval for the proposed alignment and a different alignment would require new approvals. Ms. Hedstrom explained this was the case. However, she noted if there was a cost savings, this was a conversation that could be revisited.

Boardmember Anderson recalled that when the Board toured the Site 7 area and walked the boardwalk, that the alignment was staked with lathe, which meant the alignment had already been determined. He asked how private properties could be located within the 50 foot easement of ditch. Ms. Hedstrom explained the homes along the west side of Okinawa have a significant drainage and utility easement for the 50 foot conservation easement. She commented on how code enforcement staff would be visiting these properties to ensure gardens and landscaping was not creeping into this easement.

Ms. Hedstrom reviewed several photos of the views from the proposed trail alignment noting the trail would provide a remote and interesting trail user experience. She noted the trail was a nice distance from the adjacent homes, which was a priority for the City.

Boardmember Anderson discussed how the new trails would provide connections between the new housing subdivisions with the existing trail systems. He asked if staff would be assisting with the project inhouse. Ms. Hedstrom reported Brent Anderson would be assisting with this project for the City.

Ms. Hedstrom provided the Board with an update on the following projects:

Reappointments - The City Council would be considering reappointments at their January 22 workshop meeting.

Volunteer Opportunities - Staff would be meeting with weed management on February 10 and there would be an Anoka Conservation meeting in late February in order to discuss spring volunteer projects.

Hidden Ponds Park Buckthorn Clearing - Staff reported public works has been removing buckthorn in Hidden Ponds Park.

Approved 2025-2029 Open Space Fund - Staff reviewed the proposed open space budget noting a request was made from the Council to further review the proposed trail numbers. The Commission supported further discussions regarding the preservation of open space before the entire City is developed. Boardmember Anderson recalled that the Board made a motion to appropriate funding for 2026, 2027 and 2028 for this purpose. Ms. Hedstrom reported this may have been the case, but noted the Council did not support another expenditure until better understanding the actual trail costs.

Annual Schedule - Staff reviewed the proposed meeting scheduled for 2025, noting a meeting may be held in March.

Boardmember Anderson stated bench had been installed at Pioneer Park in memory of Dottie McKinley, which was very appreciated by Dottie's family and friends.

7. Adjournment

Boardmember Anderson adjourned the meeting at 8:17PM.