



City of Blaine

Natural Resource Conservation Board

March 18, 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 – Chair Rafferty, Boardmembers Anderson, Panning and Truchon.

Absent – Boardmember Dahl.

Others Present: Recreation Manager Nate Monahan, Engineer Brent Larson, and Senior Parks and Recreation Manager Jerome Krieger.

3. Approval of Agenda

The agenda was approved as amended adding the discussion of an Eagle Scout Project for Eric Rust prior to Item 6.1.

4. Approval of Minutes

- 4.1.** 2025-121 Approval of January 21, 2025 NRCB Minutes.
Sponsors: Nate Monahan, Recreation Manager

Boardmember Anderson requested a change to the minutes under Item 6.1 in the first paragraph, noting the reference should be to 42 wetland credits.

MOVED by Boardmember Anderson, seconded by Boardmember Panning, to approve the minutes of the January 21, 2025 board meeting as amended.

Motion carried unanimously.

5. Open Forum for Citizen Input

No one appeared to address the NRCB.

6. New Business

Recreation Manager Monahan asked that Eric Rust come forward at this time to discuss his Eagle Scout project with the Board.

Eric Rust explained for his Eagle Scout project he was interested in constructing 20 wood duck houses that would be installed around the city's wetlands and ponds. He reported the wood duck houses would provide housing every year for wood duck hens and their babies, while also welcoming migratory forms of wildlife that will consistently come back year after year. He stated the wood duck houses would be easy to monitor and maintain. He provided further information on how the wood duck houses would be maintained in the winter months. He reported the benefits of the wood duck houses would be to welcome wood ducks to the community, while providing a touch of nature to the community. He explained if the city supported his project, his next steps would be to define the locations for the wood duck houses, after which time he would construct and prep the wood duck houses for installation. He reported he was hoping to complete this project by May 22.

Mr. Monahan stated staff has met with Mr. Rust and have come up with 10 locations for the wood duck houses. He stated staff was looking forward to hearing from the boardmembers on other locations that should be considered for the wood duck houses.

Boardmember Anderson commended Mr. Rust for his efforts. He requested further information regarding the current wood duck population in the Twin Cities. Mr. Rust explained that every year the wood duck population in the metro area depends on rainfall, pressure and fly ways. He discussed how the fly ways now spread the metro area, which was pushing the birds further and further away from development. It was his hope the proposed houses would bring wood ducks to the woodland areas in Blaine.

Boardmember Anderson asked if Mr. Rust would be documenting the success of the wood duck houses. Mr. Rust explained he hoped to monitor the wood duck houses noting he did not anticipate the houses would be used this year, but that hens would find them in 2026.

Boardmember Anderson inquired if the wood duck houses would only be installed near wetlands or if they could also be installed near infiltration basins. Mr. Monahan explained the wood duck houses could be installed near wetlands or infiltration basins.

Boardmember Truchon stated there may be more food resources near wetland ponds. She thanked Mr. Rust for bringing this project forward in Blaine. She commented on how important these houses would be in order to maintain the wood duck population in Blaine.

The board supported this Eagle Scout project moving forward.

- 6.1.** 2025-122 Presentation of the Blaine Wetland Sanctuary Conceptual trail system development by Stantec Consulting Firm
Sponsors: Nate Monahan, Recreation Manager

Recreation Manager Monahan stated a representative from Stantec Consulting Firm was in attendance to present on the Blaine Wetland Sanctuary Trail System Development.

Jacob Berstaller, Stantec, provided the board with a presentation on the Blaine Wetland Sanctuary Trail System Development. He explained the final alignments would take advantage of the upland areas while also having boardwalk and aggregate trails, while protecting significant plant communities. He commented further on Phases 1, 2, 3 and 4 of the trail development, which consisted of 2.3 miles of trails.

Boardmember Truchon asked if the county ditch would be impacted. Mr. Berstaller stated the impacts were reviewed with the county and Stantec would be working with the watershed district to update the delineations. He reviewed with the board the location of the private and public ditches.

Boardmember Anderson commented on how close the ditch was to the the New Horizon development along 109th Avenue. He asked if code enforcement staff had investigated to see if there were any encroachments into the easement. He inquired if this work were to proceed, would the watershed district be responsible for maintaining the county ditch system.

Boardmember Truchon reported the county ditch system was maintained by the Rice Creek Watershed District.

Boardmember Anderson recommended ditch maintenance be done now prior to the installation of the proposed trails and boardwalks. Mr. Berstaller stated he could discuss this matter with the watershed district at their next meeting.

Mr. _____ explained in his last discussions with the watershed district he understood they had enough room for maintenance to occur. He reported this project would be done in phases with Phases 1 and 2 being bid at the same time, and Phase 3 being an alternate. He stated if pricing allows, Phase 3 would be constructed along with Phases 1 and 2. He indicated Phase 4 would be constructed at a future date, but the design plans would be completed for the entire project.

Boardmember Anderson thanked Stantec for coordinating with the watershed district. He asked if Stantec had an idea of the difference in cost between doing a boardwalk versus gravel. Mr. Berstaller stated the cost difference was significant. He estimated a gravel trail was \$100 to \$120 per linear foot for a 10 foot wide trail. He indicated he would be leaving the bids open for the boardwalk trail portions, noting these portions could be constructed out of precast concrete or metal framing with wood decking, and would cost anywhere from \$650 to \$1,000 per linear foot.

Boardmember Anderson thanked the Stantec staff for taking advantage of the upland areas for the proposed trail segments as this would assist with managing costs for this project.

Boardmember Truchon commented on how the boardwalk construction would have to follow Army Corp of Engineer standards. Mr. Berstaller explained these requirements had been built into the proposed plans.

Boardmember Truchon discussed how the board on the original boardwalk required repair and maintenance. She anticipated composite boards may be cheaper in the long run for the boardwalks. Mr. Berstaller explained the upcoming phases would pursue a precast concrete boardwalk or a treated yellow pine, as was used in Phase 1. He indicated a composite board would cost two to three times more than the treated yellow pine. He reported he could request a bid alternate for composite decking boards.

Senior Parks and Recreation Manager Krieger reported the city was trying to do this project right, while also being cognizant of the price. He commented on all of the work he has had to do on his personal deck due to the clay soils surrounding his home. He indicated he finally had to go with helical piers in order to ensure the posts were not heaving.

Chair Rafferty asked if the budget for this project had changed. Mr. Monahan explained the City had \$1 million earmarked for this project, but noted a budget amendment could be submitted to the council for this project if the price comes in higher.

Boardmember Anderson questioned if the entire trail would be handicap accessible. Mr. Berstaller reported all trail grades would be under 5% in order to ensure the trails were handicap accessible.

Boardmember Truchon stated she has experienced people on all different types of motorized vehicles on the trails, which included a four-wheeler, a motorized bike and electric bikes. She stated she was not opposed to this, but she anticipated these vehicles were harder on the trails than pedestrians. Mr. Krieger stated electric bikes could be used on trails if under a certain speed. He added that the new trails would also be able to support the use of a side-by-side on the trails in the event of a medical emergency.

Mr. Krieger reported the North Oaks West Park would be used as the staging area for the equipment needed for the trail improvement project.

Boardmember Anderson questioned if the viewing platforms would have benches. Mr. Krieger reported the viewing platforms would have benches and would provide for a turnaround area for the emergency use of side-by-sides.

Boardmember Anderson inquired if pan feet would be as durable as the helical piers. Mr. Berstaller reported the pan feet could withstand 6,000 pound loading.

Boardmember Truchon asked if differing soil conditions would determine what type of footing was used. Mr. Berstaller explained he would have more information after the geotechnical report was completed in the coming weeks but anticipated the pan feet would be a viable option.

Boardmember Truchon questioned which option was the most economical. Mr. Berstaller stated the pan feet were a more economical choice, but noted he would be putting out a bid

for both pan feet and helical piers with concrete.

Boardmember Anderson stated the proposed trail improvements would have impacts on the city's wetland credits and asked if this had been taken into consideration by staff. Mr. Monahan explained because the city does not have a wetland bank in the southern portion. He reported the city would work to place trails on the upland areas wherever possible in order to reduce the impact on the wetlands.

Boardmember Panning stated she was thrilled to see this plan coming forward and she thanked staff and the consultants for all of their efforts on the proposed trail improvement plan.

6.2. 2025-123 NRCB Updates

Sponsors: Nate Monahan, Recreation Manager

Mr. Monahan provided the Board with an update on the following items:

- Volunteer Opportunities - Staff discussed upcoming volunteer events that the boardmembers could attend in the community. It was noted Earth Day groups were being formed at this time to assist with cleaning the city's parks and open spaces.
- ACD Grant Updates - The city was planning a brush removal event on an outlot with a wetland that was now owned by the city and ACD Grant funding would be used to cover the expense. Staff noted a prescribed burn would also be held if weather permits.
- Blaine Wetland Sanctuary 7 Site Wetland Bank Monitoring Update from ISG Consulting Firm - Staff would be meeting with ISG on March 19 along with BWSR and the Army Corp in order to finalize the spring monitoring plan. It was noted ISG would be in attendance at the August NRCB meeting to provide the board with an update.
- Summer Programs
- NRCB Board appointments

Boardmember Truchon stated she would support the city council pursuing a comprehensive storm water management plan for the city of Blaine. She anticipated the public would be more than willing to adopt a storm water drain on their street in order to better the community.

Boardmember Panning indicated she would be willing to look into this and help staff pull a program together that could be promoted to the public at Night to Unite.

Mr. Monahan reported public works staff does do a lot of pond and storm water maintenance throughout the city already. In addition, the city promotes how important it was to keep storm water drains free and clear of debris in the city's newsletters.

Mr. Larson stated this was a great idea and would be well received by the DNR. He indicated staff could look into what other cities were doing as well to address their overall comprehensive storm water maintenance plan.

The board supported bringing ideas back to the next NRCB meeting regarding a comprehensive water management plan.

7. Adjournment

Chair Rafferty adjourned the meeting at 8:35PM.