

**ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY BOARD
CITY OF RAMSEY
ANOKA COUNTY
STATE OF MINNESOTA**

On Monday, June 4, 2012, the Environmental Policy Board (EPB) met in the Mississippi River Conference Room at the Ramsey Municipal Center, 7550 Sunwood Drive N.W., Ramsey, Minnesota.

Members Present: Chairperson Michael Max
 Board Member Bob Bentz
 Board Member John Enstrom
 Board Member Thomas Stodola
 Board Member Michael Valentine

Members Absent: Board Member Michael Hiatt
 Board Member Larry Lewis

Also Present: Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator Chris Anderson

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Max called the meeting to order at 6:37 p.m.

2. CITIZEN INPUT

There was none.

3. APPROVE AGENDA

Motion by Board Member Valentine and seconded by Board Member Stodola to approve the agenda as submitted.

Motion carried. Voting Yes: Chairperson Max, Board Members Bentz, Enstrom, Stodola, and Valentine. Voting No: None. Absent: Board Members Hiatt and Lewis.

4. APPROVE MINUTES

4.01: Approve Meeting Minutes Dated May 7, 2012

Motion by Board Member Stodola and seconded by Board Member Valentine to approve the regular meeting minutes dated May 7, 2012.

Motion carried. Voting Yes: Chairperson Max, Board Members Bentz, Enstrom, Stodola, and Valentine. Voting No: None. Absent: Board Members Hiatt and Lewis.

5. POLICY BOARD BUSINESS

5.01: Consider 2012/2013 Work Plan

Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator Anderson presented the staff report. The City Council will review and ultimately approve the work plan after the Board finalizes the draft. He noted that strategic City Council goals for 2012 are included for the Board's information and that typically, the Board tries to address any items within the strategic goals that are applicable to its function. He reviewed strategic goals and commented that there is not a lot of overlap or crossover this year. He attempted to cover items in summary from last month and attached them to headers. He commented that the work plan should be reviewed and approved by the Board, with any necessary revisions, and then forwarded for City Council consideration.

Chairperson Max stated that he likes agenda items 4-9 and would like to add these to the Councils agenda.

Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator Anderson asked to explain these items further.

Chairperson Max stated that there are rules when a private developer is involved. He stated that a question is whether public space is held to these same standards. He gave an example of landscaping standards. He commented that the last few years have been challenging due to benign neglect as there has been a lack of influence on Council. He commented that he would like the opportunity for this Board to contribute and have a voice.

Board Member Enstrom stated that in the last several years there have been three Council Members overseeing this Board who are not involved now, which impacts having a connection.

Chairperson Max stated that City Council has frequent meetings and are very busy, so he is not faulting them.

Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator Anderson stated that in terms of standards, a City development project is subject to the same review process as if a private developer brought a project forward. In fact, the City is currently conducting sketch plan reviews for several areas within The COR, for properties owned by the City's HRA. As specific projects are brought forward, they are held to the same standards as any other project.

Board Member Bentz commented that the city should lead by example and not expect things from developers that they are not doing in their own standards. He noted that curbing and rain barrels are examples.

Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator Anderson stated that plans for this building were well under way prior to this Board's formation.

Board Member Bentz stated that the Board should maybe have a role in the development process to make these types of suggestions.

Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator stated that City Staff, as part of their normal review, does look for opportunities for stormwater BMPs, for example, and brings them to a developer's attention. These are only recommendations, not requirements. He continued by

saying that adding another layer of review to the development process would conflict with the City Council's goal of streamlining the overall review process.

Board Member Bentz stated that previously they were looking at costs involved with collecting rainwater that is deterred from the sewer.

Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator Anderson stated that there is a water and sewer study currently underway, which is showing that certain fees may be reduced to a degree. He stated that their goal is to reduce development fees where possible.

Board Member Valentine stated that developers he has spoken with find it appealing to develop in a green method. He asked if the city has a way to promote this with developers to attract them.

Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator Anderson stated that Allina made selections of what level they wanted to participate in green construction. He stated that the VA Clinic is attempting to get LEED certified.

Chairperson Max stated that a developer used to serve on this Board and he stated that what really helps is to make the rules clear and consistent. Chairperson Max stated that he would not like to see a lot of rules and regulations added. He questioned who would police all of the mandates if several are added.

Board Member Valentine suggested having the tools available for those who are interested.

Chairperson Max suggested having some standards to encourage developers but not have as a mandate.

Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator Anderson asked if there is a suggestion to add to this topic to the work plan.

Board Member Valentine commented that if the development standards are the same for residential and commercial there should not be a need.

Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator Anderson stated that development standards are not the same for instance, when a trail is being developed.

Board Member Bentz stated that a graded area should have maintenance requirements. He stated that tall weeds should not be allowed to grow. He referred to an area across the street.

Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator Anderson stated that PSD and the City periodically mow down the weeds. Also, the city works with the banks who own a lot of lots in some of the stalled residential developments. The banks are taking responsibility of mowing 15-foot back from the curb so the lot maintains a somewhat manicured look. He reported that abatements are scheduled for properties that are not adequately maintained and the cost of the abatement is assessed against the property.

Chairperson Max suggested creating wording for the green idea.

Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator Anderson stated that the suggestion would be a package of ideas to encourage developers or to attract developers who are interested in green programs.

Board Member Valentine noted that he does not want to see mandates because then the city would have to enforce them. He suggested that it be used for marketing and education.

Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator Anderson commented that standards can be developed by the Board and incorporated into a brochure or handout that can promote this type of development.

Board Member Bentz commented that three packages could be listed that would show the benefits of using various combinations of window types and shingle types.

Chairperson Max stated that developers can get a green certificate and promote that to home buyers. He suggested they may be able to recoup additional costs as consumers will see this as a benefit.

Board Member Stodola stated that this was discussed in another venue and a suggestion was made that a financial incentive could be to reduce the amount paid for stormwater removal if rainwater is collected.

Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator Anderson again inquired if the Board would like to see this topic added to the work plan.

Board Member Stodola inquired whether research would be done at this point and specifics ironed out later.

Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator Anderson stated he thought that some of the standards could be determined and then look at how to distribute the information to developers.

It was the consensus of the Environmental Policy Board to add development of ecological standards and education to the work plan.

Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator Anderson commented that a rain garden is an idea for a demonstration project. He noted that Alpine Park would be an ideal setting for a rain garden. He added that the park is well used with the ball fields and thus the project would have higher visibility.

Chairperson Max asked about the power line situation. He asked if a prairie restoration could be done as a demonstration project under the power lines.

Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator Anderson stated that he was contacted by an individual that was trying to organize a comprehensive project to accomplish this. There seemed to be a lot of support from various individuals and organizations, including Great River Energy. He offered to get in touch with him again.

Chairperson Max suggested just using an area by a major road and creating a small prairie area to use for demonstration.

Board Member Valentine stated that he has several connections at Great River Energy and he suggested getting them involved to help spur the project along. He asked for the contact name so he can help out with the communication.

Board Member Enstrom commented that he is quite upset about the number of trees taken down with the power lines. He stated that there was no incentive to plant additional trees. He also added that Canada Thistle is supposed to be controlled according to State Statute. He commented that it is growing wildly and not being addressed. He stated that the Mayor is supposed to act as the Weed Inspector according to the statute.

Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator Anderson confirmed that the Board is comfortable with the wording and items added to the draft work plan. He commented that once the draft plan is finalized, it will go to City Council for discussion and consideration. Typically, this is done through a Work Session and he encouraged the Board to attend if possible. He stated that after the City Council has reviewed the draft work plan and are comfortable with it, the work plan would be added to a regular City Council meeting agenda for formal approval. He noted that the Environmental Policy Board is an advisory Board to City Council, so any revisions to the plan made by City Council do not need to be approved by the EPB at a subsequent meeting.

Motion by Board Member Stodola and seconded by Board Member Valentine to forward a draft of the 2012/2013 Work Plan to Council Member Backous and direct staff to schedule this topic for a City Council Work Session.

Motion carried. Voting Yes: Chairperson Max, Board Members Stodola, Valentine, Bentz, and Enstrom. Voting No: None. Absent: Board Members Hiatt and Lewis.

Board Member Bentz asked if a timeline can be assigned to this as it took many months to approve previously.

Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator Anderson stated that last year it was in place in July. He stated that he will communicate that it is a requirement of the EPB to have the work plan approved by City Council and that the current work plan runs through June.

6. BOARD / STAFF INPUT

- Used Motor Oil Collection

Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator Anderson stated that the City is looking into offering collection of used motor oil through East Side Oil Companies. This program would provide an opportunity for residents to drop off used oil, filters and antifreeze at no cost. He stated that he and the city attorney are working through some of the issues that were raised at the City Council meeting. He stated that East Side Oil Companies has agreed to participate in the city recycling events as well. He stated that he has spoken with Elk River and Sherburne County and they all had positive remarks about East Side Oil Companies and their program.

- July Meeting (July 2, 2012)

Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator Anderson noted that July 2 is the next scheduled meeting. He asked if the Board wanted to consider rescheduling due to the Independence Day holiday.

Board Member Stodola stated that he will out of town and unable to attend.

Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator Anderson stated that the meeting could be held on the 2nd as regularly scheduled as long as there would be a quorum.

Board Member Enstrom commented that he is unable to speak for that date this far in advance.

Chairperson Max asked when the City will be closed for the holiday.

Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator Anderson stated that it is just closed on July 4.

Consensus of the Board was to hold the July meeting on the regularly scheduled meeting date of July 2.

Board Member Enstrom stated that he made a delivery in an area and found a blue spruce that had been attacked by worms, which are destroying the tree and he thought it should be sprayed. He suggested publishing something as a reminder for residents to spray their trees. He noted that many neighbors do not know how to prevent it. He added that the season is two weeks ahead of schedule. He noted that a homeowner by the fire station has asked him twice for the city to visit his property and so far nothing has been done.

Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator Anderson asked why the resident was approaching Board Member Enstrom about this rather than speaking to somebody at City Hall. He also stated that he has not been contacted about this matter regarding the concern of the installed trees and does not have any insight into what's been discussed.

Board Member Enstrom stated that the resident probably believes that he has some authority on this because of his role with the Board. He remarked that a week from Thursday night he will be having a flag retirement ceremony. He invited the Board to the ceremony and suggested that if they have a flag to retire they can bring it along.

7. ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Board Member Bentz and seconded by Board Member Stodola to adjourn the meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 7:44 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Chris Anderson
Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator

ATTEST:

JoAnn Shaw
Community Development Secretary

Drafted by Beth Bostrom
TimeSaver Off Site Secretarial, Inc.