

City of Ramsey
Agenda
Environmental Policy Board (EPB)
Monday May 7, 2012
6:30 pm
Mississippi River Room, 7550 Sunwood Drive NW

- 1. Call to Order**
- 2. Citizen Input**
- 3. Approve Agenda**
- 4. Approve Minutes**
 1. Approve Meeting Minutes Dated April 2, 2012
- 5. Policy Board Business**
 1. Recap of Environmental Expo Event
 2. 2012-2013 Work Plan
- 6. Board/Staff Input**
- 7. Adjournment**

Environmental Policy Board (EPB)

4. 1.

Meeting Date: 05/07/2012

By: Chris Anderson, Community
Development

Title:

Approve Meeting Minutes Dated April 2, 2012

Attachments

Meeting Minutes Dated April 2, 2012

Form Review

Inbox
Chris Anderson (Originator)

Form Started By: Chris Anderson

Reviewed By
Chris Anderson

Final Approval Date: 05/03/2012

Date
05/03/2012 10:03 AM
Started On: 05/03/2012 10:03 AM

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

On Monday, April 2, 2012, the Environmental Policy Board (EPB) met in the Trott Brook 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 Michael Hiatt
 Board Member Larry Lewis
 Board Member Michael Valentine

Members Absent: Vice Chairperson Thomas Stodola

Also Present: Councilmember Randy Backous
 Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator Chris Anderson

CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Max called the meeting to order at 6:35 p.m.

CITIZEN INPUT

None.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion by Board Member Bentz and seconded by Board Member Hiatt to approve the agenda as submitted.

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

APPROVAL OF ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY BOARD MINUTES

Board Member Enstrom stated that he would like the March meeting minutes amended to reflect his concern with the transmission line clearance work goes beyond just the tree clearing, it is also very concerning to him the amount of pesticide/herbicide treatments that are being applied.

Motion by Board Member Bentz and seconded by Board Member Enstrom to approve the regular meeting minutes dated March 5, 2012 as amended to reflect Board Member Enstrom's concern related to pesticide/herbicide use.

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

Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator Anderson suggested it may be beneficial to have the new members introduce themselves.

Board Member Hiatt stated that he's lived in the area for thirty-two (32) years. He summarized his past work experience and stated that his background is in music education. He stated that he admittedly has some learning to do related to the environment but is excited to be serving on the board.

Board Member Valentine stated that he spent seventeen (17) years with the Pollution Control Agency (PCA) and now is involved with environmental consulting work. He's been in the community now for about twelve (12) years and is interested in politics ranging from the local to international levels.

Board Member Lewis stated he's been in the community for about twenty (20) years now and is in the printing business.

Chairperson Max stated that he thinks that everyone should introduce themselves a bit and he'd continue on. He stated that he's been in Ramsey since 1987, has been involved with various boards and/or committees at various levels and has been a part of this group since it was initially formed as a task force.

Board Member Bentz stated that he's been involved with the Board since its inception and his education is in chemistry and physics.

Board Member Enstrom stated that he lives in northern Ramsey on the border of Nowthen. He's been in Ramsey for thirty-five (35) years, operates an organic farm and has a monument on his property dedicated to the veterans of the Iraq war.

Councilmember Backous stated he's been in the community since 1988, volunteers where he can, is obviously serving as a Councilmember currently, and thinks highly of this Board.

POLICY BOARD BUSINESS

Case #1: Environmental Expo Event

Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator Anderson presented the staff report.

General discussion ensued about potential improvements that could be made to future expo events.

Board Member Hiatt stated that he likes that idea of incorporating it into the Happy Days event somehow.

Councilmember Backous stated that he thought it could possibly coincide with the annual kick-off of The Draw concert series and farmers market events. It could be held on a Saturday or Sunday in The Draw along with the initial farmers market, which could then be shifted to its traditional day of Thursday.

Board Member Valentine asked if the expo focused mostly on local businesses or is there a presence of state agencies as well. He stated that many of the state agencies also have outreach programs that could be included in the event.

Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator Anderson stated that state agencies have been invited in the past ranging from the National Park Service and MNRRRA to DNR.

Board Member Lewis stated that Lord of Life might be a site large enough to accommodate both the Business Expo and the Environmental Expo in one location. He thinks that it makes a lot of sense to consider joining the two events into one.

General discussion ensued about the tree sale component of the event. Generally, the discussion included considering separating the tree sale from the expo event, especially now since it is all done through a pre-order program, which is a significant change from past years.

Board Member Enstrom stated that without new homes being constructed, the demand for new trees has declined.

Councilmember Backous asked if the City's facebook page had been used to promote the tree sale.

Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator Anderson stated that it was used to let folks know that the tree sale info was available through the City's website.

Councilmember Backous suggested placing the tree list and pricing right on the facebook page and then folks could share it with their friends.

Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator Anderson stated that he could do that this week.

General discussion ensued about whether there was a fee to be an exhibitor at the environmental expo.

Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator Anderson stated that there was not a fee to be an exhibitor and the reasoning is that this is more of an educational format. If a fee were charged, he believed that many of the exhibitors would no longer participate. In that regard, it's different from the Business Expo because there, the intent is to promote businesses and they participate in the hopes of drawing in new customers.

Councilmember Backous stated that he believed there could be a tiered fee structure where for profit businesses would have a fee, whether it was for the Environmental Expo specifically or if the two events were combined, and the fee would be waived for not-for-profit companies and organizations.

Board Member Lewis stated that he had attended a beekeeping class through the U of MN, which was booked solid and that that might draw some interest.

Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator Anderson stated that he's had Gary Reuter from the U of MN attend the event in the past as well as the MN Hobby Beekeepers Association. But, like many volunteer groups, they are stretched pretty thin and haven't responded to the invite for this year's event.

Councilmember Backous inquired about geocaching and whether that may be an exhibit to explore. He suggested contacting the local geocaching group to see if they may be interested.

Chairperson Max asked the new members if they'd looked at the EPB webpage yet.

None of the new members had had a chance yet to view the page.

Councilmember Backous asked what the Board's booth was going to include.

Board Member Bentz stated that he liked the reuse or recycling topics.

Board Member Lewis suggested getting feedback from citizens about topics they think the Board should work on.

Chairperson Max suggested a focused question could be posed to attendees to get feedback.

Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator Anderson stated that the Board has in the past solicited feedback from attendees in various formats.

Board Member Bentz stated that the Board typically has their approved work plan posted somewhere within its booth.

Board Member Hiatt stated that he thinks the expo could be a tool to get ideas for future work plans.

A general discussion ensued about the structure of the Board including the requirement of having an approved work plan and how the Board could possibly be more effective, especially if good ideas come up during the year that are not reflected on the approved work plan.

Chairperson Max stated that the Board could maybe approach other Boards/Commissions to see how the EPB could help with them.

Councilmember Backous stated that the work plan should be fluid to allow the Board to work on various topics if they arise during a year.

Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator Anderson stated that that would be great, but as outlined in City Code, the Board is subject to a Council-approved work plan.

Councilmember Backous stated that as the Council liaison to the Board, if there are new ideas or topics that come up during the year, they can be brought to him and he can relay that information to the Council for consideration.

The Board then discussed the concept of a very simple survey that could be offered during the expo. The survey could be as simple as two questions: (1) Are you a Ramsey resident and (2) What would make Ramsey better for you and your family?

Board Member Enstrom suggested that it should include a third question which focused on how long they have lived in Ramsey.

After some discussion, there was consensus that the length of time someone had been a resident wasn't critical because whether somebody lived here for 30 years or 6 months, they are still residents of the community and their opinions should be weighted the same.

Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator Anderson stated that he could try and put together a recycling display board that highlighted materials that can and cannot be recycled curbside. He said that he staff's a booth at the North Suburban Home Improvement Show each year that focuses on curbside recycling and they use a similar type of display which always seems to draw people in. This might be especially good now with the new types of plastics that can be recycled curbside.

The Board liked that idea and asked Mr. Anderson to proceed with it.

BOARD/STAFF INPUT

Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator Anderson informed the Board that he staffed both a recycling booth and a forestry booth at the North Suburban Home Improvement show, which was held at the Andover Community Center. There was a good turnout and a lot of good questions both related to recycling and to trees.

Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator Anderson reminded the Board that the spring recycling day event is scheduled for May 5, 2012 and provided a brief summary items and pricing.

Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator Anderson informed the Board that the City's Community Forest Bonding grant application had been approved, which means that a mini arboretum will be established in North Commons.

Board Member Enstrom stated that the state is trying to control Emerald Ash Borer with traps and wanted to know if Ramsey could get some and the City would do the monitoring.

Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator Anderson stated that the City has worked with the Department of Agriculture in the past, offering up trap trees as a way to monitor for EAB. He

said he could check with the Department of Agriculture about locating some traps in Ramsey but that the City would not do the monitoring, that would be under the jurisdiction of the Dept. of Agriculture.

Chairperson Max mentioned that there's an eagle's nest along Highway 10, just east of the Lowe's store.

Board Member Bentz mentioned that there are now LED street lights available and inquired if the City may consider utilizing them.

Councilmember Backous stated that he believed that Connexus Energy was starting to use them in certain situations.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Board Member Lewis and seconded by Board Member Valentine to adjourn the meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 8:58 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Chris Anderson
Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator

Environmental Policy Board (EPB)

5. 1.

Meeting Date: 05/07/2012

By: Chris Anderson, Community Development

Title:

Recap of Environmental Expo Event

Background:

As the Board knows, the Environmental Expo event was held April 28. The event included twenty-five (25) exhibitors and offered a wide array of information ranging from recycling to sustainable products to live raptors, reptiles and chicks. There were also several hands-on activities to further engage the attendees. Feedback that Staff has received from various exhibitors was that the event was well attended and provided them with an excellent opportunity to discuss their organization, purpose and/or products with folks.

Approximately twenty (20) surveys were completed by attendees. The common themes of the surveys were an interest in seeing expansion of biking/walking trails, more recreation programming/activities, continued development of The COR, and preservation/planting of trees.

After a slow start, the pre-order tree sale program picked up in sales. Ultimately, just shy of sixty (60) trees were sold. Staff received multiple compliments regarding the size and quality of the trees as they were picked up.

Staff has put together a summary of the two expo events and distributed it to both QCTV and the Anoka Union for follow up pieces. The summary is attached.

Recommendation:

Staff believes that while the event is still relatively fresh in people's minds, it would be good to review and discuss the event and possibilities for next year.

EPB Action:

Provide feedback to Staff on the event and thoughts for next year.

Attachments

Summary of Expo Events

Form Review

Inbox	Reviewed By	Date
Chris Anderson (Originator)	Chris Anderson	05/03/2012 10:03 AM
Form Started By: Chris Anderson		Started On: 05/01/2012 02:15 PM
	Final Approval Date: 05/03/2012	

TWO RAMSEY EXPOS... ONE GREAT DAY



On Saturday, April 28th, 2012, an estimated 500 people attended the Ramsey Environmental and Ramsey Business Expos. Both expos took place from 9:00a.m. to 2:00p.m. and were located within walking distance of each other, allowing patrons a unique two-in-one expo opportunity.



Environmental Expo: Duck Exhibit. Source: ABC Newspapers



Business Expo: Acapulco. Source: ABC Newspapers

The Ramsey Environmental Expo took place at the Ramsey Municipal Center and included live raptors, reptiles, an array of exhibitors and hands-on activities for kids. The Ramsey Business Expo took place across the street, at the Fountains of Ramsey, and included free food, product demos and product giveaways.



Environmental Expo: Exhibitors lined up in the Ramsey Municipal Center. Source: ABC Newspapers

The Ramsey Environmental Expo was host to 25 exhibitors, focusing on all sorts of topics such as recycling, watershed info, sustainable products, rocks and fossils, and gardening and tree care information. Some of the highlights of the Environmental Expo included live reptiles from the MN Herpetological Society, a live peregrine falcon and bull snake from Wildlife Science Center, live baby chicks from Anoka Ramsey Farm and Garden, gardening for kids from Home Depot and a variety of hands-on activities for kids offered by the Cheerful Chuggers 4-H group.



Environmental Expo: Fur and pelts exhibit. Source: ABC Newspapers



The Ramsey Business Expo included nearly 50 vendors, filling the event site to capacity. Variety was the theme this year as vendors ranged from construction trades to crafters and from restaurants to financial services. Highlights of the Business Expo consisted of delicious food samples from Acapulco and Wells Catering, display vehicles brought in by the Ramsey Raceway and R&M Golf Carts, giveaways from companies like Trotbrook Financial and One Hour Heating & Air Conditioning and product demos from companies like Park Place Studio and Solid Ground Homes and Remodeling.



Environmental Policy Board (EPB)

5. 2.

Meeting Date: 05/07/2012

By: Chris Anderson, Community Development

Title:

2012-2013 Work Plan

Background:

As outlined in City Code, the primary objective of the Environmental Policy Board is to review, consider, initiate and recommend to the City Council such policies, plans or projects which will enhance and preserve the natural environment of the City. The Board’s scope shall include, but not necessarily be limited to, matters of the preservation of the community forest, water quality, wetland preservation, ground water protection, control of soil erosion and air, noise and light pollution. The Environmental Policy Board shall prepare an annual work plan subject to the approval of the City Council.

Observations:

Some potential topics that the Board may wish to consider would be tree preservation replacement standards and restoring native plant communities within transmission line corridors. Both topics in some aspects relate to the vegetation removal within the transmission line easements that drew attention this past year. Tree replacement standards is an area within the Tree Preservation Ordinance that is somewhat silent, meaning that there is no required replacement for trees removed to facilitate development. As for the native plant communities topic, a collaborative concept project has been proposed to a number of different entities, including the City of Ramsey, in which some benefit could be reached after the large-scale tree removal within the easement corridors. This may be a project that is of interest to the Board should it come together. An introductory letter that Staff received has been included to provide some background information to the Board.

Recommendation:

The Board should be prepared to consider and discuss possible topics for inclusion in the 2012-2013 EPB work plan as well as how to present this information to City Council for consideration.

EPB Action:

Based on discussion.

Attachments

Current Work Plan

Native Plants Project Concept

Form Review

Inbox	Reviewed By	Date
Chris Anderson (Originator)	Chris Anderson	05/03/2012 10:03 AM
Form Started By: Chris Anderson		Started On: 05/01/2012 02:29 PM
	Final Approval Date: 05/03/2012	

Environmental Policy Board 2011-2012 Proposed Work Plan

As outlined in City Code, the primary objective of the Environmental Policy Board is to review, consider, initiate and recommend to the City Council such policies, plans or projects which will enhance and preserve the natural environment of the City. The Board's scope shall include, but not necessarily be limited to, matters of the preservation of the community forest, water quality, wetland preservation, ground water protection, control of soil erosion and air, noise and light pollution.

The Environmental Policy Board will focus its efforts on the following tasks in 2011:

- Participating in an Arbor Day tree planting event.
- Encouraging citizen awareness and education on environmental stewardship through the Environmental Expo & Tree Sale.
- Revisiting the water conservation and invasive species web pages as needed and/or directed by City Council.
- Exploring potential public outreach opportunities such as developing an additional web page(s) that identify various wildlife and plants that may be seen while utilizing the City's trail system and includes phenological information as well (potentially in conjunction/unison with the Go Anoka County project).
- Undertaking a demonstration project (such as a rain garden or 'mini arboretum' highlighting species that perform well in Ramsey's sandy soil).
- Promoting, enhancing and expanding recycling opportunities within the Municipal Center and other public buildings.
- Research and review green building principles and low impact development practices that could be encouraged or incentivized within The COR as well as their return on investment.
- Enhance visibility of 'green' information on the City's website.

We've all seen the swath of destruction underneath powerlines. Areas that have been cleared of trees to protect the lines.

In an effort to increase the reliability of their lines, power companies are now being ordered to clear trees to the full width of their easement, which is often a departure from past practice.

They want to cut more trees. The scar will get worse.

I am a landowner with a Great River Energy easement. Part of my woods is directly affected. My reaction was typical: "See you in court."

Upon further reflection, I changed my mind. My woods is typical of former farmland: lots of boxelder, green ash, prickly ash and gooseberry but with some spring ephemerals. Most of my yard-admiring time is spent walking through my front yard which has been mostly converted to prairie garden. The fall color of my little bluestem was better than ever, this year.

I therefore decided to convert the easement land, which consists of prairie garden, pasture grasses and woods, to prairie garden and woodland margin shrubs such as nannyberry, arrowwood, etc.

As I looked down the hideous scar of the easement, it became apparent that easement land could serve a greater good with the right plantings. It could be mile-after-mile of prairie and flowering shrubs / small trees. It could be a haven for a wide variety of habitat-strapped wildlife. It could be spectacular.

Project and Goals

1) Encourage landowners, whether public or private, to convert at least some of their easement property to native or other plantings that could benefit wildlife. Long stretches of appropriately vegetated land might also serve as a wildlife corridor.

Even if only a very small percentage of landowners have an interest, the project could result in a significant increase in habitat for non-game species. Common milkweed, for instance, is widely regarded as a weed and has often been destroyed as such. This would be an opportunity to return it to general availability.

Long stretches of east/west or north/south habitat could provide a good transect for biology projects.

2) Set the stage for the collection of volumes of biological data.

3) Introduce landowners to the community of phenologists and others with biological interests. This would ideally be done at the time of GRE / landowner contact.

4) Support the movement away from resource-intensive turf lawns.

5) Encourage the commercial development of additional types of habitat.

Carrol Henderson, in *Landscaping for Wildlife*, describes an involved method of creating reptile hibernacula. Perhaps Prairie Resto or Landscape Alternatives could come up with a simpler structure that could be incorporated into their repertoire.

They could also collaborate with Dr. Oberhauser to develop seed / plant mixes specifically designed around the needs of the monarch.

Habitat selection could make it easier for landowners to visualize favorable alternatives to turf or to the painful emptiness of a lost woods.

6) Encourage a greater appreciation of and access to nature by the younger generation, which is now seeing more and more restricted access.

7) Encourage power companies and their regulatory agency to be more flexible when high-value woodlands are encountered.

Landowner Involvement

Most of the landowners will lose only a small number of trees. The rest of their land will contain turf grass or pasture grass (for developments in farmland). Landowners will probably be most amenable to converting pasture grasses. However, people with large 1-acre+ yards may be interested in converting significant portions of their turf grass to prairie. Even small yards would benefit from a 3x3 foot patch of butterfly garden.

The inducements to landowners would include at least:

1) Minimal maintenance: perhaps a spring or fall mowing. Burning is a possibility but is more difficult.

2) A constantly changing patch of ground or even a vista dotted by native flowers and grasses and visited by a wide variety of wildlife including butterflies, mammals, birds and singing insects.

3) A place for children to personally experience a bit of nature right outside their door.

4) A sense of participation or ownership in the effort to support species of interest, such as the monarch butterfly.

5) Opportunities for citizen science. GRE is interested in generating a website. They have not yet been specific about exactly what the website should include but they have supported phenology and climate change initiatives through Wolf Ridge Environmental Learning Center. I believe they would be open to most of what we'd like to accomplish. Many of us have an interest in phenology. The website could collect some information as well as direct new observers to other well-developed sites, such as Ebird.

6) Some people might be more open to the use of dried plants in craft projects.

Preliminary Model

- 1) GRE contacts landowner of need to destroy trees and presents the brochure or software describing what the land could look like. The landowner may even have heard about the project from phenology shows, such as presented by John and Peter.
- 2) Landowner fills out a short questionnaire on projects that are of interest, e.g. monarchs, general butterfly gardens, wildflowers, herps. Detailed information is then provided by landscaping / plant providers based on recommendations of project owners.
- 3) Land is landscaped, planted and maintained accordingly. The average landowner knows little of the process of converting turf grass or woods to prairie or edge plantings. We'll need to supply at least a vision of what the land could look like, where to get plants and how to go about accomplishing the work. This involves a brochure or software package with images of appropriate plants, GRE's height requirements, providers of landscaping services and appropriate plants, suggestions for specific habitat modifications (hibernacula, etc).
- 4) Landowner / citizen-scientist starts making observations and reporting them on the web or thru other arrangements. Participation is optional.
- 5) Some projects might require training sessions of the landowners / citizen-scientists. In some cases, it could be accomplished via written instructions on the web. In other cases, hands-on instruction might be required.
- 6) Scientists analyze data and report the results via the usual scientific outlets but in venues accessible to the public. This is necessary to encourage the continued participation of the landowner.

Funding has not yet been discussed. This might be better examined after interested parties have been identified and preliminary goals have been established. GRE has a good record on this issue and has funded projects through Wolf Ridge concerning phenology and climate change. I have no doubt that they have funded other projects, as well.

Time commitments for most people would be minimal and might even be simply putting their materials on the web. GRE still has the responsibility for contacting the landowners and informing them of their options.

If this project is successful, there is no reason it couldn't be used as a model for other areas around the state or nation.

Participants

Mr. Poetter, my contact at GRE, is an active Audubon member and has a good understanding of the issues.

Only a few people have been contacted so far.

John Latimer has a popular phenology show in Grand Rapids. He is part of the Minnesota Phenology Network and is in a position to help advertise and promote the project from his very popular phenology radio show in Grand Rapids and surrounding communities.

Peter Harris is a naturalist / science coordinator at Wolf Ridge Environmental Learning Center. He is also a member of MPN, also has a phenology radio show, and has put together many conferences / training sessions covering a wide variety of topics from climate change to phenology.

Peter, John and I developed the phenology software that they use. It would be possible for all of GRE's easement landowners to contribute observations via the web.

This email is going out to a small number biologists, naturalists, phenology show hosts, native plant providers, the DNR, and a municipality. The list is not meant to be comprehensive. If you know other people / companies who might be interested, please feel free to forward this note.

Questions

- 1) Do you have special insights on the feasibility of the project? Perhaps you know of another location where it has been tried.
- 2) Are you interested in participating? If so, are there specific limits to your participation, e.g. the need for remuneration?

GRE is being forced to proceed with their cutting at a very rapid rate. Each landowner contacted at this point is a lost opportunity.

It would be helpful if feasibility and a tentative list of participants could be determined within a month (Feb 15). It may be possible to get basic action plans into place by the time the blackbirds (Mar 15) return since the activities are mostly just extensions of what we already do. The sooner GRE can start discussing the project with their easement owners, the better.

I'm hopeful that the project will provide significant new resources to the biologists with only a minor investment of time, more business to the native plant providers / landscapers, much more habitat for targeted species, and a vastly more interesting easement.

Thanks very much for reading such a long introductory letter and for your response.