

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

On Monday, May 7, 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 Thomas Stodola
 Board Member Bob Bentz
 Board Member John Enstrom
 Board Member Michael Hiatt
 Board Member Larry Lewis
 Board Member Michael Valentine

Also Present: Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator Chris Anderson

CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Max called the meeting to order at 6:36 p.m.

CITIZEN INPUT

Bob Bentz stated that he has heard a lot of clamoring from people wanted to raise chickens, goats and honeybees.

Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator Anderson stated that there is a case on the May 8, 2012 City Council agenda to introduce an ordinance allowing for the keeping of four (4) chickens on parcels 0.25 acres or larger. The ordinance also addresses beekeeping with the issuance of a conditional use permit. The intent was to have this topic discussed with City Council at a work session before formulating the ordinance amendments but Staff then was directed to forego the work session and present it at this upcoming regular City Council meeting.

APPROVAL OF 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 Hiatt, Bentz, Enstrom, Valentine, Stodola and Lewis. Voting No: None. Absent: None.

APPROVAL OF ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY BOARD MINUTES

Motion by Board Member Hiatt and seconded by Board Member Lewis to approve the regular meeting minutes dated April 2, 2012.

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

POLICY BOARD BUSINESS

Case #1: Recap of Environmental Expo Event

Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator Anderson presented the staff report.

Board Members Stodola and Lewis stepped out of the meeting to be sworn in at 6:45pm.

Board Member Enstrom stated that he is opposed to having any type of tree sale if it does not include having trees on site so that people can see them before buying them. He would never buy a tree without seeing it first.

Board Members Stodola and Lewis returned to the meeting at 6:50pm.

Chairperson Max stated that he doesn't see it as a real problem; in fact, he has bought trees online previously and would not hesitate to do so again.

Board Member Lewis suggested that maybe vendors could use coupons instead of bringing all their material to the event. They could sell coupons that customers could then redeem at their site and have the ability to pick their tree out themselves.

Board Member Lewis stated that after having been a part of the Environmental Expo event, he sees a tremendous opportunity and benefit if this event were combined with the Business Expo.

Board Member Lewis stated that he believes there should be more commitment from the Board to assist with this event in the future.

Chairperson Max stated he thought there was a very good turnout, although, he thought there may have been fewer young children at this year's event than past years.

Board Member Valentine stated that he thought there was a lot of energy and interaction with the exhibitors but did think that a keynote speaker would have been beneficial.

Board Member Stodola stated that he was pleasantly surprised by the turnout; it seemed like a better turnout than last year when there was a keynote speaker.

Board Member Enstrom stated that he believed the good turnout was simply due to the bad weather.

Chairperson Max stated that he thought that may have helped keep people at the event for an extended period of time, but they still had to come to the event so he wouldn't attribute the good attendance just to the weather.

Case #2: 2012-2013 Work Plan

Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator Anderson presented the staff report.

Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator stated that he knows the Board has sought more direct feedback/direction from the City Council and offered up for discussion purposes the possibility of presenting an open work plan and requesting that City Council specify topics that would be most useful for them for the Board to pursue and/or research.

Board Member Enstrom stated that he felt it was best to develop a draft plan and ask City Council for further direction.

Board Member Valentine stated that he believed the Board should develop a work plan and filter through Councilmember Backous as the Council liaison to this Board.

Board Member Hiatt echoed that same sentiment.

Chairperson Max suggested that the Board take this opportunity to brainstorm ideas for the next work plan. He stated that he agreed with maybe looking at the tree preservation regulations as it pertains to replacement standards.

Board Member Enstrom stated that he heard from a credible source that Connexus Energy owns Carr's Tree Service and therefore has no incentive to retain any trees within their easement areas.

Chairperson Max stated that he believes demonstration projects are always good as it gives the community an example of some rather simple projects they could implement, such as rain gardens.

Board Member Hiatt inquired if there are other model ordinances related to tree preservation that could be reviewed.

Board Member Bentz stated that he thought the DNR had authority over shorelands; at least that is the case in Wisconsin.

Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator Anderson explained that along the two rivers, the DNR has jurisdiction below the OHW and that the City would have jurisdiction above the OHW. So, while the vegetation management standards are specified through state standards, enforcement typically falls to the City since the trees generally are above the OHW.

Board Member Lewis inquired whether the City is subject to the same type of tree preservation standards. He continued by stating that this may be something that the Board and the Parks and Recreation Commission could explore jointly.

Chairperson Max stated that he'd like the Board to have more of a voice on development that occurs. This could help the City lead by example.

Board Member Enstrom stated that he has a friend that is rather upset with the trail improvement project that was completed adjacent to his property. There are several red pines planted and one white pine and they all appeared to be salvaged or wild trees that were not aesthetically pleasing at all.

General discussion ensued about the quality of trees that the City may install.

Board Member Hiatt stated that he believes the City's communication directly with residents could be improved. He stated that many residents came up to the Board's booth at the expo with questions about recycling, such as the new plastics that can now be accepted.

Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator Anderson stated that that is why he suggested the display board for the Board's booth. It always seems to attract people. He explained that he does write articles for the newsletter; typically near the beginning of each year one that reviews all acceptable recyclable materials and the current issue of the newsletter has information about the new plastics that can be recycled.

Board Member Lewis stated he'd like the Board to review or establish public space improvement standards. He then distributed a study that was conducted by the City of New York related to environmental initiatives.

Board Member Lewis stated that the expo may be an opportunity for some sort of eco challenge with high school students or vocational students.

Board Member Bentz suggested some sort of reuse challenge.

Chairperson Max said he'd like the Board to be more involved. For instance, the Board should have been the first stop for discussion on any updates to the animal ordinance.

Board Member Valentine stated that the Board should look for ways to improve communication on natural resources, such as wildlife, trees, plants, foot/paw prints, scat, soils etc.

Board Member Bentz stated that the City did complete a Natural Resources Inventory that could be used to develop some of that information.

Board Member Hiatt suggested that an independent mailer to each household is very effective. He said that the postcard he received for the expo events really caught his attention.

Board Member Valentine inquired about whether there's any direction on communications that the City develops.

Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator Anderson stated that there is not a communications coordinator or any specific outline that is to be followed. Generally, the staff person responsible for certain topics puts together articles for inclusion in the newsletter.

Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator Anderson reviewed the items that had been discussed thus far: Community Awareness (e.g. natural resources info on trees, wildlife, soils etc), Demonstration Projects, Tree Preservation/Tree Replacement Standards, Improving Communication (e.g. a standing Did You Know column in the Ramsey Resident newsletter), Public Space Improvement Standards, Eco Challenge, and Participation in the Environmental Expo event.

Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator Anderson stated that he would try to incorporate this into a draft work plan for discussion at the June meeting.

BOARD/STAFF INPUT

Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator Anderson provided a brief recap of the Spring Recycling event, which he said was very successful with just shy of 350 vehicles passing through.

ADJOURNMENT

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

The meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Chris Anderson
Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator