

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

On Monday, May 6, 2013, the Environmental Policy Board (EPB) met in the Rum 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 Michael Hiatt
 Board Member Larry Lewis (arrived at 6:41 p.m.)
 Board Member Tara Prendergast
 Board Member Thomas Stodola
 Board Member Michael Valentine

Members Absent: None.

Also Present: Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator Chris Anderson
 City Council Liaison John LeTourneau

1. CALL TO ORDER

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

2. CITIZEN INPUT

None.

3. APPROVE AGENDA

Motion by Board Member Valentine and seconded by Board Member Hiatt to approve the agenda as amended.

Further discussion: Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator Chris Anderson noted that the first item under the Staff Reports, Rain Garden Planting Plan, actually became case number three and therefore can be removed from the agenda.

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

4. APPROVE MINUTES

4.01: Approve Meeting Minutes Dated April 1, 2013

Motion by Board Member Hiatt and seconded by Board Member Valentine to approve the regular meeting minutes dated April 1, 2013.

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

City Council Liaison LeTourneau asked that the Board Members introduce themselves for the benefit of himself and the new Board Member.

Board Member Lewis arrived.

The Board Members, Council Liaison, and Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator Anderson introduced themselves and provided a brief summary of their interest and experience with the Board and the environment.

5. POLICY BOARD BUSINESS

5.01: Environmental Expo and EPB Booth Discussion

Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator Anderson presented the staff report.

Chairperson Max questioned if there should be one main focus or whether a few areas of interest should be displayed.

Board Member Stodola stated that perhaps the current outreach efforts of the Board should be mentioned so residents know how to follow up with the Board, including the article in the newsletter and the spots on QCTV.

Board Member Bentz provided information that he had gathered from other similar events, including brochures and booklets, regarding green energy and rain gardens.

Board Member Hiatt questioned if there is a theme for the Happy Days event this year. He noted that this will be the first year the Expo will occur along with Happy Days and believed it could be beneficial to tie into that theme.

Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator Anderson provided general information on the Happy Days event but did not believe there was an overall theme. He encouraged the Board to focus on Environmental Expo rather than how to tie into Happy Days.

Board Member Stodola noted that perhaps the Board could focus on rain gardens and could tie that into the demonstration project.

City Council Liaison LeTourneau stated that perhaps the Board could review the Work Plan and choose two or three items that could be displayed visually and presented to the public.

Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator Anderson stated that in regard to the Work Plan he believed the most important items that have been or are almost complete would be the rain garden project in Alpine Park, the establishment of a prairie in a utility corridor, and the outreach efforts of the Board.

Board Member Lewis stated that this would be a good opportunity for the Board to build brand awareness. He stated that rather than focus on one specific issue, perhaps the focus should be that the EPB is a group that you could come to for many different issues.

Chairperson Max stated that the Expo should also be listed as an outreach effort of the Board. He confirmed that the focus should remain broad and show what the Board does and some projects that have been completed.

Board Member Lewis questioned if the Council would like to see any specific things referenced at the Expo.

City Council Liaison LeTourneau stated that there was a joint Council meeting with the City Councils from Ramsey and Anoka that took place the previous week. He advised that discussion occurred regarding the Lower Rum River Water Management Organization (LRRWMO) and the spread of invasive species. He noted that the Anoka Dam would be the last stop before Lake Mille Lacs and discussed the improvements that would be needed for the Dam to become an effective barrier. He believed perhaps that issue could be discussed at the Expo.

Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator Anderson noted that there will soon be discussion for the next Work Plan and noted that some of those items could be included on the Plan and spoken about.

Chairperson Max confirmed that the booth from the Board would be a broad aspect of who the Board is and some of the projects that have been completed.

Board Member Hiatt agreed that would be a good idea because this event will bring in a new crowd.

Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator Anderson noted that there should be a visual aspect that sparks the interest of people and brings them in to find out more information.

Board Member Hiatt suggested the potential work on the rain garden including photographs be used as a visual focal point for the booth. He stated that videos could also play in the background. He noted that the display could say here is what we did and here is what you could do in your own backyard.

Board Member Valentine referenced a brochure brought in from Board Member Bentz regarding rain gardens and questioned if that would be something a homeowner could do on their own or whether a resident would need technical assistance.

Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator Anderson advised that there are many places where residents can obtain information on how to install a rain garden step by step and confirmed that the project could be done without technical assistance. He advised of past class/presentations in which the City partnered with the Conservation District to teach residents how to install a rain garden but noted that the response was not high enough and the event had to be canceled.

Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator Anderson confirmed that the idea for the Expo is that the Board is a resource for the community, provides information and advocates for the environment, projects that have been worked on and will be worked on in the next year.

Board Member Lewis commented that it would also be nice to ask residents what they think and what further efforts the Board could take to service the residents. He asked if something could be passed out to residents asking them to go to a website and take a short survey on the Board, noting that perhaps a door prize could be given away in return.

Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator Anderson confirmed that something could be setup through a service like Survey Monkey and slips of paper could be distributed asking residents to go to the site and take the survey. He noted that perhaps a few trees could be donated from a local vendor to use as prizes.

City Council Liaison LeTourneau noted that QCTV could be used to create a loop video that could be played at the Expo event.

Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator Anderson confirmed that QCTV would love the opportunity to create something like that. He asked that everyone continue to think about ideas for the Expo to continue the discussion at the next meeting.

Board Member Valentine suggested that perhaps a timeline should be laid out that could be presented at the next meeting to give Board Members a better idea of preparation and what would need to be completed at specific times.

City Council Liaison LeTourneau stated that perhaps a case should be added to a future agenda that would provide the Board with the opportunity to brainstorm on the questions to include on the survey.

The Board Members further discussed the type of questions and whether the questions should remain broad or focused.

Chairperson Max questioned if this item would be appropriate to bring to the City Council via a workshop setting to gain input on the type of survey questions used.

Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator Anderson explained that if the questions are focused on the Board and their Work Plan priorities, that would not need to go before the Council. He noted that if the questions were broader, then the City Council opinion should be gained.

Board Member Stodola stated that he will look into the idea and determine if any other Metro communities have used similar surveys that could be used as a guide.

Board Member Prendergast suggested having a comment drop box that could be used to obtain resident questions and comments and noted that as a resident and parent she likes to see visual aspects that teach you something quickly. She noted that it should look fun and inviting.

5.02: Outreach (Articles and QCTV Spots)

Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator Anderson presented the staff report.

Chairperson Max stated that water conservation should be a focus, as drought is a constant fact of life in this city.

Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator Anderson noted a few topics that could fall under that category that could be used as speaking points for a QCTV spot. He noted that the previous year through the County he was able to obtain about 50 recycling containers that will be placed in the Ramsey parks this summer and advised that could be mentioned on a television spot. He hoped that interested Board Members would volunteer to film footage.

City Council Liaison LeTourneau noted that those ideas could be printed in an article and then talked about on a television promotion, as he did not think the Board should be afraid of duplication in these messages. He stated that he would be willing to film a QCTV spot with any Board Members, noting that although they may be hesitant the process is not as scary as you may think.

Board Member Hiatt stated that this would be a good time to shoot something that could be broadcast in the changing season.

Board Member Stodola stated that he would also be willing to volunteer for a QCTV spot.

Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator Anderson suggested Oak Wilt as a talking point and article idea. He noted that the website could also be used to promote that information.

Chairperson Max and Board Member Valentine noted that they would also be willing to film segments for QCTV.

Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator Anderson asked that interested Board Members email him with the topic they would like to discuss on the QCTV segment and he can respond with some talking points. He questioned if there were any other article ideas, highlighting items that had recently been printed in the newsletter articles from the Board.

Board Member Lewis stated that there are new residents coming into the city and suggested an environmental welcome wagon of sort, noting that this time of year will bring many new residents with many questions.

Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator Anderson stated that they do still have the new resident welcome packet that the City offers and highlighted the information that is provided. He stated that he would be hesitant to add more information to the already thick packet. He did not believe that the packet is mailed directly to new residents but is available at City Hall. He noted that some items are mailed separately to households, such as the Recyclopedia that is sent out by Anoka County.

Board Member Prendergast suggested expanding on the idea of pollution prevention and preserving what is around in the community.

Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator Anderson referenced a program in which the City is going to partner with a business to collect motor oil that could then be recycled. He also discussed proper maintenance near storm water ponds and wetlands with regard to fertilizers.

City Council Liaison LeTourneau stated that he was having trouble finding the EPB webpage under the Ramsey website. He believed that the EPB should have a direct link button on the homepage for the City.

Chairperson Max stated that it would be nice to have a dashboard that could display useful information for the appropriate time of year on the EPB page, such as oak wilt and appropriate management.

Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator Anderson stated that there is discussion about creating another direct link button on the homepage and there is a lot of interest in that but noted that the item could be discussed with the IT Specialist.

Board Member Bentz suggested that the existing buttons be made smaller or condensed, noting that NorthStar has three buttons.

City Council Liaison noted that there has been consolidation in the staff members and their loads have increased, he stated that while these ideas have come forward he does not want Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator Anderson to feel like these are additional work items that he must complete in addition to all his other work.

5.03: Rain Garden Demonstration Project

Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator Anderson presented the staff report. He noted that the budget would have sufficient funds for the planting materials but noted that additional funding sources should be identified for the design and creation of the interpretive signage. He advised that the plantings and work could occur in June or early July, while the signage could be designed and installed at a later date.

Chairperson Max stated that perhaps the signage could be an Eagle Scout project.

Board Member Lewis stated that the planting could be used as an opportunity for a QCTV segment. He noted that he could obtain some quotes on signage costs before the next meeting.

City Council Liaison LeTourneau noted that the signage funding may be an opportunity for a local corporation sponsorship.

Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator Anderson noted that he would provide the specifications from the signage used at Sunfish Lake Park to Board Member Lewis as the signs would most likely be similar to that model and could be used to obtain cost estimates.

City Council Liaison LeTourneau noted that the planting would be a great opportunity to partner with a local organization in the community and suggested Youth First.

Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator Anderson confirmed that the Board would like to do the planting on a Saturday and noted that it would only take a few hours to complete. He noted that he could gather additional information on the ability to partner with a group, including Youth First.

Further discussion ensued regarding rain gardens and the use in other Metro communities, including Maplewood.

6. BOARD / STAFF INPUT

- ~~**Rain Garden Planting Plan**~~

- **Recap of Recycling Event**

Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator Anderson advised that the recycling event took place the previous weekend and was very successful with over 400 vehicles going through. He believed that this may have been the most attended event with large amounts of cardboard, tires and used oil that were collected. He advised that the document destruction was also very successful.

- **Recap of Tree Sale**

Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator Anderson advised that the tree sale pickup was a part of the recycling event. He believed that the Board should further discuss the tree sale and whether it is worth it to continue with the sale, or hold it separate from the recycling event. He noted that people voiced their frustration with not being able to bypass the recycling line to pick up trees. He reviewed the overall number of orders in the past three years and the low number of trees and shrubs being purchased. He explained that with the amount of time spent planning and orchestrating the event, he believed it was time for the Board to reconsider whether it is warranted for the sale to continue.

Chairperson Max stated that in the past the tree sale was successful because of the amount of construction. He believed it would be beneficial to track the number of building permits in the next few months in an attempt to determine the need. He noted that whether or not to continue the tree sale could be included on the survey discussed.

- **Arbor Month Planting Project**

Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator Anderson advised that the planting event is scheduled for May 18th at North Commons Park and provided additional location information. He stated that about 30 trees were planted the previous fall and the remaining plantings, which are funded through a grant from the DNR, will be done that Saturday. He advised that the event will be a part of the Anoka High School Football booster that takes place each spring and encouraged all interested Board Members to attend the event in observance of Arbor Day. He asked that interested Board Members arrive at 9:00 a.m. and noted that the event will wrap up by 11:30 a.m. or noon.

City Council Liaison LeTourneau stated that he did reach out to the possible speaker desired for the Expo and noted that he would continue to work on that item for the next meeting.

7. ADJOURNMENT

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

The meeting adjourned at 9:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Chris Anderson
Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator

ATTEST:

JoAnn Shaw
Community Development Secretary

Drafted by Amanda Staple
TimeSaver Off Site Secretarial, Inc.