

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

On Monday, October 7, 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  
                            Board Member Tara Pendergast  
                            Board Member Thomas Stodola (arrived at 6:33 p.m.)  
                            Board Member Michael Valentine

Members Absent:     None

Also Present:         Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator Chris Anderson  
                            Diana Mckeown, Great Plains Institute

**1.     CALL TO ORDER**

Chairperson Max called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

**2.     CITIZEN INPUT**

None.

**3.     APPROVE AGENDA**

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

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

**4.     APPROVE MINUTES**

**4.01: Approve Meeting Minutes Dated August 26, 2013**

Motion by Board Member Valentine and seconded by Board Member Hiatt to approve the regular meeting minutes dated August 26, 2013.

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

Board Member Stodola arrived.

## **5. POLICY BOARD BUSINESS**

### **5.01: Review of 2013 Environmental Expo Event**

Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator Anderson presented the staff report.

Chairperson Max stated that he believed the event went well, noting that more people could have been in the tent. He did acknowledge the amount of people who walked through during the event.

Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator Anderson commented on the expenditure for the folks that bring in the wild animals, which is a significant expense. He noted that the expense may be unnecessary for the event in the future because of the association with Happy Days. He explained that if the event were to continue with Happy Days, that significant expense may not be needed.

Board Member Valentine questioned if Happy Days could cover the expense in the future if the exhibit were to be tied into the event rather than the Expo specifically.

Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator Anderson noted that sponsorship could be a possibility but did not think that Happy Days would contribute the funds.

Board Member Hiatt questioned how the funds could be used in the future.

Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator Anderson advised that if a keynote speaker were secured the funds could be used for that purpose.

Board Member Hiatt suggested that the exhibitors be surveyed to provide feedback on the event, as they had been involved with the event in the past as well. He believed that could be one method in which suggestions could be used to gain additional interest in exhibitors. He stated that a number of contacts that he had were not even aware the EPB existed; noting that he believed the event was beneficial simply for that educational aspect.

Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator Anderson suggested that this item be tabled briefly in order to receive the GreenStep Cities Program presentation, noting that discussion could continue again following the presentation.

### **5.02: Presentation on GreenStep Cities Program**

Diana Mckeown, Great Plains Institute, explained that 100 percent of her time is based managing Clean Energy Resource Teams (CERTs) and explained that the CERTs team statewide is involved in the MN GreenStep Cities Program. She provided background information on the GreenStep Cities Program and noted that the program acts as a pathway to sustainability that is cost-effective, pragmatic, and achievable for all Minnesota cities. She explained how GreenStep Cities is different than other national programs, noting that the program is geared towards

smaller cities, includes practices developed by experts in their fields from Minnesota, are action oriented and at your pace, and allows flexibility with each best practice. She explained that the program moves at the pace desired by the city participating and credit is given for items already accomplished. She reviewed the benefits of being a GreenStep City including claim credit, special attention, access to 40 hours of free consultant help and intern support, and free technical workshops on best practice topics. She provided examples of efforts to date from other Minnesota cities including Edina, St. Cloud, Willmar, Kasson, and Milan. She advised of the five categories which are buildings and lighting, land use, transportation, environmental management, and economic and community development. She explained that each category has a number of best practices, which each include a number of steps that can be followed and reached by member cities. She displayed a map that identifies the many cities that now participate in the program statewide. She explained the steps to getting started which includes the presentation tonight and would also require a resolution approved by the City Council to work toward GreenStep Cities recognition. She advised after that action occurs the City would be required to register and post their initial information onto the GreenStep's website, noting that the posting of information would be the largest time commitment. She explained that after answering a series of questions the City would determine which category city they fall into. She confirmed that the website would allow you to compare the categories that neighboring or similar cities fall into. She encouraged Board Members and staff to reach out to participating cities in order to gain estimates of costs and staff time spent on the program as well as the benefits they feel have been gained. She advised that currently the program offers seed grant money for energy efficient projects.

Board Member Bentz questioned if private businesses could utilize this program to obtain expertise or whether the program was only for municipalities.

Ms. Mckeown explained that member cities could refer a local business owner to the GreenStep's contact and would then receive credit for the action. She noted that CERTs could also assist business owners. She thanked the Board for their time.

Chairperson Max questioned if there is anything currently on the Work Plan that would qualify for the grant funds.

Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator Anderson stated that with the grant application deadline of next week, there would not be enough time to seek City Council authorization to apply for funding.

Chairperson Max stated that it seems to be a flexible program, which could provide a pathway for the Board to work.

Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator Anderson noted that he did review portions of the list of steps and there were items the City could check off as completed. He stated that if the Board would like to join the program, the purpose of participation should be identified. He stated that participation in the program could provide cost-savings in the future through efficiency. He noted that he would like to speak with staff from participating cities to determine the actual amount of staff time needed.

The Board discussed advantages of the program including the increased efficiency and positive public relations.

Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator Anderson confirmed general consensus to move forward. He stated that he will try to contact other participating communities to get a sense of how much staff time went into enrolling in the program and entering all information as well as any potential costs that they encountered and bring this topic back for consideration next month.

Board Member Lewis stated that if the Board chooses to move forward with this idea they should consider creating a subcommittee to handle this item. He asked that Board Members think about the level of participation they would like to have before the next meeting.

Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator Anderson stated that it would make sense for him to input the initial data onto the website but noted that the creation of a subcommittee after that would be a great aid to him.

Chairperson Max agreed that a subcommittee would make sense. He believed that an expo committee should also be created as a standing committee. He explained that each year the planning for the expo is mentioned but ultimately falls mostly onto Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator Anderson, which it should not. He noted that it would be beneficial to form these smaller discussion groups within the Board that could provide monthly reports to the Board.

Board Member Lewis stated that in regard to the GreenStep's program it may be beneficial to create a series of subcommittees to work on the different actions.

Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator Anderson noted that his next step would be to gather additional information to bring back to the Board at the following meeting, at which time a formal decision could be made by the Board. He invited the Board to visit the website in the next month to review the program further, noting that he believed Ramsey would be a category A city.

#### **5.01: Review of 2013 Environmental Expo Event (Continued)**

Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator Anderson advised that the results of the survey were summarized in the Board packet, noting approximately 32 responses. He stated that there were common positive themes identified for the City including trails, parks and recycling. He stated that the negative themes identified were an increased need for publication of positive recycling efforts and planting of additional trees. He noted that on some scale most of the participants had instituted some of the efficiency measures listed.

Board Member Bentz noted that some of the potential survey takers did not want to wait in line when there was a technical glitch.

Board Member Stodola noted that perhaps a few hardcopies of the survey could be kept on hand next year in case that situation occurs again.

Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator Anderson stated that he did see a benefit provided in regard to the question regarding the residents' knowledge of the environmental services provided in Ramsey. He noted increased activity that he could do to publicize those efforts.

Board Members Lewis and Pendergast expressed their condolences that they were unable to attend the event.

Board Member Lewis agreed with Chairperson Max that the Board should create a standing subcommittee to plan for the expo. He noted that it would be beneficial to make contacts within the Happy Days committee as well.

Board Member Hiatt questioned the feedback of the Happy Days folks to the Expo joining their event.

Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator Anderson noted that the Happy Days committee will be making a presentation at the City Council meeting the following night and will meet after that to debrief on the event. He advised that he did not yet hear any feedback in that regard.

Chairperson Max commented that he was disappointed to see how early the Girl Scout troop left the event on a hot day.

Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator Anderson noted that he did follow up and determined that the troop leader expressed concern with the high level of heat and the slower sales. He advised that the troop did raise the necessary funds to purchase the trash receptacle for the Lake Itasca Trail.

## **6. BOARD / STAFF INPUT**

- **Fall Recycling Day**

Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator Anderson advised that the event was held September 28<sup>th</sup> and about 300 vehicles came through the event, even with the rainy weather. He stated that the event went well and between the spring and fall events there were over 700 vehicles participating.

- **Alpine Park Rain Garden Enhancement**

Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator Anderson stated that in order to move forward he directed Prairie Restoration to complete the plantings. He advised that 90 plants were installed and the rainy weather since the planting has really helped. He noted that the City should be able to make it through, because of the time of year, without watering.

- **Special Joint Meeting**

Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator Anderson reported that a joint meeting will occur at 6:00 p.m. on October 29<sup>th</sup> between the City Council, Planning Commission and EPB. He advised that the group will specifically be talking about the rule making process for the Mississippi River Critical Corridor. He advised that following that meeting a joint meeting between the City Council, Planning Commission and EDA will take place and noted that interested EPB Board Members can stay to attend that meeting. He also discussed a recent DNR meeting in regard to the Mississippi River Critical Corridor. He confirmed that he would send a follow-up email to the Board regarding the joint meeting.

- **Board Member Input**

Board Member Hiatt commented on a recent trip to Montreal and an exhibit that he visited.

Board Member Bentz questioned if staff followed up with Great River Energy (GRE) regarding wood burning.

Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator Anderson stated that he did not yet reach out to GRE.

Board Member Bentz questioned if the Emerald Ashe Borer plan included a policy for disposal of wood.

Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator Anderson explained that is not included in the plan as removal is not required for private property. He advised that public trees would be removed and likely chipped to avoid transporting the wood.

Board Member Lewis suggested that the next agenda include one or two items which include the creation of committees/subcommittees and future meeting format. He asked that each Board Member consider their strengths and weaknesses prior to that time so the best fit for everyone can be found. He asked that everyone consider the time commitment that will be needed in order to complete these items and unburden Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator Anderson. He stated that he believed that these meetings could be kept to 90 minutes.

Board Member Bentz noted that in the past there has been a thorough scrutiny of the content or wordsmithing.

Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator Anderson agreed with the comment made by Board Member Bentz and noted that if this is the direction that the Board moves, some form of trust would need to be placed with the subcommittee.

Chairperson Max stated that he would also like to discuss QCTV at the next meeting because additional input and creation of segments is needed.

**7. ADJOURNMENT**

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

The meeting adjourned at 8:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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Chris Anderson  
Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator

ATTEST:

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JoAnn Shaw  
Community Development Secretary

Drafted by Amanda Staple  
*TimeSaver Off Site Secretarial, Inc.*