

City of Ramsey
Agenda
Environmental Policy Board (EPB)
Monday December 2, 2013
6:30 pm
Rum River Room, 7550 Sunwood Drive NW

1. **Call to Order**
2. **Citizen Input**
3. **Approve Agenda**
4. **Approve Minutes**
 1. Approve Meeting Minutes Dated November 4, 2013
5. **Policy Board Business**
 1. Topsoil Requirement Update
 2. Subcommittee Updates
6. **Board/Staff Input**
 - Recycle Your Holidays Update
 - GreenStep Cities
7. **Adjournment**

Environmental Policy Board (EPB)

4. 1.

Meeting Date: 12/02/2013

By: Chris Anderson, Community
Development

Information

Title:

Approve Meeting Minutes Dated November 4, 2013

Action:

Attachments

Meeting Minutes Dated November 4, 2013

Form Review

Inbox

Chris Anderson (Originator)
Form Started By: Chris Anderson
Final Approval Date: 11/25/2013

Reviewed By

Chris Anderson

Date

11/25/2013 03:39 PM
Started On: 11/25/2013 09:22 AM

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

On Monday, November 4, 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 Prendergast
 Board Member Thomas Stodola (arrived at 6:34 p.m.)
 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 6:30 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, Lewis, Bentz, Hiatt, and Prendergast. Voting No: None. Absent: Board Member Stodola.

4. APPROVE MINUTES

4.01: Approve Meeting Minutes Dated October 7, 2013

Motion by Board Member Lewis and seconded by Board Member Valentine to approve the regular meeting minutes dated October 7, 2013.

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

5. POLICY BOARD BUSINESS

5.01: GreenStep Cities Program

Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator Anderson presented the staff report. He advised that he spoke with Elk River and found that the process is not too difficult, noting that the most time consuming process was entering the initial data. He noted that he attempted to reach three other similar sized cities to gain additional input but was unable to connect with a staff member.

Board Member Stodola arrived at 6:34 p.m.

Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator Anderson advised of a number of items and best practices that the City has already completed or participates in. He noted that a City could attain or come close to attaining step three solely through improving City operations. He advised that a resolution of adoption from the City Council would be necessary for the City to participate in the program, should the Board desire to move forward with this program. He advised of an upcoming workshop he is going to attend which will take place on Tuesday, November 12th from 9:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. He noted that he may be able to speak with staff from other participating cities to gain additional input on the time needed for the program.

Chairperson Max questioned if this is a recognizable organization or whether there are similar programs.

Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator Anderson stated that he was unaware of the national status and advised that statewide this is the most recognizable program.

Board Member Hiatt asked if there were additional benefits to the program, which might not be easily recognizable.

Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator Anderson noted that an increased chance in obtaining grant funds, motivation to become more efficient, and added publicity.

Board Member Bentz noted that a number of areas are covered through the subcategories. He questioned if there is a percentage threshold to mark items off the list.

Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator Anderson noted that there are benchmarks that could be used for comparison purposes. He advised that the input from Ramsey stopped for some reason in 2007 and explained that those numbers would be used to compare the current status. He was unaware if a minimum threshold is identified within subcategories but noted that he could obtain clarification.

Board Member Lewis stated that this program covers a lot of elements and things the Board is attempting to accomplish and also would assist the Board in reaching some identified goals with additional resources. He believed that there would be merit to joining the program.

Chairperson Max agreed that there would be benefits provided including increased contacts for staff and assistance to the Board in accomplishing Work Plan items.

Board Member Bentz referenced the climate change portion and noted that item may not garner resident support.

Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator Anderson noted that the resolution could be tailored to a City's individual needs to a certain extent.

Board Member Valentine believed that portion was well crafted.

Board Member Hiatt believed that item should be recognized and noted that the Council can always amend that portion if desired.

Motion by Board Member Hiatt and seconded by Board Member Valentine to recommend that the City Council adopt a resolution to enable the City of Ramsey to enroll in the GreenStep Cities program.

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

5.02: Discuss Potential Creation of Subcommittees

Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator Anderson presented the staff report. He noted that the Board should also consider whether they would like to hold a tree sale and whether that item would be its own subcommittee or wrapped into another committee.

Chairperson Max believed the item should remain separate as it could be easily knocked out.

Board Member Valentine stated that he likes the list of subcommittees found in the report but noted there were a number of subcommittees listed if the desired number of members for each group is three members.

Board Member Lewis noted that participation in the GreenStep Cities program could assist with a number of the items listed.

Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator Anderson noted that the City would still need approval from the City Council before joining the GreenStep Cities program. He reviewed subcommittees which should be higher priority including the expo and public communications.

Councilmember LeTourneau noted that with the number of subcommittees listed and the number of Board Members available each Board Member could possibly belong to three subcommittees in addition to the regular meeting. He questioned if the Board would be willing to accept a recommendation from a subcommittee.

Chairperson Max noted that subcommittees could present a recommendation and the Board could then further discuss the item.

Board Member Stodola advised that the topic was discussed at the previous meeting and the consensus was that the Board would be willing to place trust in the subcommittees and not pick apart the recommendations.

Board Member Lewis stated that in his experience the Board is not functioning fully in this setting and has historically dumped a lot of the work onto Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator Anderson, which he did not believe was fair.

Board Member Bentz noted that a number of the subcommittees would not be meeting year round and they could shift during the year.

Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator Anderson agreed that the intent was to just have a subcommittee for a short period to get the ball rolling on some of the Work Plan items, rather than have a subcommittee run with an item from start to finish.

Chairperson Max noted that there would be some groups that would be fluid where members come and go. He also asked for the regulations regarding subcommittees, specifically if work can be done over the telephone and through email.

Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator Anderson stated that he believed that as long as no more than three members were participating that would not be a violation. He explained that can get tricky with email, as one member could bring in an outside opinion, which would violate the open meeting laws. He noted that he would clarify that information.

Board Member Lewis asked for input from Councilmember LeTourneau regarding the resolution needed to join the GreenStep Cities program.

Councilmember LeTourneau stated that he could not count votes but believed that the Council would support the resolution. He advised that one discussion could arise regarding whether this would be another layer of government and whether you would need to follow regulations or if the program is completely voluntary. He stated that he would be pleased to introduce the resolution to the Council.

Board Member Hiatt suggested parameters for the subcommittees including limiting participation for Board Members in only one subcommittee at one time. He believed that the process could become cloudy if the Board attempts to start multiple subcommittees at one time. He suggested that to start each Board Member should only have participation in one subcommittee.

Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator Anderson noted that this item was simply a discussion topic based on discussions last month and was not mandating that the subcommittees be formed right now. He advised that the list included in the Board packet was simply a jumping off point.

Chairperson Max noted that the Board has talked about subcommittees for a long time and believed that now was the time to move forward.

Board Member Hiatt also believed the Board should jump into this and begin work as it will take time for the Board to trust the subcommittees.

Board Member Prendergast questioned when the GreenStep Cities resolution would come before the Council.

Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator Anderson noted that the earliest that item would come before the Council would be November 26th. He confirmed that item could not become a subcommittee until the status is known. He believed the expo and community involvement would be critical subcommittees to form.

Chairperson Max agreed that those two subcommittees would be at the top. He also believed that the tree sale could be included as discussion needs to occur regarding reasons whether or not to continue with the sale.

Board Member Prendergast confirmed that the next step would be to identify which subcommittee Board Members would like to join.

It was the consensus of the Board to form an environmental expo subcommittee composed of Board Members Prendergast and Hiatt; a tree sale subcommittee composed of Board Member Bentz and Chairperson Max; public education/communications subcommittee composed of Board Members Lewis, Stodola, and Valentine.

Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator Anderson asked that any updates from the subcommittees be provided to him the Wednesday prior to the next meeting date in order to incorporate the information into the Board packet. He advised that he would amend the agenda to include updates from the subcommittees and possibly a GreenStep Cities item. He encouraged the Board to reach out to him if additional information or resources are needed.

Councilmember LeTourneau referenced the layout of the cases included in the Board packet, which could be used to format public education and communications.

Chairperson Max asked that each subcommittee identify a spokesperson that will provide the update at the regular Board meeting. He asked that Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator Anderson forward the template for cases so that the subcommittee updates could be provided in the same format.

Board Member Bentz confirmed that an update should be provided to Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator Anderson via Microsoft Word.

6. BOARD / STAFF INPUT

Board Member Lewis commented that he will most likely be attending the GreenStep Cities meeting the following week.

Board Member Bentz referenced the added encryption that will be occurring soon and noted that will limit the ability of some residents to access that channel.

Councilmember LeTourneau noted that he belongs to the Quad Cities Cable Commission and can follow up on the item in addition to Associate Planner/Environmental Anderson following

up on the item. He noted that a broad section of the community will still have access and access is available online.

Councilmember LeTourneau advised that a joint meeting took place the previous week between the Council and Commissions and Boards. He thanked the Board Members that attended as he believed there was great value obtained. He stated that the meeting was in line with the vision of the Council to be inclusive and open.

Chairperson Max commented that he found it beneficial as there are not many opportunities for members of different Boards and Commissions to come together.

Board Member Bentz discussed the DNR rule process and questioned what would occur if the shoreline erodes and a home no longer meets the setback requirement.

Associate Planner/Environmental Coordinator Anderson explained that per state statutes, there are lawful nonconforming rights that provide protection for a property owner when a structure was lawfully constructed but that due to some sort of change, no longer complies with standards in City Code.

7. ADJOURNMENT

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

The meeting adjourned at 7:35 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.

Meeting Date: 12/02/2013

By: Chris Anderson, Community
Development

Information

Title:

Topsoil Requirement Update

Purpose/Background:

As of December 2, 2013, MnDOT's Standard Specifications for Construction (Spec Book) will be converting to the 2014 edition. While there is still a Topsoil Specification (3877), the 2014 edition no longer includes the Premium Topsoil Borrow spec that is identified in Ramsey's City Code. As a result of this change in MnDOT's specifications, the City will need to consider revisions to City Code prior to the next construction season, as it will reference a specification that will no longer exist.

Observations/Alternatives:

The purpose of the topsoil ordinance was to promote water conservation by requiring a soil medium that had an improved water holding capacity. The ordinance was initially adopted in April of 2009. It was then revised early in 2010 to a more standardized specification (the MnDOT Premium Topsoil Borrow) but with a greater depth (increased from four [4] inches to six [6] inches), and then revised again in 2011 to reduce the required depth back to four [4] inches. The theory behind a topsoil requirement is that a material with a greater water holding capacity, such as organic matter, would help reduce the frequency and duration of irrigation needed during the summer months to maintain a green lawn.

Since the initial adoption of the topsoil ordinance in 2009, the City has heard from a number of builders and developers that the requirement is cost prohibitive and that added to the perception that Ramsey was not 'development friendly'. Thus, in 2012, Parks Staff developed four (4) test plots in North Commons to test and measure the effectiveness of various topsoil compositions and depths to determine whether the City's current requirement was supported by scientific data. Parks Staff is currently compiling all the data obtained from that experiment and will be developing a cost/benefit analysis to assist with any potential revisions to the topsoil specification.

In working with the ordinance, Staff has also observed several things that should also be taken into consideration. First, as the material is installed, it often times becomes very compacted as the equipment is driven back and forth over it. Secondly, if an in-ground irrigation system is not adjusted to account for the greater water holding capacity of the soil, the topsoil requirement is not really accomplishing its intended goal (and as a result, homeowners have found themselves with very 'spongy' yards).

Due to the change in MnDOT's specifications, this topic will be discussed with the Public Works Committee in December. That discussion will likely focus on the change in the specification and to seek direction as to how to address it, such as by amending City Code to the closest new specification. However, as this topic is revisited again, Staff may be recommending that the City look at incorporating a menu of options that could be implemented or made available, rather than just requiring the installation of topsoil. Staff wanted to bring the EPB up to speed on this matter prior to the formal review of the topsoil requirement and to see if there was any initial input that the Board may have.

Action:

This is for information purposes only, no action is needed.

Attachments

Current Topsoil Requirement

MnDOT 2014 Topsoil Specification Options

Form Review

Inbox

Chris Anderson (Originator)
Form Started By: Chris Anderson
Final Approval Date: 11/26/2013

Reviewed By

Chris Anderson

Date

11/26/2013 03:31 PM
Started On: 11/25/2013 09:46 AM

C Premium Topsoil Borrow

Premium topsoil borrow for use as a plant growing medium in critical areas and top dressing erosion stabilization mats shall be screened and pulverized and meet the requirements of Table 3877-3:

Table 3877-3 Premium Topsoil Borrow Requirement		
	Minimum	Maximum
Material Passing 2.0 mm (#10) Sieve	95%	--
Clay	10%	25%
Silt	25%	60%
Sand & Gravel	25%	60%
Organic Matter	5%	15%
pH	6.0	7.1
Soluble Salts	--	0.15 siemens/m 1.5 mmho/cm

MnDOT 2014 Standard Specifications for Construction
(3877 Topsoil Material)

A Common Topsoil Borrow

Provide Common topsoil borrow ranging from a silt loam, loam, clay loam, sandy clay loam, or sandy loam soils for general use as a turf growing medium and in accordance with Table 3877-1. Common Topsoil Borrow is a blend of Type A and/or Type B horizon soils defined in the soil profile section of the Grading and Base Manual, and is similar to topsoil found adjacent to the project.

Table 3877-1 Common Topsoil Borrow Requirements		
Requirement	Range	Test Method
Material Passing the ¾ in [19 mm]	100 %	ASTM D 422
Material passing No. 4 [4.75 mm]	≥ 85%	—
Clay	5% – 40%	ASTM D 422
Silt	10% – 60%	ASTM D 422
Sand	20% – 65%	ASTM D 422
Organic matter	3% – 20%	ASTM D 2974
pH	6.1 – 7.8	ASTM G 51

B Loam Topsoil Borrow

Provide topsoil borrow consisting mostly of loam ranging into sandy clay loam, sandy loam, silt loam, and clay loam soils as a plant growing medium for landscape and planting beds and in accordance with Table 3877-2:

Table 3877-2 Loam Topsoil Borrow Requirements		
Requirement	Range	Test Method
Material Passing the ¾ in [19.0 mm]	100%	ASTM D 422
Material passing No. 4 [4.75 mm]	≥ 90%	—
Clay	5% – 30%	ASTM D 422
Silt	10% – 50%	ASTM D 422
Sand	20% – 70%	ASTM D 422
Organic matter	3% – 20%	ASTM D 2974
pH	6.1 – 7.5	ASTM G 51
Soluble salts	≤ 0.15 siemens/m [1.5 mmho/cm]	—

C Sandy Clay Loam Topsoil Borrow

Provide topsoil borrow consisting mostly of a sandy clay loam and ranging into clay loam, sandy loam, and loam soils for use as a plant growing medium in critical areas, such as steep slopes and as a top dressing for Turf Reinforcement Mats and in accordance with Table 3877-3:

Table 3877-3 Sandy Clay Loam Topsoil Borrow Requirements		
Requirement	Range	Test Method
Screened and pulverized	—	—
Material passing the ¾ screen [19.0 mm]	100%	ASTM D 422
Material passing No. 4 [4.75 mm]	≥ 95%	ASTM D 422
Clay	15% – 35%	ASTM D 422
Silt	0% – 40%	ASTM D 422
Sand	30% – 80%	ASTM D 422
Organic matter	5% – 15%	ASTM D 2974
pH	6.0 – 7.1	ASTM G 51
Soluble salts	≤ 0.15 siemens/m [1.5 mmho/cm]	—

Environmental Policy Board (EPB)

5. 2.

Meeting Date: 12/02/2013

By: Chris Anderson, Community
Development

Information

Title:

Subcommittee Updates

Purpose/Background:

As the Board knows, several Subcommittees were formed at the November meeting. The Subcommittees topics included the Tree Sale, the Environmental Expo, and Education and Community Awareness. Staff will be creating a standing case each month for Subcommittee Updates. This will provide each Subcommittee an opportunity to review thoughts and/or brainstorm with the Board as a whole on certain ideas and concepts related to their focus area.

Observations/Alternatives:

Tree Sale Subcommittee:

The City of Ramsey has coordinated a Tree Sale for multiple decades now. The Tree Sale has traditionally always been offered in the spring to correspond with Arbor Day and the availability of bareroot trees. At one time, the Tree Sale included a handful of nurseries that brought their stock to a central location (in association with the Environmental Expo). Over time, for various reasons, the Tree Sale evolved into a pre-order program that provided residents an opportunity to purchase primarily bareroot trees at wholesale prices. Trees were available for pick-up during the Environmental Expo or, as of last year, during the Spring Recycling Event. However, over time, sales and participation have trended downward and this Subcommittee is exploring potential ways to reinvigorate the program.

Education & Community Awareness Subcommittee:

A major role of the EPB is to educate the citizenry on environmentally relative matters. This can be accomplished through a variety of ways including the City's newsletter, website and QCTV. This Subcommittee is researching and reviewing how to better promote environmental initiatives that the City has already implemented (such as being designated as a Tree City USA) as well as ways to increase community awareness of specific events and activities that coincide with seasonal opportunities (such as spring/fall recycling events and holiday lights recycling).

Environmental Expo Subcommittee:

The City has coordinated an Environmental Expo event for well over ten (10) years now. The event was initially developed in partnership with Ramsey Elementary School and had been held at the school each spring. In 2007, the school informed the City that they could no longer continue the partnership as it was consuming too much staff time in planning and coordination. Thus, the City revamped the Environmental Expo event and shifted it to the Municipal Center. In 2013, the event was incorporated into Happy Days to capitalize on greater foot traffic and greater promotion. This Subcommittee is looking at how to grow the expo event now with potential guest speakers, activities, etc.

Action:

Each Subcommittee should be prepared to update the Board with any relevant information and solicit feedback and direction from the Board with regard to their focus area.

Attachments

No file(s) attached.

Form Review

Inbox

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