

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

On Wednesday, January 18, 2017, the Environmental Policy Board (EPB) met in the Lake Itasca Conference Room at the Ramsey Municipal Center, 7550 Sunwood Drive N.W., Ramsey, Minnesota.

Members Present: Chairperson Thomas Stodola (arrived at 6:34 p.m.)
 Board Member Colleen Anderson
 Board Member Reid Bernard
 Board Member Jane Covart
 Board Member Lucas Trossen
 Board Member Michael Valentine

Members Absent: Board Member Michael Hiatt

Also Present: City Planner Chris Anderson
 Councilmember John LeTourneau

1. CALL TO ORDER

Vice Chairperson Valentine called the meeting to order at 6:32 p.m.

2. CITIZEN INPUT

None.

3. APPROVE AGENDA

Motion by Board Member Covart and seconded by Board Member Bernard to approve the agenda as submitted.

Motion carried. Voting Yes: Vice Chairperson Valentine, Board Member Covart, Bernard, Anderson, and Trossen. Voting No: None. Absent: Commissioner Hiatt and Chairperson Stodola.

4. APPROVE MINUTES

4.01: Approve Meeting Minutes December 19, 2016

Motion by Board Member Covart and seconded by Board Member Trossen to approve the regular meeting minutes dated December 19, 2016.

Motion carried. Voting Yes: Vice Chairperson Valentine, Board Member Covart, Trossen, Anderson, and Bernard. Voting No: None. Absent: Commissioner Hiatt and Chairperson Stodola.

5. POLICY BOARD BUSINESS

5.01: Receive Presentation on Irrigation System Components and an Overview of Incentive Programs

City Planner Anderson introduced the topic and guest speaker Russ Jundt of Conserva Irrigation, and stated that Mr. Jundt would provide a presentation on water conserving technologies available for irrigation systems and an overview of Minnesota Nursery and Landscape Association (MNLA) incentive/rebate programs that encourage use of these newer technologies.

Russ Jundt, Conserva Irrigation, shared a presentation that outlined his background and explained water conservation as it relates to irrigation in residential, commercial, and municipal areas with over 46 million residential irrigation systems nationwide. He stated irrigation systems waste more water than any other source.

Councilmember John LeTourneau asked if the waste comes from systems not being designed properly.

Mr. Jundt explained components are very inexpensive and that every head needs to be check-valved, which is not an expensive upgrade. He said zoning needs to be done per micro-climates and that a smart controller is much better than a simple timer in saving water. He shared a sketch outlining zones versus time watering and explained how less watering is needed in April versus August which results in massive overwatering. Mr. Jundt explained how rain sensors operate like a “snooze alarm” and shuts off but then returns to programmed time resulting in overwatering. He said smart controllers can be programmed based on weather data by zip code which saves substantial amounts of water and shared an example in a Hugo homeowners association where over 2,200 sprinkler heads were broken in their 7,800 head system.

Mr. Jundt shared changing industry dynamics including landscaping demand, control consumption, increased pricing, fines, and penalties and said most water wasted is through irrigation systems. He shared how smart controllers can reduce water usage by 40-60% and that they developed a proprietary system where low scores provide motivation. He shared their partnerships with Toro and The Wyland Foundation which are dedicated to water conservation.

Mr. Jundt displayed samples of ET sensors and controllers and outlined the Metropolitan Council’s water efficiency grant program and cities who offer rebates, adding the return on investment for commercial systems can be seen in days and residential systems within one to two seasons.

City Planner Anderson asked if ET sensors are different than soil moisture sensors.

Mr. Jundt said ET sensors are different as they operate based on 40 years of weather data.

Board Member Trossen inquired about the life expectancy of these controllers.

Mr. Jundt replied controllers are warranted up to five years and that data is updated every year.

Chairperson Stodola asked how much would be added to a system in new construction.

Mr. Jundt said smart controllers cost \$250-350 more than standard controllers on new installations.

Board Member Anderson clarified the total additional cost for an existing system to be retrofitted would be \$475-675 and asked if one system is better than another.

Mr. Jundt said a system that includes a smart controller with an ET sensor would be better than just a soil moisture sensor and would result in the City saving a lot in water.

Informational; no action required.

5.02: Receive Update from Anoka County Community Health and Environmental Services Department related to Water Resources

City Planner Anderson introduced Bret Biernat, Anoka County Environmental Services (ACES) who would provide an update on water related initiatives/activities.

Mr. Biernat, ACES, shared his background beginning in 1991 with the ground water management act established in 1989 to address watershed management issues and creating the groundwater protection plan. He reviewed priorities and said Anoka County created a task force to prioritize water, including coordination of water resources protection and management. He said it is important not to work as silos and that Ramsey's citizen survey included very good scores rating the drinking water. Mr. Biernat reviewed the Board's priorities and outlined the County's Water Task Force statement as a committee charged with making water a priority. He said the wellhead protection act ensures no pollution sources and the Community Health Services Plan includes measurable goals such as well sealing to reduce pollution.

Mr. Biernat outlined the goal of reducing wells by two percent per year and to test private wells and collaborate better with all the organizations. He shared that the Irrigation Association has declared July as Smart Irrigation Month and reviewed community health issues including water quality and sustainable drinking water. Mr. Biernat shared how the County has provided water testing for homeowners since 1972 which is important from a public health standpoint and outlined how they can support the Board. He shared water conservation goals as a partner with WaterSense and the EPA and referred to their "KnowTheFlow" coordination tool website and outreach and education efforts. Mr. Biernat outlined drinking water protection and the Water Task Force focus and shared how the County can be an advocate for cities such as creating a well sealing video.

City Planner Anderson distributed a sign-up sheet for notification of Task Force meetings and offerings then referred to Ray Renner of Renner & Sons well drilling, who provided the Department of Health with well locations in Ramsey.

Mr. Biernat said the records were very helpful and that Mr. Renner's brother is on the Water Task Force.

City Planner Anderson shared how the City offers water testing kits at City Hall.

Mr. Biernat said he is pleased with this partnership as cities can distribute bottles for testing instead of plastic bags which provides better results.

City Planner Anderson inquired about WaterSense program obligations such as reporting requirements.

Mr. Biernat said an annual report is required for the EPA to promote water efficiency as a collaborative effort which could be done separately.

Mr. Jundt inquired about the fee for a water test.

Mr. Biernat said the cost is relatively inexpensive at \$30 per test.

5.03: Consider DRAFT Ordinance #17-04 Eliminating the Requirement for In-Ground Irrigation in Multiple Zoning Districts

City Planner Anderson presented the staff report and draft ordinance to amend multiple sections of City Code to eliminate the in-ground irrigation requirement for multi-family and commercial/industrial projects. He explained this would not prohibit a project from including such a system, if they wished, but simply removes it as a required improvement. City Planner Anderson stated revisions can be made to this draft, if desired, based on the information received tonight about technological improvements to irrigation systems.

City Planner noted the proposed ordinance could be amended if the Board wishes to include language regarding smart technologies. He said due to the rescheduled meeting the public hearing notice deadlines could not be met so if brought forward the ordinance now it would be discussed at the March Planning Commission with Council consideration in March or possibly April. City Planner Anderson asked Mr. Jundt if the State Statute requirement refers to rain sensors only as it seems that it could be interpreted to require smart technologies.

Mr. Jundt said the Statute's intention was for rain sensors but the legislation is looking at broadening language to include any device affected by rain.

Chairperson Stodola said the ordinance drafted satisfies our direction and asked if staff is requesting the Board go further by requiring different technologies.

City Planner Anderson said that he was not requesting that but thought it should be discussed based on input from the Board last month. He said the timing would provide for an opportunity to include ET sensors, smart controllers, moisture control sensors and other technologies if the Board desired.

Chairperson Stodola confirmed the recommendation of incentives.

City Planner Anderson said staff intended that language would be formalized after the evening's discussion on Item 5.01 so staff will bring forward an outline for incentive programs for both retrofits and new systems and could include irrigation as well as indoor appliances and fixtures at a future meeting. He noted they now understand that outdoor water conservation provides the most return but that the Board could expand any type of rebate program.

Board Member Anderson said she would like to see incentives rather than rebates as it would provide better participation.

Chairperson Stodola said he is not advocating for incentivizing upgrades but would prefer language requiring smart sensors, ET sensor, etc. for new construction and at incentivizing retrofitting existing system.

Board Member Bernard agreed.

Board Member Trossen said he supported eliminating the requirement for systems but if someone is going to install a new system it should be water efficient.

Board Member Valentine agreed, stating the return on investment is huge.

City Planner Anderson noted an in-ground irrigation system is not required for single family home construction and asked for an estimate for multi-family/homeowner associations, and commercial/industrial projects.

Mr. Jundt said the cost is usually not much more and noted the return on investment for large systems is much quicker because of the larger water source.

Board Member Anderson referred to the need for fees and inspections and asked how we guarantee the system works.

City Planner Anderson said irrigation permits are currently required to ensure backflow preventers are installed but agreed that this is something that will need to be reviewed in greater detail.

Board Member Anderson suggested the requirements be included as part of the Certificate of Occupancy process.

Chairperson Stodola said more research is needed.

Board Member Covart confirmed the proposed ordinance is for new construction only for multi-family and homeowners associations.

City Planner Anderson said once the Board reaches consensus staff can include language on permitting processes.

Chairperson Stodola said the overall goal is to use less water and that he wants to be bold in their recommendation.

Board Member Trossen agreed, stating pricing makes this action obvious and suggested an incentive for retrofit.

City Planner Anderson said staff will develop an ordinance outlining requirements for single family, multi-family, commercial, and industrial projects. A potential incentive program for retrofitting existing systems will be explored and brought back at a future meeting.

Chairperson Stodola clarified incentives will not be included in the ordinance amendment but instead Staff will work to develop a program for retrofitting existings systems.

It was the consensus of the Environmental Policy Board to bring forward an ordinance for Council consideration outlining irrigation system requirements for all properties, including single family, multi-family, commercial, and industrial and separately develop an incentive program to encourage retrofitting existing irrigation systems with more water efficient components.

Mr. Jundt said he would offer proposed language for the ordinance and applauded the Board for their work in water conservation.

Board Member Valentine referred to revenue loss due to this ordinance.

City Planner Anderson said staff will discuss those implications with the Finance and Public Works Departments.

Chairperson Stodola said with discussions of constructing an additional treatment plant this action could potentially delay that need.

Mr. Biernat said this action could delay some demand costs and allow the City to work together with Nowthen and Oak Grove when they are ready for increased water needs.

Board Member Anderson asked who pays for the rebates.

City Planner Anderson said grant programs could potentially be renewed or similar programs created.

Board Member Anderson asked if this type of proposal is typical throughout the country.

Mr. Jundt said no as California's need is much higher. He added the City of Andover odd/even water restrictions do not apply if a homeowner's system includes a smart controller.

Board Member Anderson said Metropolitan Council grants need to be included in these discussions.

City Planner Anderson noted that the decision not to participate in past grant opportunities was based on the lack of staff resources to administer the program.

Chairperson Stodola asked that direction could be changed.

City Planner Anderson said the direction could potentially be changed if the program is renewed.

5.04: Review Concept Plan and Mandatory Environmental Review for Pearson Farm Residential Development

City Planner Anderson presented the staff report, noting the City received a Concept Plan for the potential future residential development currently named Pearson Farm. If approved, it could result in approximately 350 new housing units on City services. Due to its scale and size, the project will be subject to an Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW).

City Planner Anderson noted the EAW process takes 2-3 months to review and could result in the need for an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). He said the Board will have a significant role in the EAW review and will include support of a planning consultant who focuses on EAWs. He asked if the Board had any comments otherwise prior to the review and stated this will be a complex process including navigation with the public. He added that the Environmental Quality Board is looking for volunteers for their review panel on how this process can be improved and to let him know if any Board Members are interested in being involved.

Board Member Trossen inquired about the developer.

City Planner Anderson said the developer is Capstone Homes and the property owner is Al Pearson. He said Capstone Homes is located in Ramsey and has experience in the City with closing out the Brookfield project. He said Capstone Homes has proven to be a good developer and that the proposed 350 units will be phased over a number of years.

Chairperson Stodola asked what type of housing the developer proposes.

City Planner Anderson said although they have not received a formal application the project would include both single and multi-family homes with multi-family on the north and south portions and single-family in between with a community building and small neighborhood parks.

Board Member Covart inquired about road improvements.

City Planner Anderson said road improvements are planned for Bunker Lake Boulevard and Puma Street with a proposed second connection to Alpine Drive.

Informational; no action required.

6. BOARD / STAFF INPUT

- **Pilot Program for Collecting Extra Cardboard over Holidays**

City Planner Anderson advised the implemented pilot program with ACE Solid Waste for cardboard collection was very popular. He stated over the three weeks it was available, the 20-yard container was dumped four times. He said the effort was at no cost to the City to gauge how well it would be utilized and was successful with a total of over 2 tons of cardboard recycled with no illegal dumping. City Planner Anderson said staff will likely continue with this program over the holidays in the future.

City Planner Anderson stated the Board's February meeting will be rescheduled to Wednesday, February 22 due to the President's Day holiday.

7. ADJOURNMENT

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

The meeting adjourned at 8:53 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Chris Anderson
City Planner

ATTEST:

JoAnn Shaw
Community Development Secretary

Drafted by Cathy Sorensen
TimeSaver Off Site Secretarial, Inc.