

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

On Monday, February 26, 2018, the Environmental Policy Board (EPB) met in the Lake Itasca Room at the Ramsey Municipal Center, 7550 Sunwood Drive N.W., Ramsey, Minnesota.

Members Present: Chairperson Thomas Stodola
 Board Member Colleen Anderson
 Board Member Reid Bernard
 Board Member Jane Covart
 Board Member Michael Hiatt
 Board Member Lucas Trossen
 Board Member Michael Valentine

Members Absent: None

Also Present: City Planner Chris Anderson
 City Council Liaison John LeTourneau

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Stodola 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 Bernard to approve the agenda as submitted.

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

4. APPROVE MINUTES

4.01: Approve Meeting Minutes Dated December 18, 2017

Motion by Board Member Hiatt and seconded by Board Member Trossen to approve the regular meeting minutes dated December 18, 2017.

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

5. POLICY BOARD BUSINESS

5.01: Review Sketch Plan for Centra Homes

City Planner Anderson presented the staff report. He reported that the City has received an application for Sketch Plan review of a detached townhome project proposed by Centra Homes. He stated that the residential project is located at the southwest corner of Ramsey Boulevard and Bunker Lake Boulevard and proposed 40 detached townhome units. He noted that this is not an item that requires action and is simply an opportunity for the Board to provide input.

Board Member Anderson asked if the City has worked with Centra Homes previously.

City Planner Anderson stated that although Centra has experience in surrounding communities, he is not aware of any projects within Ramsey.

Board Member Hiatt asked if these will be multi-level townhomes and asked whether there would be attached parking provided.

City Planner Anderson stated that he is unsure whether all the townhomes would be single level or multi-level homes. He noted that each unit would have an attached garage and driveway for parking. He also identified proposed visitor parking stalls on the plan.

Chairperson Stodola agreed that the units are so narrow that he could not imagine that parking could be provided for the units without an attached garage.

Board Member Hiatt asked and received confirmation that access would only be provided by the internal roadway and would not be accessible directly from Bunker Lake Boulevard or Ramsey Boulevard. He asked if there would be sufficient space to require trees in some fashion.

City Planner Anderson replied that there will be space for shrubs and small ornamental trees along Ramsey Boulevard, noting that the plantings will occur on the private property outside of the right-of-way. He explained that staff will advise the applicant to look at the adjacent developments in attempt to match the overall aesthetic and continue that.

Councilmember LeTourneau referenced the existing stand of evergreen trees at the corner of Ramsey Boulevard and Bunker Lake Boulevard and asked if there is a possibility to preserve that stand of trees.

City Planner Anderson agreed that would be a preference as that tree stand would act as a great buffer for the end units. He stated that at this time he is not sure of the applicant's plans for the trees in that area.

Councilmember LeTourneau proposed that language be added requesting that the applicant consider preserving that tree stand as the project moves forward. He noted that perhaps the trees are within the right-of-way and would not then be able to be proposed.

City Planner Anderson noted that the right-of-way boundary shown on this sketch is an estimate. He noted that the trees would not have to be removed simply because they are within the right-of-

way and explained that the County simply does not want additional trees planted in the right-of-way.

Chairperson Stodola noted that there may be some impact to the roots upon construction.

Councilmember LeTourneau asked if there are additional trees on the property that could be preserved.

City Planner Anderson replied that he does not believe that there are additional trees on the property that would meet the City definition of significant trees. He stated that much of the land within The COR has a number of smaller Siberian Elm trees, which is an invasive species, and therefore he would not put the same emphasis on preservation of those trees. He stated that a tree inventory will be done as part of the initial submittal and then the Board will have a better understanding of the mature trees that exist. He explained that the removal of invasive species is excluded from the calculations done for the tree preservation plan.

Motion by Board Member Valentine and seconded by Board Member Hiatt to encourage the developer to preserve the existing stand of evergreen trees to the extent possible.

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

5.02: Consider Arbor Day Project(s)

City Planner Anderson presented the staff report. He stated that the City has yet to receive confirmation but noted that the necessary documentation was submitted to be recognized once again as a Tree City USA. He stated that this will be Ramsey's 26th consecutive year being recognized. He noted that one of the aspects of being a Tree City USA involves an observance of Arbor Day. He stated that when the City stopped hosting the Environmental Expo event, the Board expressed a desire to see a broader effort put toward observing and celebrating Arbor Day. He advised that there are a couple opportunities available to recognize and observe Arbor Day. He noted that the purpose of this case is to summarize the opportunities to the Board and gauge the interest of the Board in participating.

Board Member Bernard stated that he likes both ideas, specifically mentioning the pollinator packet idea.

City Planner Anderson stated that there was a small-scale planting event along the Lake Itasca Trail as part of the Mayors for Monarchs program which included removal of invasive species, a prescribed burn, and will conclude with pollinator friendly plantings.

Chairperson Stodola asked if both projects would be an option or whether a decision would have to be made.

City Planner Anderson clarified that this would not be an either/or decision and advised that both projects could occur. He noted that he would also welcome additional activities. He advised that the City could obtain the packets at no cost to the City. He provided additional details on a previous planting event that took place two years ago. He noted that the event was scheduled on a night of

the regular Park and Recreation Commission meeting with a back up date set for the date of the regular EPB meeting.

Board Member Bernard stated that he is involved in youth athletics and could find a baseball team or two that could volunteer their services in planting.

Board Member Hiatt stated that the Anoka High School football team is always looking for projects and perhaps that would be an option.

City Planner Anderson confirmed that the parks department already works in collaboration with the football team on spring volunteer projects. He commented that it would be great to have the involvement of the youth athletics. He noted that ideally, he would also like participation from the Board, especially if there will be a number of children assisting in the plantings.

Chairperson Stodola stated to his recollection the Board has not officially been involved in a project in a while.

City Planner Anderson replied that the Board was invited to the planting event that took place in 2016 and advised of some smaller projects that the Board was invited to be a part of going back further into the past. He stated that with the addition of a new city planner in the planning department, he should have additional time to assist with these types of events and to put more effort towards the Board's workplan.

Councilmember LeTourneau asked the scale of the distance and width of plantings and asked if one packet would be enough. He stated that he would want to ensure that the density is sufficient to cover factors like loss.

City Planner Anderson stated that there is sufficient width to make this work, even as the plants grow, without encroaching on private property. He agreed that there will be some mortality due to lack of precipitation and deer. He stated that the pollinator packet is 500 while the seedlings come in packets of 100. He stated that if the Board is in agreement with this, he would work more on the calculations to ensure the proper amount is gained.

Councilmember LeTourneau asked if there is some commitment from City staff to ensure maintenance of the plantings for perhaps a period of one year.

City Planner Anderson stated that he would feel safe stating that the parks staff could water if the conditions are dry. He noted that while the watering would not be a daily activity, he was hopeful he could ensure some level of commitment.

Councilmember LeTourneau stated that a level of commitment from the parks staff for ongoing maintenance would help to secure a buy-in from the community in this project.

City Planner Anderson noted that he will have a conversation with the parks staff. He stated that staff would not want this to turn into an eyesore either with dead plantings lining the trail.

Councilmember LeTourneau stated that if this project is a success, it would be nice to continue the effort along other trails in the City in the future.

City Planner Anderson asked if there are any other ideas for events for this year or future years. He clarified that this would not become like the previous expo, where that is the main focus of the Board, but is simply looking for events that would promote the work and ambition of the Board.

Board Member Valentine stated that he likes the idea of doing plantings, whether that is trees or pollinator plantings. He stated that there are so many variations that could be built upon. He asked for additional details on the scale of 500 plants and whether that would be enough plants. He believed that plantings would be a great place to start and could evolve into other planting projects, like raingardens, in the future.

City Planner Anderson provided additional details on the seedlings that have been supplied in the past. He stated that if properly planted, the seedlings will grow and need room to grow.

6. BOARD / STAFF INPUT

- **Select Winning 2017 Photo – Nature of Ramsey Category**

City Planner Anderson thanked the Board Members that submitted votes for the photo contest. He provided background information on the photo contest which was implemented in 2017, noting that the EPB was chosen to vote on the category of Nature in Ramsey. He displayed the photographs from the category and identified the top three photographs that garnered the most votes. He noted that while he did not have the final tally, the parks department staff will determine the winning photo per the votes submitted by the Board.

- **Staff Updates**

City Planner Anderson provided background information on wetland banking and credits that City staff received. He stated that the City will once again host three recycling events this year. He noted that a pilot was done last year adding a third event and because that third event did not impact the materials received at the other events, they will continue to host spring, summer, and fall recycling events.

Councilmember LeTourneau asked if the summer event was as well attended as the spring and fall events.

City Planner Anderson stated that he did not have the calculations off-hand but agreed that there was less traffic at the summer event. He stated that even though there was less traffic at the summer event, the tonnage of materials received was equal to the fall event. He stated that because this last summer was the first time the summer recycling event was held, participation may increase as residents become more aware of the event. He noted that the Board will begin meeting in the Council Chambers beginning in March and the meetings will now be televised. He explained that the EPB and EDA were the only two groups that were not televised and therefore the Council made the decision to televise the meetings for those groups to provide additional transparency to the residents.

City Planner Anderson stated that the City has currently partnered with the University of Minnesota Resilient Communities Program. He noted that the fall semester projects have been

completed and the spring courses have now been matched up with projects. He noted that the projects that matched with classes included organics recycling, sustainable initiatives, and recognition of businesses that lead the way in recycling. He noted that Coborn's received an award from Anoka County for their efforts in recycling the previous year. He advised that PACT Charter School was also recognized the previous year for their efforts with organics recycling. He stated that there is another project matched with an urban forestry class to complete a public tree survey. He noted that this is something he has wanted to accomplish in the City for the past several years, especially as it would assist with planning for potential impacts from Emerald Ash Borer. He stated that he would be looking for volunteers to assist in collection of the data. He explained that the students would provide the necessary training so that volunteers could get out on the ground to collect data. He noted that the training is tentatively scheduled for April and would include classroom time on the initial date and then some field training on a second date. He stated that the data collection would presumably occur in May, as long as conditions allow.

Councilmember LeTourneau asked if the students would also include recommendations for planning with the knowledge that is gained.

City Planner Anderson stated that once he is given the data from the students, he would then take that information and prepare other planning documents with more accurate information. He welcomed interested Board Members to participate. He noted that the students will also be reaching out to other community groups such as the Master Gardeners and Master Naturalists, Parks Commission and City Council.

Councilmember LeTourneau suggested reaching out to the Ramsey Garden Club.

Board Member Valentine stated that for the past six weeks he has been working with a metro wide steering committee working on the Metro Environmental Commissioners Conference, which is an effort to get groups like the EPB together to talk about common interests. He stated that a program has been scheduled for April 7th and noted that as more information is available, City Planner Anderson will provide that information to the Board. He stated that it seems like this would be a good opportunity for the Board to participate in and will feature topics that the Board has been discussing. He stated that the event will be held at the Hennepin Methodist Church in Minneapolis and will have free parking and no admission fee. He noted that there are other larger communities in the metro area and it will be a good opportunity for the Board to gain that shared input.

Chairperson Stodola asked for an update on the organics recycling program and whether participation has declined in the winter months.

City Planner Anderson provided an update on the organics recycling program. He stated that the last calculation that he had measured about three tons of material that has been diverted from garbage to the organics recycling. He noted that is a pretty amazing figure considering the small amount of publicity the program has had thus far. He noted that the locks were removed during the winter because the locks were freezing in the colder temperatures. He stated that to his knowledge there has not been any contamination.

Chairperson Stodola stated that he makes deliveries maybe every other week and has not noticed any materials that would not be eligible for the organics recycling.

City Planner Anderson provided updates on other recycling activity including cardboard recycling that was done and the annual holiday lights recycling.

7. ADJOURNMENT

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

The meeting adjourned at 7:58 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Chris Anderson
City Planner

ATTEST:

JoAnn Shaw
Community Development Secretary

Drafted by Amanda Staple
TimeSaver Off Site Secretarial, Inc.