

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

On Monday, November 18, 2019, the Environmental Policy Board (EPB) met in the Council Chambers at the Ramsey Municipal Center, 7550 Sunwood Drive N.W., Ramsey, Minnesota.

Members Present: Chairperson Michael Valentine
 Board Member Reid Bernard
 Board Member Jane Covart
 Board Member Melissa Fetterley
 Board Member Michael Hiatt
 Board Member Laura Moore

Members Absent: None

Also Present: City Planner Chris Anderson

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Valentine called the meeting to order at 6:30 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: Chairperson Valentine, Board Member Covart, Bernard, Fetterley, Hiatt, and Moore. Voting No: None. Absent: None.

4. APPROVE MINUTES

4.01: Approve Meeting Minutes Dated September 16, 2019

Motion by Board Member Hiatt and seconded by Board Member Covart to approve the regular meeting minutes dated September 16, 2019.

Motion carried. Voting Yes: Chairperson Valentine, Board Member Hiatt, Covart, Bernard, Fetterley, and Moore. Voting No: None. Absent: None.

5. POLICY BOARD BUSINESS

5.01: Consider a Revised Landscape Plan for Delta ModTech

City Planner Anderson presented the staff report. He stated that Delta ModTech, the applicant, is a new industrial business that received its approvals earlier this year and has contacted the City with proposed revisions to their approved Landscape Plan. The property itself is located at 8445 Bunker Lake Boulevard and is zoned E-3 Employment. The subject property does abut an existing residential property that is zoned R-3 Residential (High Density). The applicant has noted that there were no proposed revisions to the landscaping border with this residential property nor were there any tree reductions proposed along the public street frontage. The proposed reduced tree plantings are mostly along the northern and eastern property boundaries, which presumably abut future industrial projects. He recommended approval of the revised Landscape Plan. He also asked for direction on whether staff should proceed with research on possible planting requirement amendments.

Board Member Hiatt asked if the reduction in trees is based on the thought that the plantings would be too heavy as originally proposed.

City Planner Anderson confirmed that the applicant attempted to comply with the code but feels that number of plantings would require removal and thinning as the trees mature and grow larger. He stated that with how dense the plantings were proposed there would be competition for sun and nutrients. He stated that even the amended landscaping plan is an investment of over \$100,000.

Board Member Hiatt stated that it would appear that the amended plan would have the potential to create healthier trees and landscaping.

Board Member Covart asked if industrial development is planned to the north and east.

City Planner Anderson confirmed that the sites to the north and east are also zoned E-3, which is industrial and therefore would be a similar type user with similar landscaping requirements. He explained that space for landscaping becomes more challenging with large industrial buildings and the required elements such as parking and stormwater ponding.

Board Member Hiatt asked if the required trees and shrubs was determined based on the amount of land and not the available greenspace.

City Planner Anderson explained how the tree and shrub calculations are determined.

Board Member Hiatt stated that as the industrial parks are evolving to larger buildings, it would be helpful to have flexibility to accommodate larger buildings and less greenspace.

Board Member Fetterley stated that it does not appear there are other areas to accommodate additional trees or shrubs.

City Planner Anderson confirmed that there would not be additional room onsite. He believed that the amended plan will result in a better product and will still be well landscaped.

Board Member Hiatt asked if there would be concern with setting precedent for other companies that would like to minimize their contribution to landscaping.

City Planner Anderson stated that the second part of the discussion tonight will focus on City Code to determine if changes should be made to ensure that the Code is achieving the desired results. He stated that this amended plan would not skimp on landscaping and would still be a thorough planting of the site. He explained that would not be the same as someone coming along with a very bare landscaping plan.

Motion by Board Member Hiatt and seconded by Board Member Bernard to recommend approval of the revised Landscape Plan.

Motion carried. Voting Yes: Chairperson Valentine, Board Member Hiatt, Bernard, Covart, Fetterley, and Moore. Voting No: None. Absent: None.

City Planner Anderson provided a review of the current landscaping requirements of the City and asked the Board for input on whether amendments should be made to ensure the desired goal is being achieved.

Board Member Moore stated that she has noticed over the past year or so that whenever a larger building is proposed for development they are attempting to squeeze in trees and a reduction is ultimately approved. She believed that it would be viable to continue discussion on amending the Code requirements related to these large industrial buildings.

Chairperson Valentine agreed that it would seem the Board would need to review the Code requirements to determine what would be appropriate for industrial buildings. He stated that he would be interested in knowing the requirements of other peer communities.

Board Member Hiatt asked how close the amended landscaping plan would come to meeting the requirement if the tree and shrub requirements were applied to the greenspace area rather than the building area and parking lot.

City Planner Anderson stated that based on the Code, that would be based on the linear footage of the site and therefore would still not change the number drastically.

Board Member Hiatt commented that especially in the industrial park area, where there are large buildings and large parking areas, it would make sense to simply consider the greenspace areas on that plot. He agreed that it would not make sense to require a large number of plantings that would ultimately need to be reduced in future years as they grow.

City Planner Anderson stated that idea is very similar to how the planting requirements are applied in the multi-family districts currently. He stated that he will attempt to put together some information the Board could review to see how that formula would translate to this district. He noted that he will also gather the requirements from other communities.

Board Member Covart asked and received confirmation that both the original and amended landscaping plans included a stormwater pond. She asked if the stormwater ponding could be excluded from the calculations as well.

Board Member Hiatt referenced the policy that allows a residential developer to financially contribute to the City's tree fund if all the trees cannot be replaced onsite. He asked if that would be a potential for commercial/industrial development as well.

City Planner Anderson noted that while that could be a discussion, he suggested that the City should still look at its requirements.

Board Member Moore asked if the number of trees removed to construct the site is considered in terms of landscaping requirements or is that calculation simply based on the calculations discussed.

City Planner Anderson provided details on the tree preservation requirements for industrial sites. He noted that in this instance there were not tree preservation calculations because of the lack of significant trees on site.

City Planner Anderson confirmed the consensus of the Board is to bring back additional information for the Board to discuss related to industrial landscaping requirements for further discussion.

5.02: Consider Participation in a Nationwide Water Conservation Challenge

City Planner Anderson presented the staff report. He explained that the purpose of this case is to introduce the EPB to an interesting and friendly nationwide water conservation challenge sponsored by the Wyland Foundation. The Wyland Foundation is a non-profit organization focused on providing environmental awareness, with an emphasis on water. The Wyland Foundation hosts a National Mayor's Challenge for Water Conservation in April each year. The challenge intends to simultaneously engage and educate residents on water conservation and provides simple tools to implement water conservation in various aspects of everyday life. There is a lot of good information about the challenge on their website: <https://mywaterpledge.com>.

Chairperson Valentine asked if this would go through the City Council as well.

City Planner Anderson confirmed that Staff did connect with the Mayor on this topic before placing on the agenda so that he was aware of it and to see if there were any immediate concerns, which there were not. He confirmed that this would also go through the City Council.

Chairperson Valentine confirmed that it would make sense to participate but noted that he would not want there to be a conflict with the City Council, referencing a past dispute over GreenStep Cities.

City Planner Anderson confirmed that this would go forward to the City Council, explaining that there would be no obligations.

Board Member Hiatt asked how much more difficult it would be for a community that has a greater percentage of private wells to compete with cities that rely solely on City water.

City Planner Anderson explained that there is a calculator that asks a number of questions to determine the footprint. He was unsure if there was a way to track water reduction for those using private wells.

Board Member Hiatt stated that he would assume that this nationwide effort would have some kind of accommodation for cities that also have private well users. He explained that if there is not some kind of accommodation, he would worry that Ramsey could lose about 40 percent of potential participants that use private wells.

City Planner Anderson confirmed that there are questions related to specific water use, such as shower length. He stated that nothing in the challenge requires the City to prove the water savings. He explained that it is based on engaging residents to participate and implement actions that help to conserve water. He reiterated that the contest/challenge is about residents taking a pledge to conserve water, not about actual water savings.

Board Member Covart asked if the metric used could be related to the amount of water awareness that was raised through the program rather than specific water reductions.

City Planner Anderson agreed that a webpage could be built for this challenge and noted that simple questions could be added in an attempt to analyze the impact in terms of education and awareness.

Board Member Fetterley noted that there is no cost to participate and if there is very little administrative effort required, this would seem to be a benefit to the community in terms of education and awareness.

Chairperson Valentine referenced the previous hiccup with the GreenStep Cities program and stated that perhaps additional information should be brought back to the Board before the item moves to the City Council.

City Planner Anderson confirmed the consensus of the Board is to get more information and details on the challenge and bring the topic back for formal consideration.

6. BOARD / STAFF INPUT

Board Member Moore stated that the Environmental Conference will take place again in March or April, noting that all members of the Board are welcome to attend. She referenced a recent email that included a survey and asked the Board to complete the survey. She stated that parks staff has asked if any of the Board would like to assist in plantings at Pearson Park this spring. She noted that the event would be focused on pollinator friendly plantings.

City Planner Anderson confirmed that he could coordinate that activity as the event nears.

Board Member Moore referenced a policy of a neighboring city that provides an incentive for converting typical yard space to pollinator friendly plantings. She noted that perhaps this group could look into a similar initiative.

City Planner Anderson stated that if the Board is interested, that could be reviewed. He noted that the zoning code does allow for native landscapes.

Chairperson Valentine confirmed the consensus of the Board to further discuss that opportunity.

Board Member Moore asked if there would be support from the Board to put together a climate action plan or environmental action plan.

City Planner Anderson noted that he can distribute information to the Board to review.

Board Member Fetterley asked if the upcoming annual meeting schedule could be distributed soon to discuss meetings that may need to be rescheduled.

City Planner Anderson confirmed that the January and February meetings do need to be rescheduled because of the holidays that fall on those regular meeting days. He suggested that Board Members review their schedules to determine the best date to reschedule for those months, noting that could be finalized at the December meeting.

Board Member Hiatt strongly encouraged the Board to consider an Arbor Day event at the new elementary school site. He stated that would be a good opportunity to forge a relationship with that school.

- **Staff Updates**

City Planner Anderson reported that the second and final standalone paper shredding event was recently held but was not well attended. He stated that in discussions with the vendor it was determined that the standalone events have not been as successful as originally believed and did not believe that it would be worthwhile to continue standalone events for shredding. He noted that paper shredding would still be offered at the regular recycling events. He reported that the City Council recently approved the EPB Work Plan for 2020. He stated that engineering staff is working with SEH to complete a study on regional surface water treatment as well as a second study specific to Ramsey and groundwater treatment options to address the manganese issue.

7. ADJOURNMENT

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

The meeting adjourned at 7:53 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Chris Anderson
City Planner

ATTEST:

JoAnn Shaw
Community Development Assistant

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