

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

On Monday, January 13, 2020, 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
 City Engineer Bruce Westby
 City Council Liaison Debra Musgrove (arrived 6:39 p.m.)

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

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

4. APPROVE MINUTES

4.01: Approve Meeting Minutes Dated December 16, 2019

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

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

City Planner Anderson stated that in reference to the November, 2019 meeting, Councilmember Musgrove had let him know that she would not be able to attend because of a conflict with a City Council budget worksession. He stated that he had failed to alert the Board at the November meeting and wanted the minutes to reflect the reason for her absence.

5. POLICY BOARD BUSINESS

5.01: Update on Multiple Water Treatment Studies

City Planner Anderson presented the staff report. He stated that in November of 2019, City staff provided a brief update to the EPB that there were multiple water supply system studies underway. Staff noted that in the coming months, the City Engineer offered to attend an EPB meeting to provide further updates and answer any questions the Board may have. He noted that a high-level update on the two water system supply studies currently in progress was provided in the Board packet.

City Engineer Westby stated that staff has been working on two water supply studies, one looking at treatment of surface water and the other treating groundwater. He stated that unfortunately staff is not as far along as he hoped they would be but would still be providing a brief presentation. He noted that he would be happy to come back in June or July when the studies are completed to provide more definitive conclusions.

Chairperson Valentine commented that he would be happy to have City Engineer Westby back when the studies are completed.

City Engineer Westby reviewed the timeline for the City's current water supply system including construction of the system, participation in the regional surface water supply study, recent levels of manganese, and centralized water treatment facility preliminary design study. He noted that future plans in the CIP include construction of a groundwater treatment facility. He provided an update on the status of the regional surface water supply study, noting that the Metropolitan Council is funding the study while the cities involved are leading the study. He stated that they are hoping to have results available next month to further review. He provided an update on the status of the centralized water treatment facility preliminary design study, noting that the study will provide three deliverables to the City. He stated that staff is hoping to have the results from this study around June or July. He confirmed that he would be willing to come back to the Board with the final study results later this summer.

Chairperson Valentine stated that it will become increasingly difficult to obtain permits for wells for this purpose as so much water is being drawn from the aquifers. He also commented on the Joint Powers Agreement that would be needed for a multiple municipality treatment facility. He asked for input on the City's relationship with the DNR, as that agency could have an impact on the City's ability to draw additional water from the aquifer.

City Engineer Westby commented that the City has a good relationship with the DNR. He stated that with ongoing discussions and the City working with the DNR on various studies, he believes that the DNR would allow additional wells to be drilled if necessary. He believed that the DNR recognizes that the costs are significant to convert a municipal water supply to a surface water

treatment system. He did not believe that the DNR would require an additional pilot study or deny the request of Ramsey to drill another well.

Board Member Hiatt asked how many cities are currently drawing surface water from the Mississippi, other than Minneapolis and St. Cloud.

City Engineer Westby stated that there are additional cities utilizing surface water treatment but was unsure if there were any located between St. Cloud and Minneapolis.

Board Member Hiatt asked if there is a model of other cities along the Mississippi that work together on a regional surface water treatment system. He noted that the City could use that information for its study.

City Engineer Westby stated that the consultant is reviewing governance models used by others that share a water treatment facility and noted that he would remind the consultant of those examples.

Board Member Hiatt asked if there is potential to perhaps drill in the northern part of the City.

City Engineer Westby explained that the aquifer disappears as you move north and west in the City. He stated that a well siting study will need to be done each time the City needs to drill a well.

Board Member Fetterley asked if there are concerns that the surface water study would show favorable and that the DNR could then deny the City's ability to drill another well in 2023.

City Engineer Westby stated that he does not have any concerns that the DNR would use the study results to pressure the City to switch to surface water but would instead show that the City has researched that option. He stated that he anticipates that the cost to change to surface water treatment would be prohibitive and therefore the DNR would not/could not force the City to take that route. He stated that the City has been collecting and saving funds for a groundwater treatment facility and therefore there are funds available in the water utility fund for that purpose.

Board Member Covart stated that it appears the life of a water treatment facility is about 50 years and asked the lifespan of a well.

City Engineer Westby stated that the City is getting good use of its wells. He noted that there are some maintenance items such as pump replacement, but the well itself lasts a long time. He stated that the City began punching wells in 1984 and they have served the City well and continue to do so.

Board Member Moore stated that it appears the City is also looking for future potential contaminants in these studies and asked if the issue of manganese is also included as an issue, specifically how the City can treat that to open the other wells.

City Engineer Westby confirmed that is a part of the second study the City is completing on its own. He noted that the City is attempting to identify as much as it can in terms of possible future contaminants to be prepared for the future.

Councilmember Musgrove stated that she does have questions but will wait until the studies are completed, as that information will most likely answer her questions. She asked if the City is looking to drill one additional well, or two, based on the City's rate of growth.

City Engineer Westby stated that in the latest update of the City's Comprehensive Water Systems Study, two wells are identified; one in 2023 and a second in 2028 or 2030. He stated that staff will talk with the consultant that completes the well siting study for the 2023 well to determine if additional work could be done in advance for the second well.

Chairperson Valentine expressed appreciation to City Engineer Westby for attending the meeting and provided an update tonight.

5.02: Overview of Framework for Water Efficiency Grant Program

City Planner Anderson presented the staff report. He stated that the City of Ramsey has been awarded \$28,000 in grant funds through the Metropolitan Council's 2019-2022 Water Efficiency Grant Program for use in a rebate program. As the name of the program implies, the purpose of the grant is to implement water efficient technologies to reduce the demand on water supply.

City Planner Anderson stated that there are two primary financial requirements of the program. First, the municipality must contribute 25 percent of the grant award, which equates to \$9,340. Second, that rebate recipients must also have a financial contribution. Other important eligibility requirements include the rebate recipient being a municipal water customer, only applicable to replacement devices, and the rebate is only applicable for the cost of the device and its installation, excluding any owner labor costs.

Councilmember Musgrove asked if there would be a provision in the application that would require a 30-day waiting period once opened to the public. She stated that in searching smart devices, there is a wide range of pricing available. She stated that requiring residents to only pay tax is not a big commitment and asked if it would make more sense to require residents to pay an additional amount (such as \$20 or \$25) to ensure that they are being smart with their purchases, rather than the resident choosing higher priced items simply because this program is paying the cost.

Chairperson Valentine stated that it is an interesting question as there is a science to figuring out how big the rebate should be in order to attract participants. He stated that his concern would be that if the rebate is not enough, residents may not choose to participate.

Board Member Hiatt stated that he thought he read that there is a maximum rebate per device, which is \$200.

City Planner Anderson agreed that there is a wide range of prices and staff attempted to make the program as attractive as possible but also wanted to create the opportunity for as many residents to participate as possible. He used the example of toilets, noting that there is a wide variety available for \$200 or less, while there is a wide variety available above \$200. He stated that there would be a device maximum of \$200, with a household maximum of \$500. He stated that this could also be used as a pilot for the City to implement its own program in the future, if desired.

Board Member Hiatt stated that this money will greatly help with the cost for the devices, but the homeowner would also be responsible for labor costs to install the new devices. He commented that the \$500 maximum per household would help to serve the intent desired by Councilmember Musgrove. He noted that half of the City would not be eligible for the program as they are not connected to municipal water services. He hoped that the City could also investigate options for those residents that are not connected to City services in the future.

Board Member Fetterley stated that she would suspect that the majority of devices purchased will be irrigation upgrades, which will cost significantly more than \$200. She stated that this information will all be distributed to the public and did not see the purpose of a waiting period as it will already take time for residents to complete research and find the appropriate devices and contractors.

Councilmember Musgrove stated that Councilmembers, Commissioners, Board Members, and City staff have a head start on the availability of grant funds from the program, which would put them at advantage so to speak. She explained that her thinking was perhaps to provide the same amount of notice to residents.

City Planner Anderson stated that as the structure of the rebate program is finalized there will be a number of public promotions completed to notify the public. He stated that staff could incorporate a start date for applications if desired.

Chairperson Valentine agreed that it would be fair to have public notice. He noted that there would also be a seasonal concern with irrigation uses.

Board Member Covart asked if a public notice stating that the grant funds would be available in 30 days from the publication would suffice the intent of Councilmember Musgrove. She referenced audit services, which would not be covered under this grant, but noted that service would be available to those on private wells as well and is something the City could look at for a future program.

Motion by Board Member Hiatt and seconded by Board Member Bernard to recommend that the City Council adopt Resolution #20-018 to enter into the Clean Water Fund Grant Agreement with the Metropolitan Council and to accept the \$28,000 grant to implement a water efficiency rebate program.

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

5.03: Minnesota Department of Agriculture Presentation on Emerald Ash Borer (EAB)

City Planner Anderson presented the staff report. He stated that in response to an inquiry from a concerned Ramsey resident, City staff went out to inspect an ash tree in the resident's front yard. There was a gallery visible on one of the lower limbs. City staff sent photos of the gallery to the Minnesota Department of Agriculture's Arrest the Pest site for review. A follow up inspection by City staff and MDA occurred on December 11, 2019, which ultimately confirmed the presence of Emerald Ash Borer (EAB). EAB is an invasive insect that attacks all native variety of ash trees.

Jonathan Osthus, Minnesota Department of Agriculture, stated that EAB was first found in Minnesota in 2009 and since that time has continued to spread throughout the State. He provided background information and reviewed the life cycle of the EAB. He provided information on host trees and displayed photographs of what residents should look for, specifically the “S” shaped galleries and EAB larva. He stated that adult EAB leave a “D” shaped exit hole but can be harder to find. He displayed a photograph of look alike insects that the Department of Agriculture often receives calls on. He reviewed the symptom progression that occurs during the different years of infestation and provided photographs as well. He also provided photograph examples of native damage to trees. He provided a national perspective of how EAB has spread, explaining that people have moved EAB much faster than it would have spread on its own. He reported that EAB is currently in 22 counties in Minnesota and is spreading up the 94 corridor, which is still spreading slower than the national average. He reviewed some of the regulations within Minnesota that help to regulate the spread of EAB and also provided information on tree removal and treatments available for EAB. He noted that it can sometimes be less costly to treat an EAB tree compared to removal of the tree. He stated that the best place to start would be to complete a tree inventory, or at least an Ash tree inventory. He encouraged residents to report infested trees, so that information can be added to the database.

Board Member Moore stated that she would assume that information will be included in the next City newsletter. She asked if there would be information on how residents should dispose of wood from a tree that they have removed themselves.

City Planner Anderson stated that there is information on the City website but noted that he would verify that information is still up to date and conduct any needed refreshing. He stated that information on proper management for removed trees as well as available treatment would be available on the website. He explained that EAB was identified in Anoka County (Ham Lake) about five years ago and therefore the quarantine on the County went into effect at that time. He stated that winter is a great time to look for signs and symptoms of infected trees. He noted that concerned residents can contact City staff to verify whether EAB is present.

Board Member Fetterley asked if the City needs to be concerned, as the City has not completed its own inventory. She asked if additional funds should be committed in the budget for possible tree removal and/or treatment.

Mr. Osthus stated that the best place to start would be to complete an inventory, which can then be used to plan for possible future costs.

City Planner Anderson stated that the City attempted to complete a tree inventory. He explained that through the Resilient Communities Program (RCP), the City, in conjunction with University of Minnesota Urban Forestry students, trained volunteers in species identification. Unfortunately, we were not able to obtain a large enough group of volunteers to complete the inventory. He stated that the City’s tree population is fairly young and from a public perspective, the designed and planted right of way trees do not include significant mature Ash trees. He stated that from a budget perspective, as of right now, if boulevard trees become infested the City would lean towards removal and replanting rather than considering treatments. He stated that there may be valuable larger Ash trees in some parks that may warrant consideration for treatment. He noted in terms of private trees, the City can act as an educational resource, but the decision and responsibility would ultimately be the homeowners.

5.04: Review Landscape Plan for Amended Preliminary Plat of Riverstone Addition

City Planner Anderson presented the staff report. He stated that Riverstone LLC has applied for a revised Preliminary Plat for the subdivision known as Riverstone, which is located south of Alpine Drive, north of the railroad tracks, and on the west side of Puma St NW. The proposed revision is in the northern portion of the site and would eliminate the previously approved attached townhomes and replace with more detached villas, which is the primary product offered in Riverstone. The proposed amendment to the Preliminary Plat does have a minor impact on the approved Landscape Plan for the subdivision.

Motion by Board Member Fetterley and seconded by Board Member Covart to recommend approval of the revised Landscape Plan for Riverstone.

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

6. BOARD / STAFF INPUT

No additional comments.

7. ADJOURNMENT

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

The meeting adjourned at 8:19 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Chris Anderson
City Planner

ATTEST:

JoAnn Shaw
Community Development Secretary
Drafted by Amanda Staple
TimeSaver Off Site Secretarial, Inc.