

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

On Monday, February 10, 2020, 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 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 Fetterley to approve the agenda as submitted.

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

4. APPROVE MINUTES

4.01: Approve Meeting Minutes Dated January 13, 2020

Motion by Board Member Hiatt and seconded by Board Member Bernard to approve the regular meeting minutes dated January 13, 2020.

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

5. POLICY BOARD BUSINESS

5.01: Continued Discussion on Potential Amendment to Landscape Requirements in the

Employment Districts

City Planner Anderson presented the staff report. He stated that at the December 2019 EPB meeting there was continued discussion about potential amendments to the landscaping requirements for the Employment Districts (E-1, E-2, and E-3), which originated as a result of the Delta ModTech Landscape Plan. The EPB had reviewed what various peer communities had for landscaping requirements. Additionally, the EPB expressed a desire to explore what the results would be if the Canopy Cover Formula, which is applied to multi-family developments, were applied. Staff was directed to prepare exhibits to assist the EPB in understanding what the various Code requirements would look like. He reviewed the different models and examples of what is required in neighboring communities.

Chairperson Valentine asked if it would be useful for the Board to outline goals. He stated that the Board could reinforce some of the strategic thought processes of staff. He commented that the ornamental trees and shrubs provide instant greenery, rather than awaiting the larger tree species to mature. He explained that diversity ensures immediate assistance with aesthetics. He agreed that the long-term projections should also be taken into account when landscaping, such as future expansions of a business.

Board Member Hiatt stated that one goal is to create a healthy environment in the landscaping plan, to ensure the health and longevity of the trees and plants installed and in the overall environment. He commented that having diversity in the tree population helps prevent against damage that could occur from future tree diseases. He asked if there is a way to incorporate natural landscaping, which could help to reduce the amount of impervious in the calculation, similar to stormwater ponds.

City Planner Anderson referenced the Great River Energy site in Elk River that is being decommissioned. He noted the natural landscaping work that occurred on that property and stated that it would be interesting to watch that site and see what happens without the active management that was occurring.

Chairperson Valentine stated that although he likes the idea of natural landscaping, not every site would be ideal for that. He commented that there is also a lot of management that is required, which does not make it ideal for every site.

Board Member Covart referenced the formula for the tree cover and asked if the different varieties would include more greenery and would mature more quickly to provide a variety in tree species.

City Planner Anderson provided details on the characteristics of the different tree groups and stated that having some formula would ensure a variety of species and growth rates.

Board Member Hiatt asked if there is a cost factor between the different species.

City Planner Anderson stated that cost does vary depending on species and cost would be a factor in landscaping. He noted that there are also trends that cause certain trees to be selected more often.

Board Member Moore stated that she would suggest an emphasis on fitting some native landscaping into each plan, if possible. She recognized that there is active management needed on the front end, but that tends to taper off throughout the years to a lesser amount.

City Planner Anderson stated that he will call Elk River to gain input from its staff on how that element has worked in their community.

Board Member Moore stated that she would be curious as to whether businesses are maintaining native landscaping that already existed or starting fresh.

Chairperson Valentine stated that it would be rare to find true native landscaping that already exists and does not include invasive species.

City Planner Anderson agreed that there would be limited sites where a native landscape truly exists and therefore, he would want input from the Board on whether it would want preservation of native landscaping or even preservation of just existing landscape vegetation, or newly established native landscaping.

Chairperson Valentine stated that although he believes that option should be provided, he would not want to see too much focus on that because of the effort and active management that is required.

City Planner Anderson stated that perhaps native landscaping is allowed as an incentive rather than as a requirement and confirmed the consensus of the Board.

Board Member Hiatt stated that flexibility within the canopy cover formula would allow the City to work with a developer to find a solution that would be good for the land and the developer.

Board Member Fetterley commented that this seems to be moving in the right direction. She commented that if the diversified percentages are built in, that would help to prevent the situation where someone presents a landscaping plan with only the largest canopy cover species.

Motion by Board Member Hiatt and seconded by Board Member Fetterley to direct staff to proceed with drafting an Ordinance Amendment for landscaping requirements in the Employment Districts based on the discussion of the Board.

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

6. BOARD / STAFF INPUT

- **Master Naturalist Course**

City Planner Anderson referenced an email that was sent out the previous week related to a Master Naturalist course. He noted that there will be an open house on Wednesday, February 12, and encouraged anyone interested to attend and learn more. He stated that there is a cost of \$275 but noted that this is a unique opportunity as people drive from all over the metro to attend and the course is being held in Ramsey. He noted that scholarship opportunities are available to assist with the cost.

Board Member Moore stated that anyone that applies for the scholarship would likely be accepted, to her knowledge.

City Planner Anderson stated that this seems like a topic of interest for the members of the Board. He noted that more people are needed to ensure that the course could be offered.

The Board discussed opportunities of Arbor Day activities involving the new elementary school.

Board Member Hiatt volunteered to assist in making the connection to Brookside.

7. ADJOURNMENT

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

The meeting adjourned at 7:39 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Chris Anderson
City Planner

ATTEST:

JoAnn Shaw
Community Development Secretary

Drafted by Amanda Staple
TimeSaver Off Site Secretarial, Inc.