

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

On Monday, January 25, 2021, 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 Jared Little
 Board Member Laura Moore

Members Absent: None

Also Present: City Planner Chris Anderson
 City Council Liaison Chelsea Howell
 Parks and Assistant Public Works Superintendent Mark Riverblood
 Deputy City Administrator Tim Gladhill

1. CALL TO ORDER

Acting Chairperson Hiatt called the meeting to order at 6:34 p.m.

2. CITIZEN INPUT

None.

3. APPROVE AGENDA

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

A roll call vote was performed:

Board Member Fetterley	aye
Board Member Little	aye
Board Member Covart	aye
Board Member Bernard	aye
Acting Chairperson Hiatt	aye
Chairperson Valentine	absent
Board Member Moore	aye

Motion carried.

4. APPROVE MINUTES

4.01: Approve Meeting Minutes Dated September 21, 2020

Motion by Board Member Fetterley and seconded by Board Member Little to approve the regular meeting minutes dated September 21, 2020.

A roll call vote was performed:

Board Member Moore	aye
Acting Chairperson Hiatt	aye
Board Member Fetterley	aye
Board Member Little	aye
Board Member Covart	aye
Board Member Bernard	aye
Chairperson Valentine	aye

Motion carried.

5. POLICY BOARD BUSINESS

5.01: Consider Natural Resource Recommendations Related to Riverstone South; Case of Capstone Homes/Riverstone Development

City Planner Anderson presented the staff report. He stated that the purpose of the case is to consider natural resources elements related to the proposed Riverstone South neighborhood. The City has been working with the developer, Capstone Homes, over the past year on a long-range planning exercise to come to a consensus on a concept plan for this site. The Preliminary Plat submittal represents conformance to the planning framework approved by the Planning Commission and City Council as well as the Sketch Plan recently submitted and reviewed by the Planning Commission.

Board Member Little asked if the trees proposed to remain on the one-acre park is part of the stand of trees that currently exists on that area.

City Planner Anderson confirmed that those are existing trees that would remain.

Acting Chairperson Hiatt asked if the dotted line is for the road that would connect to the back of Bowers Drive.

City Planner Anderson replied that connection was a recommendation from the EPB and Planning Commission but with continued input from the Bowers Drive neighborhood, the Council directed the developer to eliminate that connection. He stated that the Planning Commission provided a separate recommendation for the Council to reconsider that connection when it reviewed the Preliminary Plat. He noted that the Council will consider that at its meeting the following night.

Board Member Covart referenced the virtual workshop that was mentioned in the staff report and asked for a summary of those results.

City Planner Anderson stated that the feedback from that meeting focused on the connection to Bowers Drive, as those residents were very opposed to that idea. He noted that there was additional discussion related to tree preservation as the Bowers Drive residents support the seven-acre dedication of trees. He also identified a 50-foot strip of land that was dedicated to the City as part of the Pearson Place project to provide additional buffering.

Deputy City Administrator Gladhill stated that there have been multiple public engagement sessions in different formats related to the land use and there is support for the project as presented with the combination of lot sizes and preservation of trees. He confirmed that there is strong opposition from the adjacent property owners related to the Bowers Drive connection and noted that the Council will discuss that at its meeting the following night.

Acting Chairperson Hiatt commented that he recalls the statement being made that the second access would be provided to improve safety and was unsure why the residents would be opposed to that. He asked if staff believes that this would be the best option to preserve trees.

City Planner Anderson agreed that Capstone has done a service to the community to set aside this contiguous seven acres of trees. He recognized that Capstone is giving up land that could have been turned into additional housing units. He believed that this would be beneficial to the project and overall community.

Motion by Board Member Covart and seconded by Board Member Little to recommend approval of the project as presented.

Further discussion: Board Member Moore asked if the recommended action would include additional trees on three rear lots. City Planner Anderson commented that he is not recommending dense plantings but believes that those lots would benefit from some trees for buffering.

Motion by Board Member Moore and seconded by Board Member Fetterley to amend the motion to request the developer consider additional plantings on the three northeastern back lots.

Further discussion: Board Member Little asked if that is the southeast corner. Acting Chairperson Hiatt agreed that would be the southeast corner. City Planner Anderson confirmed that those would be the lots in the southeast corner. Board Member Moore confirmed that was her intent. The amendment was corrected to state:

Motion by Board Member Moore and seconded by Board Member Fetterley to amend the motion to request the developer consider additional plantings on the three southeastern back lots.

A roll call vote was performed:

Board Member Fetterley	aye
Board Member Little	aye
Board Member Covart	aye
Board Member Bernard	aye
Board Member Moore	aye
Acting Chairperson Hiatt	aye

Chairperson Valentine aye

Motion carried.

The amendment was passed, and a roll call vote was performed on the new motion:

Board Member Fetterley aye
Board Member Bernard aye
Board Member Covart aye
Board Member Little aye
Acting Chairperson Hiatt aye
Board Member Moore aye
Chairperson Valentine aye

Motion carried.

5.02: Review Preliminary Plat and Density Transitioning for Northfork Meadows, Case of Lennar (Project #20-135)

City Planner Anderson presented the staff report. He stated that the purpose of the case is to review a request from Lennar for a Preliminary Plat application for Northfork Meadows. The subject property is located east of Puma/Okapi Street and south of Alpine Drive and is approximately 33 acres. The subject property has a split zoning with R-1 Residential (MUSA – Detached Single Family Homes) (80-foot-wide lots) along the eastern and southern boundary and the remainder of the property is zoned R-1 Residential (MUSA – Detached Villas) (65-foot-wide lots). He noted that the Planning Commission recommended that the plans be amended to meet the minimum planting requirements for density transitioning.

Board Member Covart asked if the same number of trees would go in the 45-foot area compared to the 35-foot area.

Board Member Moore stated that she lives across from this parcel and commented that there is a grove of oak trees that provides habitat for animals and therefore would recommend that the largest amount of vegetation be added back into the development, even perhaps above what is required by Code.

City Planner Anderson commented that the landscape plan as proposed adds in more than is required by Code. He stated that overall, there is more planting than what the Code would require with the exception of this density transition corridor.

Board Member Little noted that he is a former landscaper and asked if there is a requirement for the type of soil used for the berm.

City Planner Anderson replied that the language states that it must be good, clean fill but does not get more specific than that.

Board Member Little commented that in the long-term there would be issues with crowding if additional trees were included. He stated that in order to keep the aesthetic beauty of the trees there would need to be a plan for thinning and asked if there would be a plan for that activity.

City Planner Anderson commented that the intention would be to have this area in an outlot deeded to the City, therefore the long-term maintenance would be of the City.

Board Member Little asked if the homes adjacent to the density transitioning would be two- or three-story homes.

City Planner Anderson replied that they would be modified two story homes.

Board Member Little commented that this is a north to south berm with preexisting canopy of trees on the east side and wants to ensure the long-term viability of the trees and therefore would be hesitant to require trees to be planted that would not survive.

City Planner Anderson stated that he does agree with that sentiment but recognizes that this is a zoning tool. He noted that the developer could have chosen to match lot sizes of the existing homes as an alternative. He agreed that there could be some over competition in the long-term. He stated that there is a similar comparison in the Brookfield development, which was planted 15 years ago and there is still ample room between the trees. He stated that although he echoes the concerns about long-term survivability and has empathy for the comments from the developer, he falls back to the fact that this is a zoning tool that is being used to allow additional density for the development.

Board Member Fetterley commented that there are requests made frequently to the Board related to the planting expectations. She stated that in this case the applicant is asking for an exception based on the concern for overcrowding. She commented that her concern is that the decision is required now for something that may become an issue many years down the road. She stated that if they guess wrong now and allow less trees, there would be less trees in the future. She noted that she would prefer to start with the required plantings and if an issue arises in the future, the City could resolve that through maintenance as the property would be deeded to the City.

Acting Chairperson Hiatt asked if the neighborhood has been recently surveyed as to whether they strongly support the transition berm.

City Planner Anderson commented that originally the developer proposed 65-foot lot widths throughout the development. He noted that the existing neighborhood made it clear that they would not want to see anything less than 80-foot lot widths and the developer made the change to place 80-foot-wide lots along that border with the existing homes along with meeting the density transitioning requirements.

Acting Chairperson Hiatt asked if there has been discussion with the developer to provide an easement for that area which would allow the City to complete maintenance.

City Planner Anderson replied that in order to meet the density transitioning requirements, the lots bordering the existing homes are already 35 feet deeper than required to provide density transitioning. He stated that additional space would be used to create the outlot while allowing

those lots to meet the minimum lot requirements. He stated that the developer does support deeding that area to the City as it removes their obligation for long-term maintenance.

Board Member Covart asked if there would be additional outreach to the adjacent neighborhood for input if the Board supported the developer proposal without requiring additional plantings.

City Planner Anderson stated that neighborhood would be notified of the upcoming Council consideration of the project and could provide input at that time.

Councilmember Howell asked how much the workload for staff would include if this area were deeded rather than an easement.

City Planner Anderson replied that the developer would maintain responsibility for the first two years, as required by development agreements. He stated that after that time there may need to be several visits per growing season for the area to be mowed along with watering if necessary. He stated that long-term the area would be added to the typical maintenance cycle, noting that trimming would most likely be scheduled once every ten years. He stated that the City prefers this method rather than having that land belong to homeowners with additional restrictions.

Acting Chairperson Hiatt asked if the City provides similar maintenance on the example provided in the other development.

City Planner Anderson replied that those trees are part of the individual properties and therefore the City has no maintenance obligation. He noted that is one instance the City learned from.

Motion by Board Member Covart and seconded by Chairperson Valentine to recommend plans be amended to provide at least the minimum number of required trees within the transitioning corridor.

A roll call vote was performed:

Board Member Bernard	aye
Board Member Covart	aye
Board Member Fetterley	aye
Board Member Little	aye
Board Member Moore	aye
Acting Chairperson Hiatt	aye
Chairperson Valentine	aye

Motion carried.

5.03: Update on Water Efficiency Grant Program

City Planner Anderson presented the staff report. He provided an update on the grant program which began in May of 2020 noting that to date, 39 households have participated in the program with the majority of upgrades focusing on smart irrigation controllers. There is still approximately \$21,000 available for reimbursement through June of 2022. He noted that per the grant agreement,

the City had to contribute 25 percent which is being provided through the City's Water Fund account and the remainder of the program is reimbursed through the Metropolitan Council.

Chairperson Valentine commented that it makes sense to go forward with something like this but would not want to see the funding dried up with a few large projects. He stated that perhaps some limits be developed for the bigger projects to ensure adequate funding for residential applicants.

Acting Chairperson Hiatt agreed. He recognized that associations have different funding sources and agreed that a subcategory could be created for those types of projects.

City Planner Anderson stated that also he did not delve into the specific details, he would still recommend a cap for commercial/multi-family projects to avoid the situation where one or two large projects use all the funding. He stated that there is a wide spectrum of what has been allowed by other municipalities using the funds from the Metropolitan Council.

Acting Chairperson Hiatt stated that perhaps an association could submit a proposed percentage for reimbursement with a not to exceed amount of perhaps \$2,500. He stated that would acknowledge the larger cost of those projects but still allow those funds to be used by as many residents as possible. He commented that he would want to see the program dollars used rather than return them to the Metropolitan Council at the end of the agreement period.

Board Member Little asked if the full purpose of this program was to save water or boost moral while increasing efficiency.

City Planner Anderson stated that the grant itself is meant to find ways to be more efficient with water use, therefore a resident must be a City water customer. He stated that ideally the hope would be that additional opportunities could be found to increase efficiency for those on private wells too, as everyone pulls from the same aquifer.

Board Member Little stated that if the purpose is for efficiency, it would make sense to provide that efficiency to the biggest users and therefore he would support opening this program to associations.

Board Member Fetterley asked and received confirmation that the funds must be expended by June 2022. She stated that it is great that people are reaching out about the program and this option should be considered. She suggested adding a limitation in the beginning for association reimbursement with the option to increase reimbursement if funds are still available towards the end of the program period, rather than returning unused funds to the Metropolitan Council.

Acting Chairperson Hiatt stated that he would agree with that flexibility.

Motion by Board Member Covart and seconded by Board Member Little to recommend modifying the water efficiency rebate program to include a separate rebate for commercial/multi-family irrigation controller updates.

A roll call vote was performed:

Board Member Moore aye

Acting Chairperson Hiatt aye
Board Member Fetterley aye
Board Member Little aye
Board Member Covart aye
Board Member Bernard aye
Chairperson Valentine aye

Motion carried.

5.04: Center Street Area Framework and Policy Plan

Parks and Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood presented the staff report. He provided a highlight of the Center Street Area Framework and Policy Plan and welcomed any comments or feedback the Board may have on the draft plan or its elements.

Acting Chairperson Hiatt referenced the exterior of the pump house and stated that he would want to ensure that there is a generous landscaping plan to go along with that. He asked if there are plans for dedicated or somewhat dedicated bicycle trails.

Parks and Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood provided details on the Anoka County regional trail and the path it travels. He stated that the park improvements on the north half of Municipal Plaza would include permanent trail section that would replace the temporary section that exists. He also highlighted additional areas that would be proposed to include trail segments.

Acting Chairperson Hiatt thanked staff for the presentation and noted that the Board would be supportive as this continues to move forward.

Parks and Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood commented that staff will bring a summary of all the input received from the different Boards and Commissions to the City Council, hopefully as soon as February in attempt to begin some of these improvements this year.

6. BOARD / STAFF INPUT

City Planner Anderson commented that the February meeting will be held one week later than normal, due to the Presidents Day holiday.

Acting Chairperson Hiatt wished Board Member Covart well in the upcoming special election for the vacant position on the City Council.

7. ADJOURNMENT

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

A roll call vote was performed:

Board Member Moore aye
Board Member Fetterley aye

Board Member Bernard aye
Board Member Little aye
Board Member Covart aye
Acting Chairperson Hiatt aye
Chairperson Valentine aye

Motion carried.

The meeting adjourned at 8:16 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Chris Anderson
City Planner

ATTEST:

JoAnn Shaw
Community Development Secretary

Drafted by Amanda Staple
TimeSaver Off Site Secretarial, Inc.