

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

On Monday, April 19, 2021, the Environmental Policy Board (EPB) met 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: Board Member Jared Little

Also Present: City Planner Chris Anderson
 City Council Liaison Chelsee Howell

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

A roll call vote was performed:

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

Motion carried.

4. APPROVE MINUTES

4.01: Approve Meeting Minutes Dated March 15, 2021

Motion by Board Member Hiatt and seconded by Board Member Covart to approve the regular meeting minutes dated March 15, 2021.

A roll call vote was performed:

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

Motion carried.

5. POLICY BOARD BUSINESS

5.01: Appoint Chairperson and Vice Chairperson

City Planner Anderson stated that annually the Board appoints a Chairperson and Vice Chairperson. He opened the floor for nominations for the position of Chairperson.

Motion by Board Member Valentine and seconded by Board Member Hiatt to appoint Jane Covart as Chairperson of the Environmental Policy Board.

Further discussion: Board Member Covart accepted the nomination. City Planner Anderson asked for any other nominations. There were no other nominations.

A roll call vote was performed:

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

Motion carried.

Motion by Board Member Covart and seconded by Board Member Bernard to appoint Michael Hiatt as Vice Chairperson of the Environmental Policy Board.

Further discussion: Board Member Hiatt accepted the nomination. City Planner Anderson called for any other nominations. There were no other nominations.

A roll call vote was performed:

Board Member Valentine	aye
Board Member Fetterley	aye

Board Member Moore	aye
Board Member Bernard	aye
Board Member Hiatt	aye
Chairperson Covart	aye

Motion carried.

Board Member Valentine commented that he enjoyed serving as Chairperson and thought it would be a good time to have someone else serve in that position. He thanked the Board for allowing him to serve as Chairperson.

5.02: Discuss Potential Topics for 2021-2022 Work Plan

City Planner Anderson presented the staff report. He stated that in May, City Council will participate in its annual strategic planning to outline the City's objectives for the year. Per City Code, the Environmental Policy Board must develop a work plan consistent with the City Council's Strategic Plan. Thus, now is an ideal time for the EPB to begin discussing potential items and/or topics to include on a 2021-2022 Work Plan. The 2020 Work Plan was included in the case for reference.

Board Member Moore provided details on the idea of demonstration gardens, one featuring pollinator friendly plantings and the other a basic vegetable garden. She commented that there could be a small plot at each of the community gardens to provide these examples, bring in visitors, encourage participation, and perhaps expand in the future. She stated that perhaps it could be a joint venture between the EPB and Parks and Recreation Commission.

Chairperson Covart commented that there is a garden club in Ramsey and perhaps that could be a resource for that type of project.

Board Member Hiatt commented that he liked this idea. He referenced a natural planting area that the group did years ago.

City Planner Anderson commented that a rain garden was planted and provided details. He stated that the City also worked with Prairie Restoration to convert the power line corridor to native landscaping. He commented that the corridor is visible from vehicle but there is not a trailway that runs through the power line easement, so that was not the best educational example. He stated that the example at the park was a good example of a rain garden with native plantings.

Board Member Hiatt stated that perhaps there would be an opportunity to partner with one of the local elementary schools for a demonstration project. He stated that having someone involved with continued maintenance would be beneficial. He noted that involving students could provide an educational experience. He recognized that this year may be difficult to involve a school but perhaps that could be a future opportunity.

Board Member Bernard agreed that they could work cooperatively with the Parks and Recreation Commission and perhaps there would be opportunities with the schools as well.

City Planner Anderson commented that it seems there is consensus to consolidate some of the ideas into a single item on the work plan to engage and collaborate with the public, youth, community organizations and/or the Park and Recreation Commission on a public demonstration project. He clarified that some of the items on the work plan would not feasibly move forward in the next few weeks, as the work plan would still need Council approval.

Councilmember Howell suggested incorporating a food forest demonstration as well.

Board Member Moore asked if there could be a long-term plan to collaborate with the different groups. She stated that she is moving forward with two small plots this year as part of her Master Naturalist continuing credits and would welcome any assistance from EPB members or members of the community.

City Planner Anderson moved to the next suggestion related to revitalizing the focus on environment column in the *Ramsey Resident*. He stated that in the past members of the Board submitted articles to be reviewed and published in the column. He noted that if the Board is interested in revitalizing this idea, it could be helpful to have a schedule developed related to article topics and Board Member assignments, or the articles could be delegated to staff as well.

Chairperson Covart commented that there are so many things the EPB and City Planner Anderson are involved in related to the environment and a variety of topics that could be highlighted. She stated that she enjoys writing articles and would be willing to contribute. She agreed that it would be helpful to develop a calendar for topic ideas.

Board Member Moore agreed that it would be helpful to have a list of topics and the members interested could volunteer for different articles.

Board Member Hiatt commented that perhaps there would be an opportunity for guest columns as well, utilizing other organizations in the metro area.

Chairperson Covart noted that Board Members could draft the articles and then submit to staff for review.

City Planner Anderson stated that if included on the work plan, and if the Board drafts the articles, they should be routed through him to proof and he would then work with the communications staff to incorporate in the newsletter. He stated that there are six issues of the *Ramsey Resident* and two issues of the *Ramsey Recycler*, therefore there would be the potential for eight columns. He stated that if something is put in the Ramsey Recycler the content should be recycling, composting, organics, etc. related.

Board Member Valentine commented that there needs to be a strong and fearless editor in order to manage the schedule and provide a consistent message. He recognized that there would be time required to keep people moving along on the articles and edit the content.

City Planner Anderson commented that is where the schedule would provide assistance as it would align the topics and deadline for article submission. He noted that generally the deadline would be one month prior to publishing of the newsletter. He recognized the additional time for drafting,

submission, and editing. He stated that a general size of the article would be identified to ensure that much space could be set aside in each issue if the Board wants to pursue this idea.

Chairperson Covart asked if the Board should start working on this or whether they should wait until it is determined whether the Council would approve the concept.

City Planner Anderson commented that public education is part of the mission of the EPB. He agreed that the Board could start working on an article to begin with and the group could circle back to develop the schedule.

Board Member Moore commented that it would make sense to add this to the work plan and begin on the first article and planning the list of topics to ensure that it could be prepared and ready to meet the deadlines.

City Planner Anderson commented that this would also fall under his duties as City Planner under the planning and natural resources side. He stated that he could attempt to make a rough draft of the calendar with the timeline and the Board could have a future discussion to assign topics and Board Members for each article.

Chairperson Covart agreed that makes sense. She stated that perhaps the Board could develop a list of topics to bring for discussion at the next meeting. She stated that perhaps promotion of Earth Day and Arbor Day would make sense.

City Planner Anderson reported that Earth Day is April 22nd and Arbor Day is the last Friday in April with May identified as Arbor Month. He stated that the Council has also passed a resolution recognizing the last Friday of April as Arbor Day and designating May as Arbor Month. He commented that this seems to fall in line with a topic for the March/April issue of the *Ramsey Resident* going forward. He stated that the Board could also look to do something more formally for an Earth Day/Arbor Day event going forward that could involve collaboration with the groups mentioned in the previous discussion.

Chairperson Covart asked if the Board collaborated in the past with an elementary school class.

City Planner Anderson confirmed that in the past the City collaborated with Ramsey Elementary to do plantings at the school property and worked with the DNR to do seedling plantings. He stated that the kids seemed to enjoy the event and it was a great way to connect kids with nature and the benefits that trees bring. He stated that a number of years ago the City partnered with Village Bank and did a planting in a park. He stated that he also created an educational video with QCTV to walk through the steps of tree planting. He noted that the City has also worked with the Anoka High School football program to complete a planting. He stated that there was not an event last year because of the pandemic and there would not be an event planned for this year due to the same reasoning. He hoped to get back to some normalcy going forward and the Board could continue to review ideas to promote plantings and educational components related to Arbor Day.

Board Member Moore commented that she likes the idea of having an Arbor Day event as more of a focus. She stated that perhaps Brookside Elementary would be a good partnership opportunity for tree planting. She stated that perhaps a larger Arbor Day could be developed as well, featuring

some of the elements from the Environmental Expo that people liked. She noted that perhaps there could be further discussion on possible event ideas along with the newsletter article schedule.

Chairperson Covart stated that the next item is related to public engagement with local elementary schools.

City Planner Anderson commented that public engagement should probably be included on any work plan, noting that the details could be further discussed.

Board Member Moore agreed that anything that can be done to involve youth is a benefit.

Board Member Hiatt recognized that it will be a process to reach out to the schools and teachers in order to develop something collaboratively. He stated that perhaps something could be tied in with the curriculum if the planning is done collaboratively.

City Planner Anderson stated that public engagement interweaves with everything and perhaps this is something that evolves organically. He commented that Ramsey Elementary has been pretty receptive related to recycling topics and perhaps Brookside and PACT Charter would also be open to collaboration. He stated that the group should be cognizant that they do not overwhelm the schools/teachers. He commented that he could try to put some thoughts together for continued discussion.

Board Member Hiatt recognized the difficulties the schools have had this past year related to COVID and suggested postponing this for this school year and perhaps introducing discussion during the summer months or next school year.

City Planner Anderson stated that Chairperson Covart brought forward a suggestion related to a lighting audit of City properties. He noted that perhaps the parking ramp would be a good place to start if the group were interested in pursuing that concept.

Chairperson Covart stated that suggestion was related to both energy savings and cost savings. She stated that her other suggestion was also energy related, specific to solar energy. She stated that she has been doing some research on solar energy and was impressed by the Connexus solar gardens. She was unsure that was an idea that should be included at this time and commented that perhaps they should begin with the lighting audit.

City Planner Anderson commented that it would help to correlate the environmental and natural resources side with cost savings and potential return on investment. He stated that if desired, this could be included on the work plan as something the Board would like to explore further. He commented that the topics discussed thus far are the ones that he received by members of the Board leading up to the meeting tonight. He asked if there were any other suggestions from the Board. He stated that otherwise he can use the information from the discussion tonight to bring forward at the next meeting in May.

Board Member Hiatt referenced the idea that had been brought forward in the past related to electric charging stations. He noted that perhaps the first place to start would be to reach out to other entities such as Connexus or Anoka County to determine if they have any input on the topic.

He noted that perhaps another entity would be planning to take the lead, which would make the task less daunting for the City.

City Planner Anderson noted that he touched on that concept briefly within the case. He agreed that Connexus would be a good place to start.

Board Member Hiatt commented that there are most likely grant funds available for that type of project and if there is a viable partner, such as Connexus or the County, that agency might be better suited to pursue grant opportunities.

Board Member Moore commented that some of the items were unfinished because of COVID and confirmed with staff that those items could continue. She referenced the strategic actions related to the EPB, noting specifically the recommendation to appoint a high school member to the EPB. She stated that perhaps there would be interest from a high school member to join the group. She also suggested that there continue to be a focus on educational signage within the parks.

City Planner Anderson stated that he can draft the work plan with the ideas discussed tonight and when the group reviews this at the next meeting they can prioritize the items before it moves forward to the Council for review. He encouraged the Chair and other members of the Board, if available, to attend the Council worksession when the work plan is presented.

Councilmember Howell stated that she is very excited about the garden ideas suggested by Board Member Moore. She stated that she would be curious as to the cost to switch to LED lighting.

6. BOARD / STAFF INPUT

- **Spring Recycling Day Event – Saturday, May 1, 2021; 8 a.m. to 12 p.m.**

City Planner Anderson reminded the group about the spring recycling event which will be held on May 1st and will be held at ACE Solid Waste in Ramsey. He noted that this is a temporary change in location while the public works site is under construction.

Board Member Moore suggested that a sign be posted at the public works campus alerting residents of the location change as some people may just go where they are used to going.

City Planner Anderson confirmed that they have a sign ready to post alerting people to the ACE Solid Waste location.

Board Member Hiatt commented that perhaps temporary signage could be posted in different spots in Ramsey reminding residents about the upcoming recycling event and the new location.

City Planner Anderson commented that he is unsure the City still has those types of signs. He stated that the City now utilizes the dynamic display signs along with posting on the website and through social media. He stated that he does install signage with arrows the day of the event.

7. ADJOURNMENT

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

A roll call vote was performed:

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

The meeting adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Chris Anderson
City Planner

ATTEST:

JoAnn Shaw
Community Development Assistant

Drafted by Amanda Staple
TimeSaver Off Site Secretarial, Inc.