

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

On Monday, May 17, 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 Jane Covart
 Board Member Melissa Fetterley
 Board Member Michael Hiatt
 Board Member Jared Little
 Board Member Laura Moore
 Board Member Michael Valentine

Members Absent: Board Member Reid Bernard

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

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Covart called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

2. CITIZEN INPUT

None.

3. APPROVE AGENDA

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

A roll call vote was performed:

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

Motion carried.

4. APPROVE MINUTES

4.01: Approve Meeting Minutes Dated April 19, 2021

Motion by Board Member Hiatt and seconded by Board Member Little to approve the regular meeting minutes dated April 19, 2021.

A roll call vote was performed:

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

Motion carried.

5. POLICY BOARD BUSINESS

5.01: Review Natural Resources Aspects of Preliminary Plat for Williams Woods (Project #20-138); Case of Bill Boyum

City Planner Anderson presented the staff report. He stated that the City has received a Preliminary Plat application for a proposed nine lot subdivision on approximately 94 acres. The project involves six individual parcels, all affiliated with 7363 175th Avenue Nw. The Board previously reviewed the Sketch Plan for this project, but this submittal now includes more detailed plans including a Tree Inventory and Preservation Plan.

Board Member Moore referenced lots six and seven and asked if those lots could be further subdivided in the future.

City Planner Anderson noted that question was asked as part of the Sketch Plan review. He stated that there would not be a deed restriction related to subdivision. He stated that a variance for the cul-de-sac will be required for this layout as it is currently proposed, therefore further division would require an additional variance. He stated that any future subdivision requests would need to meet the City requirements and go through the typical City process for review. He reviewed the challenges of the site in terms of gaining additional access to the property because of the location of the adjacent park and wetland.

Chairperson Covart referenced the limitation on when tree removal could be done because of oak wilt and asked if any other trees have similar limitations.

City Planner Anderson replied that the high-risk season for oak wilt is April 15th through July 15th and noted that is the only clearing restriction for trees and only applies to oaks.

Motion by Board Member Little and seconded by Board Member Fetterley to recommend approval of the Tree Inventory and Preservation Plan.

A roll call vote was performed:

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

Motion carried.

5.02: Review Natural Resources Aspects of a Proposed Site Plan for Oppidan Holdings LLC (Project No. 21-104)

City Planner Anderson presented the staff report. He stated that the City has received a Preliminary Plat and Site Plan application for the construction of three new industrial buildings located on the north side of Bunker Lake Boulevard at the intersection of Jackal Street. The subject property is zoned E-3 Employment District and is approximately 43.50 acres. The project would split the property into three buildable lots and an outlot. Lots 1 and 2 would each have a building footprint approximately 147,000 in size and Lot 3 would have a building footprint of approximately 111,300 square feet. The project is being reviewed as a single project rather than three separate reviews.

Board Member Moore asked for details on the parking lot plantings and whether those would be a concern related to viability and spacing.

City Planner Anderson stated that he typically has some concern with trees in a parking lot as it is a harsh environment but noted that having trees in a parking lot area does provide benefit. He stated that if that is something of concern, the Board could explore that further as it is specified within City Code currently. He stated that an alternative to plantings in islands would be perimeter plantings. He recognized that with this project there are not opportunities for plantings between the buildings and therefore the parking lot plantings are proposed. He recognized that it would be difficult for plantings to thrive in this setting.

Board Member Little asked if the Code would require irrigation for these types of plantings.

City Planner Anderson commented that it had been decided in the past by the Council that it was counterintuitive to have a requirement for irrigation while attempting to promote water conservation. He stated that there is instead language that requires smart sensors for irrigation systems. He noted that this proposal does include irrigation. He noted that wood mulch would also be used to help retain moisture for the plantings.

Board Member Moore asked if these lots have access to City water or will use wells.

City Planner Anderson replied that these properties do have access and will connect to City water and sewer.

Motion by Board Member Valentine and seconded by Board Member Fetterley to recommend approval of the Landscape Plan for Oppidan Holdings LLC.

A roll call vote was performed:

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

Motion carried.

5.03: Review Draft EPB Work Plan

City Planner Anderson presented the staff report. He stated that in April the Board began discussing its next work plan. General consensus was reached to add various topics to a draft work plan, which could then be reviewed at the May meeting. As a reminder, the City Council will be conducting their strategic planning this month and once that is complete, cross referencing the EPB draft work plan with the Council's Strategic Plan will be necessary to ensure there are no conflicts or omissions.

Chairperson Covart noted that it appears the first item is a carryover from the previous work plan but that appears to be the only carryover.

Board Member Moore referenced item seven, related to the lighting audit of the parking ramp, and asked if that type of audit has been done in the past few years.

City Planner Anderson replied that a lighting audit has never been completed. He stated that this idea would consider whether the City should conduct a lighting audit to determine if it would be beneficial to covert the lighting in the lamps from fluorescent to an LED style of lighting.

Chairperson Covart commented that a company she worked for previously completed an audit, the audit was done at no cost from the utility company.

Board Member Little asked if the items are supposed to be prioritized.

City Planner Anderson confirmed that staff would suggest listing the items in the order the group should begin to work on them. He recognized that sometimes items on the list are delayed depending on the other types of reviews (development projects) that the Board has to complete during the year.

Chairperson Covart commented that there are some items that have time constraints, such as the newsletter articles in order to align with publishing times. She stated that there would also be time constraints to the demonstration garden in order for that to move forward this year.

City Planner Anderson noted that there are some projects that require collaboration, such as a larger demonstration garden, and therefore would not occur this year. He noted that the City Council would still need to finalize its Strategic Plan in order for the Board to cross reference before submitting the work plan to the City Council for review. He noted that planning could still begin for a demonstration garden later this year if that concept is endorsed by the City Council,

but it would most likely not go in the ground this year. He stated that there are multiple items that could be worked on incrementally at the same time.

Chairperson Covart commented that she does not believe that the order needs to be changed in her opinion.

Board Member Fetterley stated that she also agrees with the order as is. She asked and received confirmation that newsletter articles could be worked on immediately while awaiting review of the plan by the Council. She stated that she would not have a problem moving the demonstration garden down on the list.

Board Member Moore agreed. She stated that in reference to item eight, related to the charging stations, she believed that Chevrolet is releasing 25 new electric car models and perhaps that item should be more urgent on the list. She commented that it would be great for Ramsey to get ahead of that curve in order to receive the most assistance from other programs for that type of activity.

Board Member Fetterley stated that she would agree to move that item up on the list, referencing the recent gas shortages on the east coast.

Board Member Valentine commented that there are a lot of players involved in that market right now and perhaps the responsibility of the City would be to coordinate how it could assist in planning where that could occur, and/or perhaps bringing in parties that might be willing to provide those charging stations. He agreed that the item should be prioritized but with recognition of the other parties that could be involved.

Chairperson Covart stated that her suggestion to add this item was simply to research opportunities and if there are programs available that the City could take advantage of. She stated that perhaps the research itself would be all that the City would need to complete for that item.

Board Member Valentine commented that if the language were retuned to that message, he could support that being a higher priority.

Board Member Hiatt stated that in terms of research, perhaps that would involve determining where resources may be (public or private). He agreed that this is coming faster than people think, but also agrees that the City may not be in the best position to move forward on its own. He agreed that the best path may be to determine who is moving in this direction and how the City could work with them.

Councilmember Howell asked if there are private companies that have charging stations.

City Planner Anderson stated that he is not sure of that and confirmed that part of the research would be to identify any potential partners.

Councilmember Howell stated that if this is going to be a hot trend, she would believe that the private market would jump on that opportunity. She asked if the City charges for use of the charging stations.

City Planner Anderson confirmed that there is a charge to use the stations but was unsure of the current cost and noted that he could follow up on that.

Board Member Hiatt stated that perhaps one of the first steps would be to approach a car dealer and what they are doing related to charging stations, as they are selling those vehicles.

Chairperson Covart stated that she traveled in northern Minnesota and they had two charging stations to the side of the gas station run by a private company and charges occur through an app on the user's phone. She stated that currently there is no charge as it is being covered by the electric company at that location. She confirmed that the Board would like to see that item prioritized somehow in terms of research options. She asked if the Board would support moving that item in front of the demonstration garden as item six.

Board Member Little stated that he has passion for the demonstration garden as that would provide benefit to the community and would be willing to provide assistance. He noted that there is benefit to having a cover crop for the first year as well and would volunteer to assist.

Board Member Moore stated that she is also passionate for that item. She stated that she will be moving forward on her demonstration garden as a Master Gardener this year, in coordination with the Park and Recreation Commission and welcomed the assistance of Board Member Little. She stated that because her smaller scale project will move forward this year, she would support moving the work plan item to follow the charging stations.

Board Member Little agreed and stated that he would volunteer on Board Member Moore's project.

City Planner Anderson reviewed the consensus of the Board to move the articles to the top of the list, move the charging stations above the demonstration item, and removing the items with lines through them.

Chairperson Covart asked if the carryover item has had any progress.

City Planner Anderson replied there has not been progress made on that item.

Board Member Moore commented that she was under the impression that Ramsey was working with the watershed on an ongoing basis to discuss these matters and ensure that people that purchase homes along the rivers were aware of erosion guidelines.

City Planner Anderson stated that perhaps that discussion was confused with erosion issues on the Rum River and attempting to target those property owners with education materials related to the Wild and Scenic Overlay District. He stated that the City does have an inventory of the Mississippi River shoreline through the Anoka Conservation District and properties with severe and moderate erosion issues were identified. He stated that this item would send targeted materials to those property owners and connect them with assistance and funding opportunities in order to address some of those erosion issues on the Mississippi River.

Board Member Fetterley commented that the investigatory work has been done and it should remain high on the list to see it through.

City Planner Anderson confirmed the consensus of the Board to keep the erosion item as number one and then make the changes as previously discussed. He stated that the City Council will begin its strategic planning the following evening and once that is finalized, the Board can cross reference that document to ensure there are no conflicts or omissions on the EPB work plan. He stated that after that is done, the work plan will be added to a work session agenda of the City Council for review and discussion.

5.04: Review Content Calendar for *Ramsey Resident* and *Ramsey Recycler* “Focus on Environment” Articles

City Planner Anderson presented the staff report. He stated that as part of the discussion from the previous month, the Board asked staff to develop a list of potential topics that may be used to guide seasonally relevant articles for the *Ramsey Resident* and *Ramsey Recycler* newsletters. Additionally, staff was directed to prepare a calendar to assist with task management; both were included in the case. The purpose of the case is to provide the Board an opportunity to review the potential topics, make any recommended adjustments and possibly event identify and/or assign authors.

Board Member Little asked for the desired length of the articles.

City Planner Anderson stated that the article space would be about half a page, therefore if a picture is included the article should be about 150 to 200 words in length. He stated that without an image perhaps 300 words. He stated that if the Board feels that is not enough space as things move on, he could determine if more space would be available. He noted that an article could provide highlights and additional details could be provided through a website link.

Board Member Hiatt stated that sometimes there are great articles already available and asked if perhaps that author could be approached to determine if they would be willing to republish in this format.

City Planner Anderson confirmed that is an option, noting that staff works with the Lower Rum River Water Management Organization, which shares newsletter articles for the City to use. He stated that the desire would be to reinvigorate this column in the publications and advised that does not necessarily mean it would be the only environmentally focused article within the publication.

Board Member Moore stated that if a Board Member is interested in a topic, could staff make the Board aware to ensure members are not writing on the same topic.

City Planner Anderson stated that theoretically it would be nice to have a working document that everyone would have access to in order to sign up for certain topics and avoid duplicative efforts.

Chairperson Covart confirmed the consensus of the Board to use the shared document to allow the Board to sign up for articles.

Board Member Valentine stated that historically the problem has not been too many authors, but rather a lack of interest in writing articles.

Board Member Fetterley stated that she senses that there is some passion from the Board for this item.

City Planner Anderson stated that if someone wants to submit an article within the next week, it could be published in the July/August issue. He stated that originally the column was titled Focus on the Environment and noted that name could continue, or it could be renamed.

Chairperson Covart confirmed the consensus of the Board to keep that title.

6. BOARD / STAFF INPUT

- **June Meeting Date**

City Planner Anderson stated that the June meeting is scheduled for June 21st and advised that staff has a conflict and asked if the Board would be willing to reschedule that meeting.

It was the consensus of the Board to hold the June meeting on June 28th.

- **Recycling Event Recap**

City Planner Anderson stated that the event was very well attended, with long lines and wait times. He commented that most people were understanding. He noted that the new location worked well, although there were a few pinch points at different stations within the site. He stated that there was a Reserve Police Officer on site to assist with traffic direction. He stated that overall, the event was a success and was very busy. He stated that they are hoping to make some tweaks for the fall event and perhaps hold the event back at the Public Works Campus if construction is completed in time.

7. ADJOURNMENT

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

A roll call vote was performed:

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

Motion carried.

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.