

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

On Monday, July 19, 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

Members Absent: Board Member Reid Bernard
 Board Member Michael Valentine

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 Hiatt to approve the agenda as submitted.

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

4. APPROVE MINUTES

4.01: Approve Meeting Minutes Dated June 28, 2021

Motion by Board Member Hiatt and seconded by Board Member Little to approve the regular meeting minutes dated June 28, 2021.

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

5. POLICY BOARD BUSINESS

5.01: Review Tree Preservation Plan Request for Trott Brook North

City Planner Anderson presented the staff report. He stated that at the June 28th EPB meeting, the Board reviewed a request from a developer to utilize a Fixed Radius Plot (FRP) sampling technique to survey trees in a planted setting. The EPB raised questions about cost and time savings and accuracy of such a sampling technique. A memorandum was included from Kjolhaug Environmental Services Company in attempt to address those questions.

Board Member Hiatt asked if a variance would go through the Planning Commission.

City Planner Anderson confirmed that the Planning Commission is the body that acts on variances, therefore the request would go to that body.

Board Member Hiatt asked if there would be an expectation that the EPB should provide a recommendation as to whether the body supports the variance request.

City Planner Anderson confirmed that tonight would be a good opportunity for the Board to provide that feedback or a recommendation to forward to the Planning Commission should the developer choose to pursue that.

Board Member Fetterley commented that she finds the additional information helpful. She stated that this seems to be reasonable based on that additional information and believed the sampling would be well done. She stated that based on the unique situation of this plot and method for calculation, this seems to be reasonable, and she would support this technique for this situation.

Board Member Little agreed. He commented that this technique has a drawback for larger trees and asked for additional information on when that age frame would come into play in terms of years after planting.

Mr. Mark Kjolhaug of Kjolhaug Environmental Services Company commented that the trees were planted at the same time, are growing in similar conditions, and have comparable growth rates so that does not really apply in this instance.

Chairperson Covart stated that she also appreciated the additional information and agreed that this was thoroughly presented. She stated that she would also recommend approval of the variance.

Board Member Hiatt commented that he supports this because it is a planted area, which provides uniqueness. He stated that this method is reasonable because this is a planted area and believed that was important to document in order to avoid setting precedence. He believed there was distinction between a planted area and a naturally wooded area. He stated that in places where the Board can be supportive of a developer, and when appropriate, he is happy to do that. He noted that 150 hours is a sizeable savings in terms of time and cost. He asked if staff was aware of any other significant planted areas in Ramsey.

City Planner Anderson commented that he did not do a complete analysis. He noted that there is one large tree farm and there are a few other planted areas similar to this. He did not believe it is overwhelming throughout the community.

Board Member Fetterley asked if another applicant would have to request a variance if they wanted to use this same method of calculation.

City Planner Anderson confirmed that this situation is rare enough where a variance request on a case-by-case situation would be appropriate.

Motion by Board Member Hiatt and seconded by Board Member Little to support this sampling technique in the planted areas of the proposed plan and encourage the applicant to pursue a variance.

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

5.02: Consider Request for Variance to Deviate from Wetland Setback Requirement on Three Lots in Williams Woods (Project No. 20-138); Case of Landform and Bill Boyum

City Planner Anderson presented the staff report. He stated that the City has received an application from Landform for a variance to deviate from the wetland setback required on Lots 3 through 5, Block 1, Williams Woods. The Preliminary Plat has been reviewed by both the EPB and Planning Commission and both bodies recommended approval, contingent upon compliance with Staff's review comments, which included addressing the encroachment into the wetland setback. The City Council formally approved the Preliminary Plat on June 22nd, again contingent upon compliance with Staff's review comments.

Board Member Moore stated that it was mentioned that more fill could be added to the wetlands and remain in compliance with the de minimus exemption. She asked for information on what "more fill" would mean and how the Board could ensure that does not occur.

City Planner Anderson stated that the applicant was demonstrating that they could add fill to create upland and provide more setback than proposed, but staff agrees with the applicant that would seem contradictory to the intent of the Wetland Conservation Act (WCA). He stated that under the WCA, additional fill could be added to create that upland setback. He stated that a condition has been added to the draft resolution stating that the developer would install those three driveways to lock in those locations rather than allowing the builder or future homeowner to install the driveways. He noted that provision would protect against additional encroachment or fill to the wetland.

Board Member Fetterley asked if the City has experience with this type of variance in the past, where a driveway goes into a wetland area. She stated that her concern would be if this is allowed now, whether the driveways would sustain over time or whether repairs would be needed in the future and additional encroachment would be necessary.

City Planner Anderson commented that language could be added stating that the driveway can be no wider than 10 feet in the encroachment area. He stated that once past that area, the driveway could be widened. He stated that the City has had lots over the years where there is not a lot of usable space once the home is constructed, therefore certain features cannot be included in the lot size calculation in order to avoid situations where fill is added in the future.

Board Member Fetterley commented that the developer has done a nice job attempting to minimize impacts and encroachment to the wetlands. She stated that she would like it made clear as to the maximum area that can be impacted so that is not questioned down the road. She stated that they would be comfortable with the additional condition if the Board desires.

Kendra Lindal, Landform, stated that she was present to answer any questions. She thanked staff for doing a great job of presenting the request. She stated that they do not want to fill wetland to create additional setback, which is why they requested the variance.

Motion by Board Member Fetterley and seconded by Board Member Little to recommend approval of the requested variance to deviate from the wetland setback requirement on Lots 3 – 5, Block 1, Williams Woods with the additional condition that the maximum driveway width would be ten feet through the encroachment area.

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

5.03: Consider Landscape Plan for Knoll Properties 2nd Addition

City Planner Anderson presented the staff report. He stated that the City has received an application for Site Plan and Plat review for Knoll Properties 2nd Addition. The proposed project is located at the northeast corner of Ramsey Boulevard and Sunwood Drive. Anderson Dahlen, the applicant, is an existing Ramsey business and is expanding. This site allows the business to continue operating in Ramsey. The applicant proposes construction of a roughly 64,000 square foot building with the potential for a future addition of another 52,000 square feet.

Board Member Moore referenced the landscape plan shown with comments noting that there is a pond shown and asked if that is located on the subject property.

City Planner Anderson confirmed that pond on the east side of the lot would be part of this property. He stated that the proposed subdivision would have a few outlots and provided additional input on those outlots.

Board Member Moore asked if the seeding shown in the pond area would be within the pond or around the pond.

City Planner Anderson confirmed that the basin and edges of the pond would be seeded.

Chairperson Covart asked if staff ran the proposal on the old standards for comparison.

City Planner Anderson commented that this would meet the old standards. He stated that if the new standard is not met, some species could be changed in order to comply if necessary.

Motion by Board Member Little and seconded by Board Member Fetterley to recommend approval of the Landscape Plan and Tree Inventory and Preservation Plan, contingent upon compliance with Staff comments in Projectdox.

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

5.04: Environmental Policy Board Work Plan Update

City Planner Anderson presented the staff report. He stated that the EPB continued this discussion from the previous meeting and provided an update to the Board on the request for more information on the Council Strategic Plan initiative related to open space.

Chairperson Covart commented that it would seem that it would happen anyways and therefore it would make sense for the EPB to be involved. She stated that the EPB could also assist with perhaps sharing information through newsletter articles if that is the desire. She stated that she would be comfortable moving forward and including the item.

Board Member Hiatt stated that he found it helpful to see the discussion from the Council worksession. He referenced the use of the word “referendum”, noting that Andover chose to use a referendum and asked for clarity.

Councilmember Howell stated that the Council had the high-level discussion but did not go deep into detail.

City Planner Anderson stated that the intention would perhaps be to develop a roadmap for how this could work. He stated that if it then went out for referendum, that would be the one time it would be voted on by residents. He noted that purchases would not go back to vote through referendum but would instead be reviewed by perhaps the EPB and then City Council.

Board Member Hiatt commented that he would also support adding this to the Work Plan.

Motion by Board Member Hiatt and seconded by Board Member Little to direct staff to update the draft EPB Work Plan to incorporate Action Item #19 from the City Council’s Strategic Plan.

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

6. BOARD / STAFF INPUT

Chairperson Covart commented that she is moving from Ramsey next month and therefore this will be her last meeting. She commented that she has learned a lot during her time on the Board and appreciated the ability to work with everyone.

Board Member Hiatt thanked Chairperson Covart for her contributions and time as Chair.

The Board expressed thanks and wished Chairperson Covart well.

7. ADJOURNMENT

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

The meeting adjourned at 7:28 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Chris Anderson
City Planner

ATTEST:

JoAnn Shaw
Community Development Secretary

Drafted by Amanda Staple
TimeSaver Off Site Secretarial, Inc.