

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

On Monday, March 20, 2023, 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 Laura Moore
Board Member Reid Bernard
Board Member Melissa Fetterley
Board Member Michael Hiatt

Members Absent: Board Member Todd Arts

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

1. CALL TO ORDER

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

2. CITIZEN INPUT

None.

3. APPROVE AGENDA

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

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

4. APPROVE MINUTES

4.01: Approve Meeting Minutes Dated January 23, 2023

Motion by Board Member Fetterley and seconded by Board Member Bernard to approve the regular meeting minutes dated January 23, 2023.

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

5. POLICY BOARD BUSINESS

5.01: Pollinator Demonstration Garden Project Adjacent to the Northstar Train Station

Senior Planner Anderson presented the staff report. He stated that in 2022, the City was successful in securing grant funds through Great River Greening (GRG) to establish a pollinator corridor between Veterans Drive and the BNSF right-of-way. Subsequently, the City submitted a revised application to expand the project to include reseeding of a recently constructed infiltration basin and reseeding around the rim of a stormwater pond as well. Additionally, the revised application included a demonstration garden adjacent to the Northstar commuter rail station that would be established with larger, potted plants.

Board Member Fetterley commented that it would be great to have the involvement of the EPB in the planting event. She stated that she would be open to the April date, if the snow cooperates, otherwise May.

Board Member Hiatt agreed that this is a perfect opportunity to generate media exposure and information for the City website. He stated that it is an opportunity to draw attention to an environmental issue. He agreed that it may be more realistic to plan for May to ensure the ground could support the plantings. He also agreed that the event could align with a regular meeting date for the EPB. He suggested that perhaps QCTV record a segment.

Senior Planner Anderson stated that there seems to be general consensus for the Board to participate and align with a regular meeting date. He recognized that the event will be weather dependent but noted that staff can begin to plan. He stated that there will be two or three land use applications anticipated to come to the Board in April. He stated that perhaps they begin the meeting at 5:30 or 6 p.m. and hold the planting event after the meeting adjourns.

The Board agreed to a 5:30 p.m. start time.

Board Member Hiatt noted that in the past the City has done an Arbor Day event with the schools and asked if that would continue, or whether this would take the place of that.

Senior Planner Anderson replied that while the City has done events with the schools in the past, last year there was an event held in conjunction with a local business to plant trees. He confirmed that this event could be the City's Arbor Day event, in addition to a project staff is working on with a local Eagle Scout to do additional plantings. He noted that as staff continues with planning, he will keep the Board updated.

5.02: Zoning Code Updates

Senior Planner Anderson presented the staff report. He stated that Planning Division staff and the Planning Commission are in the process of overhauling the current Zoning Code. Both Tree Preservation and Landscaping standards currently reside in the Zoning Code. Even though the Landscaping portion was recently reviewed by the Environmental Policy Board (EPB), staff wanted to provide both of these sections of City Code to the EPB for review and comment/feedback.

Board Member Hiatt asked if staff has a concept for something that would be similar in standard to what is required in other areas of the community, but scaled down for the lack of space within the COR.

Senior Planner Anderson replied that he does not have a draft but agrees with that concept of using the framework of what exists in other districts but in a reduced manner.

Board Member Hiatt commented that he has noticed that some of the standards have created an over planting situation in the past, which they have begun to address in some zoning districts. He suggested that there be some type of flexibility built in to allow staff and the applicant to work together to consider the site conditions.

Senior Planner Anderson agreed that would be helpful to avoid creating a situation that would require a variance from landscaping standards.

Chairperson Moore agreed and supported a separate landscape and tree plan for the COR.

Senior Planner Anderson noted an inconsistency between the caliper and minimum height required for planting in the residential districts compared to the other districts and density transitioning standards.

Board Member Hiatt asked the cost difference, noting that perhaps the intention was in attempt to soften the cost for residential development. He stated that he does support consistency but wants to ensure there is not an unintended consequence.

Senior Planner Anderson replied that there is a cost difference. He stated that he is unsure why the change in size was not applied to the residential districts. He stated that perhaps the thought was that because there is less root disruption in a smaller caliper tree, those trees could begin to grow faster in residential settings. He stated that in reality the trees would be more prone to other issues. He commented that it would be reasonable to require a six foot evergreen and a two inch caliper shade tree and that change could be implemented across all districts.

Board Member Hiatt stated that he would support the most simple and consistent requirement that would be easiest for enforcement.

Senior Planner Anderson confirmed the consensus of the Board to support consistency across the zoning districts for minimum tree size as staff sees appropriate. He stated that currently there is a general landscaping requirement for businesses with additional landscaping required for parking lots. He asked for guidance from the Board on whether that should continue to be separate or whether that be simplified into one landscaping requirement for the entire site.

Chairperson Moore commented that she would want to ensure that it is clear within the Code so that it is clear to builders.

Senior Planner Anderson provided a table related to buffer yards and noted that the desire would be to simply that table.

Chairperson Moore commented that she would be interested in simplifying the table if that is possible.

Board Member Fetterley agreed that she would support simplifying the table as staff sees fit.

Senior Planner Anderson referenced the statement that if a privacy fence is installed, the plantings could be reduced by ten percent which is a fairly minimal reduction for the expense of a fence. He stated that he would suggest that reduction be increased.

Chairperson Moore stated that she would agree with that, noting that a fence also occupies a fair amount of space.

Senior Planner Anderson confirmed the consensus of the Board to increase that reduction. He provided an overview of the tree preservation requirements.

Board Member Bernard asked if any projects have not moved forward because of the tree preservation requirements.

Senior Planner Anderson replied that a project has not been lost directly related to only tree preservation standards, but that could have been one factor, of multiple, for some inquiries that did not move forward to formal application.

Chairperson Moore commented that she is comfortable with the definition of significant trees and also does not have a problem with the expense a developer would have to pay in relation because they are removing a forest in order to move forward with development.

Board Member Fetterley asked if staff could recall any feedback that would be helpful in this discussion. She stated that she is comfortable with the standard, unless the City is far off from what other communities are requiring.

Senior Planner Anderson replied that he has received comments of frustration, but those projects still went forward. He stated that they can expand the search to see what other communities require. He provided an example of a more urban area and noted that perhaps the tree inventory is only needed on more heavily wooded areas. He asked if the intention is to preserve any tree, anywhere, or whether they are intending to protect more forested or woodland areas.

Board Member Bernard commented that he would believe it should apply to a more natural area. He noted that in the example these trees were planted as a buffer and were not natural to begin with. He noted that a fence would provide the same level of screening.

Senior Planner Anderson replied that the base landscaping requirements do apply to reforestation requirements. He stated that staff can explore the requirements of other communities and perhaps draft language that encapsulates the intention of true natural areas versus sporadic trees as shown in the example.

Chairperson Moore agreed but noted that she would want some kind of safeguards in place as well. She suggested looking at other Highway 10 communities for tree preservation language.

Senior Planner Anderson provided additional input on the requirement for payment into the community forestry fund, noting that in some cases there simply was not enough room on the site to plant the required trees. He identified language within the tree preservation ordinance that should be moved and/or eliminated.

Board Member Hiatt agreed that information should be moved into a separate chapter as the information is helpful and should be easy to find.

Senior Planner Anderson noted that he will gather the comparison information for communities that have similar populations with similar levels of development in order to provide more accurate comparisons.

5.03: Appoint Chairperson and Vice Chairperson

Senior Planner Anderson stated that his intention was to provide information to the Board on the updated policy from the Council that identifies the number of consecutive terms someone can serve as Chairperson. He stated that the partial term of Chairperson Moore would not count and therefore she would be eligible for an additional term if desired. He stated that the intention of limiting the term of Chair is to provide opportunity to other members, noting that on some Boards or Commissions the same person has served as Chair for many years. He noted that no action is needed tonight.

6. BOARD / STAFF INPUT

- **Environment Commissions Conference – May 20, 2023, 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., Ridgedale Public Library, 12601 Ridgedale Drive, Minnetonka, MN 55305**

Senior Planner Anderson noted the upcoming event which the Board is invited to attend.

Chairperson Moore provided input on the positive experience she has had attending this conference in the past.

- **Compost Bin Distribution Event – May 16, 2023 3 – 6 p.m., Public Works Building**
 - **22 compost bins remaining from the 2022 event (this is all that will be available; did not sign up for a 2023 event)**
 - **Looking for volunteers**

Senior Planner Anderson noted the upcoming distribution event for the remaining compost bins.

Board Member Hiatt asked the likelihood that Ramsey could hold another rain barrel event.

Senior Planner Anderson confirmed that he could look into being a site for next year. He noted that Ramsey residents can still go online to purchase a rain barrel and identify another community as the pickup location.

Chairperson Moore stated that perhaps they look into being a distribution location every two to four years. She volunteered to assist with the distribution event.

7. ADJOURNMENT

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

The meeting adjourned at 8:01 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Chris Anderson
Senior Planner

ATTEST:

Dana Verbeek
Planning Administrative Assistant

Drafted by Amanda Staple
TimeSaver Off Site Secretarial, Inc.