

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

On Monday, August 21, 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 Thomas Hagerty
 Board Member Mike Heifner
 Board Member Hassan Salami
 Board Member Jessica Vikander

Members Absent: Board Member Melissa Fetterley

Also Present: Senior Planner Chris Anderson
 Councilmember Woestehoff

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

Motion carried. Voting Yes: Chairperson Moore, Board Member Bernard, Salami, Hagerty, Heifner, and Vikander. Voting No: None. Absent: Board Member Fetterley.

4. APPROVE MINUTES

4.01: Approve Meeting Minutes Dated June 12, 2023

Motion by Board Member Hagerty and seconded by Board Member Bernard to approve the regular meeting minutes dated June 12, 2023.

Motion carried. Voting Yes: Chairperson Moore, Board Member Hagerty, Bernard, Heifner, Salami, and Vikander. Voting No: None. Absent: Board Member Fetterley.

5. POLICY BOARD BUSINESS

5.01: Consider Natural Resources Aspects of Proposed Site Plan for Jam Hops at 14165 Ramsey Boulevard NW (Project No. 23-113)

Senior Planner Anderson presented the staff report. He stated that the City has received an application from Kinghorn Construction on behalf of Jam Hops for Site Plan review of a proposed new indoor commercial recreation facility located at Ramsey Boulevard NW. Jam Hops is currently operating in a building just across the border in Anoka, however, they have been informed that they will need to vacate their existing building. This site remains convenient for existing clients while also providing an opportunity to grow the business. The subject property is currently owned by the City and the applicant is working with the City's Economic Development Manager on the land sale.

Board Member Salami asked if the applicant could be required to plant more trees once the highway project is completed.

Senior Planner Anderson replied that the City would not come back to the business after this review and approval process to require additional trees. He stated that the recommendation in this review would be the final landscaping recommendations. He stated that it is his understanding that there will not be any impact to this property as a result of the highway project. He stated that the applicant and county are communicating to determine the location of the retaining wall to determine how that will interact with this site.

Motion by Board Member Salami and seconded by Board Member Vikander to recommend approval of the Tree Preservation and Landscape Plans, contingent upon compliance with staff's review comments.

Motion carried. Voting Yes: Chairperson Moore, Board Member Salami, Vikander, Bernard, Hagerty, and Heifner. Voting No: None. Absent: Board Member Fetterley.

5.02: Consider the Environmental Assessment Worksheet for the Haviland Fields Project Located at 14501 Nowthen Boulevard NW (Project No. 23-110); Case of Presbyterian Homes Housing and Assisted Living

Senior Planner Anderson presented the staff report. He stated that Presbyterian Homes Housing and Assisted Living is contemplating a potential residential development of the Lord of Life Lutheran Church property located at 14501 Nowthen Boulevard NW. The church would remain, but the two existing single-family homes would be removed. Per Minnesota Rules 4410, any proposed project consisting of 375 or more attached units is subject to an Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW). The conceptual development consists of 476 dwelling units (split between 22 townhouse units and three multi-family buildings). On August 8, 2023, the City Council denied the applicant's request for financial assistance (TIF) and the developer is currently rethinking funding strategies. However, an EAW is a planning document not intended to be used to approve or deny a project. Additionally, EAWs are valid for five years, so should construction costs decrease, it is possible that this project could proceed without funding assistance. Thus, it makes sense to complete the review of the EAW should the applicant decide to move forward without assistance in the future.

Chairperson Moore commented that she appreciated receiving the EAW in July as it was a long document and that allowed more time for review. She stated that she does not have any comments that she would like recorded with the document. She confirmed that no members of the Board had comments to submit.

5.03: Consider Multiple Grant Opportunities Related to Community Forestry Activities

Senior Planner Anderson presented the staff report. He stated that the purpose of the case is to review and consider two Urban and Community Forestry (UCF) grant opportunities available through the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR). One is a shade tree program bonding grant and the other is a ReLeaf community forestry grant. There is approximately \$10,000,000 available through the bonding grant program and a little less than \$7,000,000 via the ReLeaf grant program. The two grant programs are fairly similar (intentionally designed this way to simplify and streamline applying for both grants) in terms of eligible/ineligible expenses and timeframes.

Chairperson Moore asked if the funds could be used on any services if approved, such as hiring a contractor or placing additional staff in the parks department, or whether the funds could only be used for planting trees.

Senior Planner Anderson replied that funds could be used to hire a contractor as long as the contractor has certified professional staff. He stated that the funds could also be used to certify City staff as tree inspectors or arborists.

Chairperson Moore asked if EAB treatment would be ongoing and whether funds could be set aside to pay for those treatments for multiple years.

Senior Planner Anderson replied that treatment would not have to be continued for the life of the tree. He stated that if a round of injections were done in 2024, they could also do another round of injections in 2025 or 2026. He noted that most treatments are annual or biannual. He stated that once they are outside of that four-year grant window, it would be the decision of the City whether to continue with treatments at its own cost.

Chairperson Moore asked if this grant would only apply to trees on public property or whether funds could be used for trees on private property.

Senior Planner Anderson replied that the intention is to focus on public land. He noted that the grant does have a provision that would qualify certain properties that qualify as low income but noted that the City would intend to focus on public land and rights-of-way.

Chairperson Moore asked if the City would be willing to look into spaces that are not a park, but are City owned.

Senior Planner Anderson replied that the City owns quite a bit of land, noting that a handful is dedicated parkland but currently unimproved. He stated that could potentially be explored but some of the challenges with those unimproved parks is the difficulty in the survival of trees in those locations. He stated that they have done plantings in unimproved park lands before, but it

was not successful due to lack of irrigation and challenges with animals. He stated that they could look at those opportunities if grant funds are received.

Board Member Heifner asked the average grant award amount.

Senior Planner Anderson replied that the maximum grant award is \$500,000. He commented that there is not a grant minimum.

Board Member Vikander asked if a plan would be written as to how the funds would be spent if this is approved by the Board and the City Council.

Senior Planner Anderson confirmed that would be part of the grant application.

Board Member Vikander asked if that plan would be brought back for review.

Senior Planner Anderson replied that the grant deadline occurs prior to the next Board meeting. He stated that he could send out a copy of the plan once completed if the Board is interested in reviewing the document.

Councilmember Woestehoff noted the mention of right-of-way and asked if the intention would be to handle trees that are within the right-of-way as that would also assist property owners.

Senior Planner Anderson confirmed that trees within the right-of-way are the responsibility of the City and therefore these funds could be used to manage the trees within those corridors.

Councilmember Woestehoff referenced the 20/10/5 formula mentioned in one of the applications and asked how the City compares to that currently.

Senior Planner Anderson replied that is not specific to City land and applies to the overall makeup of the city. He noted that three species that would not be eligible for purchase with grant funds. He commented that the state is encouraging some species for a trial because of the warmer climate that has been experienced. He noted that if those trees do well, the City could incorporate those into the preferred tree list.

Board Member Vikander asked if the City would be requesting the maximum grant amount or whether that amount is yet to be determined.

Senior Planner Anderson replied that he would not want to request more than could be accomplished. He noted that once the plan is developed, he would have the target amount but did not believe it would be close to the maximum amount of \$500,000.

Motion by Board Member Bernard and seconded by Board Member Vikander to recommend that City Council support staff preparing and submitting applications for both grant programs.

Further discussion: Board Member Salami stated that he would like to see the City experience the benefit of the grant funds and is interested to see the plan in more detail.

Motion carried. Voting Yes: Chairperson Moore, Board Member Bernard, Vikander, Hagerty, Heifner, and Salami. Voting No: None. Absent: Board Member Fetterley.

6. BOARD / STAFF INPUT

- **Planting Event: Pollinator Garden Planting Update**

Senior Planner Anderson commented that there was a pollinator project partially implemented along Veterans Drive, converting that into a native landscape/pollinator setting. He stated that the timing did not work out for a planting event in the spring because and therefore there is a planting opportunity the Board could participate in the night of the September meeting, prior to the meeting time. He noted that the planting would likely begin around 5 or 5:30 and they would still begin the meeting at 6:30. He commented that the Board is not required to participate but is invited to do so.

Chairperson Moore commented that she will plan to attend the event.

- **Other**

Senior Planner Anderson stated that the curbside recycling held August 1st through August 15th has wrapped up and seemed to be a success. He noted that the vendor handled all calls and payments, noting that over 10 tons of material was picked up curbside during the event. He believed that they would pursue this again next year.

7. ADJOURNMENT

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

The meeting adjourned at 7:27 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Chris Anderson
Senior Planner

ATTEST:

Dana Verbeek
Planning Administrative Assistant

Drafted by Amanda Staple
TimeSaver Off Site Secretarial, Inc.