

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

On Monday, August 19, 2024, the Environmental Policy Board (EPB) met in the Council Chambers at the Ramsey Municipal Center, 7550 Sunwood Drive N.W., Ramsey, Minnesota.

Members Present: Acting Chairperson Laura Moore
 Board Member Reid Bernard
 Board Member Nick Burgess
 Board Member Thomas Hagerty
 Board Member Paula Houts
 Board Member Hassan Salami

Members Absent: Chairperson Melissa Fetterley

Also Present: Senior Planner Chris Anderson

1. CALL TO ORDER

Acting 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 Hagerty to approve the agenda as submitted.

Motion carried. Voting Yes: Acting Chairperson Moore, Board Member Bernard, Hagerty, Burgess, Houts, and Salami. Voting No: None. Absent: Chairperson Fetterley.

4. APPROVE MINUTES

4.01: Approve Meeting Minutes Dated July 15, 2024

Motion by Board Member Hagerty and seconded by Board Member Salami to approve the regular meeting minutes dated July 15, 2024.

Motion carried. Voting Yes: Acting Chairperson Moore, Board Member Hagerty, Salami, Bernard, Burgess, and Houts. Voting No: None. Absent: Chairperson Fetterley.

5. POLICY BOARD BUSINESS

5.01: Consider Natural Resources Aspects for Parkside Townhomes Preliminary Plat

Senior Planner Anderson presented the staff report. He stated that the City has received an application from Ramsey at COR LLC for Preliminary Plat review of a proposed townhome development located on the block bordered by Rhinestone Street, Traprock Street, 146th Avenue, and Ramsey Parkway. The purpose of this case is to review the Landscape Plan and other natural resources aspects of the project. Environmental Policy Board (EPB) members may recall this project from early in 2023. Parkside Townhomes actually received Preliminary Plat approval, however, the applicant withdrew the application for Final Plat consideration to work through some items with his builder. Preliminary Plat approval is only valid for one year, and by the time the applicant was ready to move forward, the approval had expired.

Acting Chairperson Moore asked the anticipated timing between phases.

Senior Planner Anderson replied that there is not a specific timeline, as that often depends on how quickly units sell in the first phase. He stated that the third phase, which is not part of the application, is geared more for the future once this entire block is constructed.

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

Motion carried. Voting Yes: Acting Chairperson Moore, Board Member Bernard, Salami, Burgess, Hagerty, and Houts. Voting No: None. Absent: Chairperson Fetterley.

5.02: Discuss Potential Development of Performance Standards for Managed Natural Landscapes

Senior Planner Anderson presented the staff report. He stated that in 2007, the City of Ramsey amended Chapter 30 (Nuisances) of City Code to exempt natural landscape plant materials from the eight-inch height restriction for grass and weeds. In 2023, the State of Minnesota enacted State Statute 412.925 (Native Landscapes), which specifies that statutory and home rule charter cities must allow private property owners to install and maintain managed natural landscapes on private property. In 2024, Ramsey amended Chapter 30 (Nuisances) again, reiterating that natural landscapes are exempt from the vegetative height restrictions but also specifying that an approved management plan is required. However, there are no other standards in place regarding these managed natural landscapes. He reviewed potential standards that could be considered.

Acting Chairperson Moore appreciated that there is growing interest in this, noting that she is doing several native plantings in her yard currently. She stated that she would support having a discussion related to boulevard type regulations.

Senior Planner Anderson provided details on the road right-of-way, noting that while ideally the road would be centered within that right-of-way, it is not always. He stated that on average there could be 15 feet of right-of-way on each side, but that is not always the case.

Acting Chairperson Moore commented that people should be able to do as they want with their own yard and therefore would only want to consider regulations in the boulevard, near the road. She stated that perhaps the management plan is a suggestion, as requiring that element may detract some people from wanting to pursue that endeavor. She commented that sometimes when you

start a native planting area, things often change based on what is successful and what is not. She stated that there could be guidelines on what a plan could look like, which could help keep the areas contained. She stated that when there is not a border around the native area, perhaps there is signage. She stated that she would also be interested in a regulation to keep invasives out of the natural area.

Senior Planner Anderson commented that a management plan forces a property owner to put thought into it and think about what they are going to do. He stated that some people think about a native landscape, thinking they will not need to maintain it, but commented that the first three to five years require a lot of work. He stated that he would not necessarily advocate for needing a buffer/border on a natural area, but used the example where that area may abuts another property and could begin to encroach on the neighboring property.

Board Member Salami commented that he has lived in Ramsey for almost 15 years and has noticed properties with grass/vegetation that is too tall. He stated that he has wondered if the City could intervene and cut grass or trim trees on certain properties. He also noted that some trees seem to be planted on property lines.

Senior Planner Anderson replied that there is not a setback for tree planting, noting that a tree can be planted further from the property line and then still encroach onto a neighboring property over the years. He also noted volunteer trees that pop up also. He stated that there is also nothing the City can do about things that grow from one yard to the next yard. He stated that the private property owner is responsible for cutting their grass and trimming their trees. He stated that there are stretches of City owned land that would be maintained by public works, acknowledging that the City has limited resources.

Board Member Houts asked if the City differentiates between native and natural landscape.

Senior Planner Anderson replied that the City does not, as everything falls under the umbrella of alternative landscapes.

Board Member Houts asked if the boulevard would be different than someone that has a ditch adjacent to the road.

Senior Planner Anderson replied that currently there is not a distinction but that could be something the board may wish to consider.

Board Member Hagerty stated that he favors having some type of standards and management plan. He stated that he does like the idea of a border between properties, signage, and maintenance activities. He acknowledged that there is a lot more work involved in native plant areas compared to mowing a lawn and believed that the management/standards would help people to understand that. He asked if the City has been receiving complaints and whether that is what drove this issue forward.

Senior Planner Anderson commented that the City did receive complaints about a property undergoing a native landscape, noting that property does have a management plan. He recognized that there is a strong sense of property rights in Ramsey, but that does not mean there cannot or should not be standards as well. He stated that perhaps they should incorporate the notion that this

landscape would need to be installed, as there has been interest from someone that intended to stop mowing and have their neighbor's natural landscaping blow into their yard.

Acting Chairperson Moore stated that to really do a good job to establish a native prairie you really need to start with a burn, recognizing that some yards are larger and could allow that while others could not.

Senior Planner Anderson commented that while a controlled burn would be ideal, there are many places that would not be allowed. He stated that there are alternative methods that could be used to establish the native landscaping, it just takes more effort and work, noting that it is often two or three years after the initial seeding that you would see above ground growth and therefore often looks very undesirable. He stated that is where signage would be helpful to communicate to those passing by that this is an intentional process.

Board Member Burgess asked if there are standards that exist in other communities that could be used as a starting point.

Senior Planner Anderson stated that he does have some examples from other communities that he forgot to attach to the case, noting that he can email those as a follow up.

6. BOARD / STAFF INPUT

- **Fall Recycling Event – September 28, 2024 (8am – 12 pm, Public Works Campus, 14199 Jasper Street)**

Senior Planner Anderson noted the upcoming event and stated that the curbside recycling event recently concluded but he did not yet have those numbers.

- **Fix It Clinic – October 5, 2024 (10am – 1pm, Public Works Campus, 14199 Jasper Street)**

Senior Planner Anderson advised of the upcoming event.

7. ADJOURNMENT

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

The meeting adjourned at 7:36 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Chris Anderson
Senior Planner

ATTEST:

Abdi Sahal
Administrative Assistant

Drafted by Amanda Staple
TimeSaver Off Site Secretarial, Inc.