

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

On Monday, October 21, 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: Chairperson Melissa Fetterley
Board Member Reid Bernard (arrived at 6:40 p.m.)
Board Member Nick Burgess
Board Member Thomas Hagerty
Board Member Paula Houts
Board Member Hassan Salami

Members Absent: Board Member Laura Moore

Also Present: Senior Planner Chris Anderson
City Council Liaison Matt Woestehoff

1. CALL TO ORDER

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

2. CITIZEN INPUT

None.

3. APPROVE AGENDA

Motion by Board Member Burgess and seconded by Board Member Hagerty to approve the agenda as submitted.

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

4. APPROVE MINUTES

4.01: Approve Meeting Minutes Dated August 19, 2024

Motion by Board Member Hagerty and seconded by Board Member Salami to approve the regular meeting minutes dated August 19, 2024.

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

5. POLICY BOARD BUSINESS

5.01: Consider the Natural Resources Aspects of a Site Plan for Blanery LLC at 6591 141st Avenue NW (Project No. 24-124); Case of Blanery LLC

Senior Planner Anderson presented the staff report. He stated that the City has received a Land Use Application from Blanery LLC for a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) and Site Plan for a proposed automotive body shop at 6591 141st Avenue NW. The applicant has a purchase agreement with the City to acquire the subject property.

Board Member Bernard arrived.

Chairperson Fetterley commented that it looks like a straightforward plan with no additional recommendations.

Motion by Board Member Hagerty and seconded by Board Member Salami to recommend approval of the Landscape Plan and Tree Inventory & Preservation Plan.

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

5.02: Continue Discussion on Potential Performance Standards for Managed Natural Landscapes

Senior Planner Anderson presented the staff report. He stated that at the August meeting, the Board discussed the idea of developing performance standards for natural landscapes. There seemed to be consensus among the Board to consider standards within the right-of-way, but nothing really beyond that. Staff has prepared a rough draft of an ordinance amendment to assist with this discussion. There are three components to the ordinance amendment, simply adding several definitions to Chapter 30 (Nuisances) of the City Code; specifically addressing information that needs to be included in a management plan; and attempting to identify standards that are applicable when attempting to establish and maintain a natural landscape. He stated that staff is seeking input on the third component of the ordinance.

Chairperson Fetterley asked if staff used references from other communities when developing these requirements.

Senior Planner Anderson replied that last year the legislature enacted new legislation that required cities to allow naturalized landscapes. He stated that Ramsey has allowed that for over 15 years, with an approved management plan. He stated that within the last year a number of communities had to make changes to their regulations to allow for naturalized landscapes and therefore he was able to use those regulations to craft this proposal.

Board Member Burgess appreciated the information from other communities. He asked if the recommendation would be to have natural landscaping setback 18 inches, or about one pass of a lawnmower.

Senior Planner Anderson replied that was a seed to start discussion and noted that he is seeking feedback on that. He commented that his thought was that the entire right-of-way would not need to be turf grass and asked if the Board felt that it would be important to have some type of

separation from the roadway and/or adjacent properties. He noted that some communities have no setback requirement while others have a five foot, or fence requirement. He believed that there should be some time of setback from the roadway, and perhaps from a sidewalk or trail.

Commissioner Burgess commented that he believes it would be helpful to have some kind of setback, within the range of 18 inches to three feet, from the street and sidewalks and trails.

Board Member Hagerty stated that he also agrees with a setback, a minimum of 18 inches or two to three feet on all sides of the lawn unless there is a fence. He stated that he likes the idea of having a sign to notify people of what is going on. He also liked the once-a-year maintenance requirement.

Commissioner Houts stated that she does not like requiring a setback outside of the MUSA lines as that area is rural, but does support a setback for properties within the MUSA.

Commissioner Burgess asked if there would be guidance on what the sign should say, or whether the City would create the signs for purchase.

Senior Planner Anderson replied that the City would not provide the signage. He noted that there are standardized signs that people could obtain. He explained that the language is not as important because the intention is just to let the public know that what they are seeing is a naturalized landscape and not a situation where someone just stopped mowing. He noted that some cities only require signage during the transition period when it does not look great. He stated that he could send out examples of signs that the City uses on its own property.

Chairperson Fetterley agreed that the hardest period is that transition period. She asked if they should consider a notice, where a letter would go out to the neighborhood after someone is approved.

Senior Planner Anderson replied that he has not seen any examples that require notification to neighbors and would be hesitant to do that.

Councilmember Woestehoff asked if there was a reason this was drafted as part of the nuisance section rather than the residential landscaping standards.

Senior Planner Anderson replied that the draft was added to that section as that is where the nuisance language currently exists for yard vegetation over 8 inches. He noted that the language could be relocated, and a reference could be made to the nuisance section linking those areas.

Councilmember Woestehoff commented that makes sense, but if there are going to be different standards for different areas, perhaps it should be relocated.

Board Member Bernard commented that he would prefer to split the language into different sections, rural versus MUSA. He commented that he abuts City property and does not believe a buffer would be needed, whereas a lot in a more developed area would perhaps appreciate the buffer.

Senior Planner Anderson stated that some regulations did exempt the buffer if the property abuts a park or a neighbor with native landscaping. He stated that he could draft some exemptions for the Board to consider and bring those back. He noted that there is not a strict timeline for this, as his goal would be to have the regulations in place prior to the next growing season.

Chairperson Fetterley agreed that it would make sense to split up where buffers would be required and not required.

Board Member Hagerty asked for clarification on the process moving forward.

Senior Planner Anderson explained that the Board will develop the standards and he will finalize the draft ordinance language, which would receive a formal recommendation from the Board. He stated that if the language stays in the nuisance chapter, it would then move to the City Council for two readings. He stated that if the information is placed in the zoning code, it would move to the Planning Commission for a public hearing before going to the City Council for two readings.

The Board provided consensus direction to consider different buffer standards for rural residential lots and MUSA lots. It was noted that there would still be a setback requirement from the road regardless of the zoning district.

Board Member Salami commented that it will be important to differentiate the standards so that people on urban lots do not compare themselves to people on larger, five or ten acre lots.

Board Member Bernard stated that while he would support a front setback from the road for rural lots, he would not want to see side or back setbacks unless someone complains.

Senior Planner Anderson replied that he would be hesitant to include a complaint claim as some residents just do not get along with their neighbors and that could put them in an unfair position. He stated that he will use the comments received to update the draft and bring it back for additional review by the Board.

6. BOARD / STAFF INPUT

Senior Planner Anderson provided an update on the recent Fix It Clinic held on October 5th, which was not as well attended as they had hoped.

Chairperson Fetterley asked if the Board should discuss the 2025 meeting calendar or whether that should occur at the next meeting.

Senior Planner Anderson commented that he planned to create a draft calendar for 2025 to present at the November meeting, recognizing that the January and February meetings always have to shift because of holidays.

7. ADJOURNMENT

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

The meeting adjourned at 7:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Chris Anderson
Senior Planner

ATTEST:

Abdi Sahal
Administrative Assistant

Drafted by Amanda Staple
TimeSaver Off Site Secretarial, Inc.