

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

On Monday, August 18, 2025, 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
 Board Member Thomas Hagerty
 Board Member Hassan Salami (arrived at 6:41 p.m.)

Members Absent: Board Member Nick Burgess
 Board Member Paula Houts
 Board Member Laura Moore

Also Present: Planning Manager Todd Larson

1. CALL TO ORDER

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

Chairperson Fetterley acknowledged that there is not a quorum present, but they would still like to allow the presentation to be made that was scheduled for tonight.

2. POLICY BOARD BUSINESS

2.01: Continued Discussion on Exterior Solid Fuel-Fired Heated Devices

Planning Manager Larson introduced the members present to speak on this topic.

Tyler Ellis, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) Air Toxics Risk Assessor, introduced himself and his coworker, Megan Kuhl-Stennes, MPCA Air Policy Planner. He stated that they have both worked in woodsmoke jobs with the MPCA and are present to speak about outdoor wood boilers. He provided information on air pollutants and the role that residential woodburning has on them. He reviewed the different types of equipment that make up residential wood smoke and explained the health impacts of air pollution.

Megan Kuhl-Stennes provided additional information on outdoor wood boilers, which were designed by farmers and meant to be used on very rural properties where the smoke would not bother anyone else. She commented that even though the equipment is outside, there is a thermostat inside that regulates the temperature and puts a damper on the boiler when the temperature inside gets too hot. She recognized that some people in Minnesota may see an outdoor wood boiler as a benefit, but there are many risks associated with them as well. She stated that there is EPA certification for wood boilers, which were updated in 2015 and 2020, recognizing that many wood boilers being used were purchased before that time. She stated that outdoor wood boilers use a lot of wood, and folks will often get to the point of not having enough dry wood. She

stated that they did review the current ordinance related to outdoor wood boilers/solid fuel-fired heating devices, which is a good start. She recognized the issues that can exist in enforcing nuisances. She noted that they worked with Stillwater Township on this issue and provided an overview of their ordinance and related standards. She provided some ideas that could be considered for an updated ordinance and regulations, recognizing challenges that could still exist. She also provided additional suggestions that could assist with taking action on the current issues.

Board Member Salami arrived.

3. APPROVE AGENDA

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

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

4. APPROVE MINUTES

4.01: Approve Meeting Minutes Dated May 19, 2025

Motion by Board Member Bernard and seconded by Board Member Salami to approve the regular meeting minutes dated May 19, 2025.

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

2. POLICY BOARD BUSINESS (Continued)

2.01: Continued Discussion on Exterior Solid Fuel-Fired Heated Devices (Continued)

Chairperson Fetterley stated that it sounds like the use of these devices can be controversial based on the pollution factor. She referenced a previous discussion where it was mentioned that perhaps people are burning things they should not be, and asked if the sensors mentioned in the presentation would have a way to identify if that is happening.

Ms. Kuhl-Stennes commented that the air sensors would only measure particular pollution and would not be able to distinguish if anything else was being burned.

Board Member Hagerty asked if the stack height would make a difference in smoke disbursement.

Mr. Ellis commented that a stack would have to go pretty high to get a disbursement that neighbors would benefit from, but that could also have unintended consequences related to the speed of combustion.

Board Member Hagerty asked for more information on how the dryness of wood is tested.

Ms. Kuhl-Stennes provided more information on the moisture meter, noting its relatively cheap cost and the ability to purchase the tool at most home improvement stores.

Board Member Hagerty asked if there is a minimum lot size requirement for a wood boiler.

Chairperson Fetterley confirmed that the City does not have that type of regulation within its ordinance. She asked if there is a way to test if items other than wood are being burned in the system.

Ms. Kuhl-Stennes was not aware of such a method of testing.

Councilmember Peters asked if there was legal pushback from the residents towards the City in Stillwater Township from the updated regulations it developed.

Ms. Kuhl-Stennes stated that the issue did go through the court. She noted that the residents hired a lawyer to legally encourage the township to enforce the nuisance ordinance.

Councilmember Peters asked for more information on the enforcement mechanisms used by Stillwater Township.

Ms. Kuhl-Stennes replied that the township required the operator of the wood boiler to cease using it and required the removal of the equipment. She confirmed that wood boilers were not banned in that community, but required the boiler to be removed for someone who was in violation.

Councilmember Peters asked about the cost of a permit for a wood boiler in Ramsey.

Planning Manager Larson replied that mechanical permits are not expensive.

Councilmember Peters asked if someone would be out of compliance if they had a wood boiler without a permit.

Planning Manager Larson explained that the issue they have with this case is that several of these devices existed prior to the permit. He stated that the challenge they have is what is considered to be unreasonable, as one person can deem something unreasonable while another person may find it reasonable.

Chairperson Fetterley commented that it seems the current Code is too ambiguous for enforcement. She asked that Ms. Kuhl-Stennes and Mr. Ellis forward any additional information they have related to the Stillwater Township case, as that could be helpful. She welcomed public input.

Randy Keyser, 16967 Bison Street NW, commented that he has been to City Council meetings and has met with members of City staff and the City Council to discuss his concerns. He stated that he has three neighbors with outdoor wood boilers, two of which are older and one that was installed one year ago. He commented that he required medical attention the previous year because of the poor air quality in his home. He noted that the air quality on his property varies depending on the direction of the wind. He stated that he has called the City and 911 about this issue and continues to be told that wood boilers are legal. He stated that he is being injured and his health is at risk because of this issue. He noted that two of his neighbors have passed away, one of whom was on

oxygen and could have become ill as a result of the wood boilers. He had concerns about the coming winter and the risks to his health that would again arise. He commented that he has provided pictures of smoke enveloping his neighborhood from the boilers. He stated that the intake on his furnace sucks the smoke into his home, and he has five air cleaners active in his home. He commented on the potentially diseased wood and pallets that are burned in the wood boilers. He asked for information on what he could legally do to remedy this situation, as his health is being injured. He recognized that it is legal to have a wood boiler, but it is being used in the wrong way.

Chairperson Fetterley appreciated the input from the resident, noting that the Board cannot give him legal advice.

Chairperson Fetterley referenced the situation in which a City bans wood boilers and asked if that ban would apply to the wood boilers that people already have.

Councilmember Peters stated that the City Council will need to discuss what is best for the community. He recognized that what is best for the community is to have the best air quality. He commented on how different things have evolved over time, from open sewers to septic service and City sewer. He stated that he would feel the same about inefficient methods of heating homes. He stated that if services were available in the street to heat homes, through electric and gas, he would support that. He stated that perhaps those services are available, and the residents are choosing this as an alternative. He commented that he would like to hear from a resident who has one of these systems to find out why they use it. He noted his goal to also protect the City from litigation. He stated that he has been to the resident's home and the smoke in the air is very noticeable, and he would not want to live in that area. He commented that the City Council will continue to discuss this matter. He asked why the State does not ban this type of equipment.

Ms. Kuhl-Stennes replied that she did not believe there was an appetite to ban these throughout the whole state, but perhaps within the metro area. She commented that some states have banned this type of equipment, but noted that those tend to be states where there are air quality issues already.

Councilmember Peters asked if any counties have banned the equipment in Minnesota.

Ms. Kuhl-Stennes thought that might be the case, but would have to follow up on that. She stated that generally, it is just cities and townships that have banned the equipment.

Councilmember Peters commented that it would be interesting to see if the Metropolitan Council would be interested in taking up this issue.

Chairperson Fetterley asked if the Board is interested in making any recommendations. She stated that based on the information presented tonight, there is a lot more pollution coming from these devices than she believed, and perhaps the City should consider whether it wants to continue to allow wood boilers, and/or if the regulations should be stronger.

Board Member Hagerty noted some of the recommendations from the MPCA related to larger lot size requirements, larger setbacks, and other policy changes that he would support.

Board Member Bernard agreed that this would need to be further discussed, as there could be stronger regulations. He stated that he would not support a ban, but perhaps they are only allowed in more rural areas on larger lots.

Board Member Salami asked how the existing Code could be enforced. He referenced the statement from the resident that he has called the police and asked if there are related reports provided to the City that could be used in enforcement.

Chairperson Fetterley commented that it seems that the existing Code is so generic that it is not enforceable. This section should be reviewed and looked at property minimum etc.

Board Member Salami asked if anyone had spoken with the neighbors of the resident who spoke to ask them if they were aware their actions were harming their neighbor, and whether fines could be imposed.

Chairperson Fetterley commented that it would seem that there are perhaps no Codes being violated in this situation because of the ambiguity in the Code language.

Motion by Board Member Bernard and seconded by Board Member Hagerty to recommend that the City Council modify the section of City Code related to lot size requirements, setbacks, and burnable materials for solid fuel-fired heating devices using the recommendations received from the MPCA and information from Stillwater Township.

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

2.02: Consider the Natural Resources Aspects of the Preliminary Plat for Brookside Terrace (Project No. 25-113); Case of Brookside Construction Inc.

Planning Manager Larson presented the staff report. He stated that the City has received an application from Brookside Construction Inc. for a proposed six lot single single-family residential subdivision of the property generally known as 15156 Nowthen Boulevard. The landscaping plans does meet the city requirements for this project.

Chairperson Fetterley commented that it appears that the applicant is attempting to preserve a large amount of tree coverage, which is great to see. She asked the new plans they submitted allowed for some new trees to be planted.

Planning Manager Larson confirmed and said we do have some rules about planting in the front yard and that we preserve the trees in the backyard. But most of the new planting in the front yard is to fill in the space.

Motion by Board Member Hagerty and seconded by Board Member Salami to recommend approval of the natural resource aspects of the project, contingent upon receipt of a Landscape Plan compliant with City Code Section 106-470 (Residential Landscaping Standards).

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

5. CITIZEN INPUT

None.

6. BOARD / STAFF INPUT

Planning Manager Larson noted an item that will come before the Board at its next meeting.

7. ADJOURNMENT

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

The meeting adjourned at 7:39 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Chris Anderson
Senior Planner

ATTEST:

Kalia Lor
Planning Assistant

Drafted by Amanda Staple
TimeSaver Off Site Secretarial, Inc.