

West St. Paul Environmental Committee
Environmental Committee May 5, 2021
West St. Paul Municipal Center-City Council Chambers/Virtual Meeting

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 pm.

Committee members in attendance: Laura Zanmiller, Jade Pennig, Ken Pullman, Lauren Hazenson, Nicholas Hager

Non-voting in attendance: Robert Gausman, Robyn Gulley, Dave Schletty

2. NEW BUSINESS

- a. **Minutes**-The March 3, 2021 minutes were approved.

- b. **No Mow May Discussion**-Schletty reported that at the last Council Meeting, Councilperson Berry brought up the idea of having a “No Mow May.” It would be a month-long event in which the City would promote residents to delay mowing their lawns to help pollinators still hibernating at this time. It gives the pollinators extra spaces to pollinate and to hide or be sheltered. Schletty drafted up a resolution and sample sign for people to post so that their neighbors know what they are doing and not get call the City for the city ordinance violation. By adopting the resolution, Council would tell City Staff that the City would not be enforcing the city ordinance regarding grass height. Otte asked if non-mowing residents would be getting notices on June 1 if they did not mow their lawns, or would they be given a grace period. Schletty said that they would be given a grace period but that they would be informed that they need to mow their lawn in June. This resolution will be on next Monday’s Council Agenda. Schletty was looking for any comments from the Committee. Otte said that the language looks good and she supports an annual plan for this effort. Pennig said she thinks it is a very good idea. She asked if the City would provide the signs. The City is going to see how much the signs cost; the City is probably not going to provide them free of charge. The signs would be very inexpensive. Otte said this item is already an action item for Council; the Environmental Committee does not need to pass anything. Schletty confirmed this; he wanted to see if Committee Members had any changes. Pennig is in support of the measure. It is, however, a minimal measure. Other plants that house pollinators may have already been trimmed down. She would like to see education about this in the month of May. The City needs to talk about other yard plants and turf alternatives.

- c. **2021 Arbor Day Proclamation**-Schletty said that this is the second year in which the City has not been able to have an Arbor Day event. In order to help the City keep Tree City designation, the Tree City organization is waiving the requirement of having the Arbor Day celebration. However, the City still needs to have the Arbor Day Proclamation to celebrate Arbor Day in the City. This will also be on Monday’s Council Agenda. Otte asked about the tree-planting requirement. Schletty said that that requirement has also been waived this year. Schletty talked about the Arbor Day document, the 2018 proclamation and the suggested language from the DNR. Otte said that in the future it would be interesting to revisit the Urban Forest plan. Otte talked about Michael Orange and designating an area in West St. Paul as an urban forest. Gausman said that when he worked in St. Paul’s inner city, there was an urban forest issue. The University of Minnesota came and made a presentation to his group that the houses had actually outlasted the trees; the trees had been replaced by weed trees and sucker trees. It added to the chaos and poor feeling people had for the community. Gausman said that it is important to stay on top of this. Otte remarked that in the old resolution the language regarding the clean drinking water is not in the current resolution. She recommends still including the water references. .”

Schletty said that he would add the “usual verbiage” on the pollinator-friendly non-neonicotinoid treated plantings. Schletty said that this document would be a proclamation and then a resolution acknowledging May 10, the night of the Council Meeting as Arbor Day in West St. Paul, and also proclaiming May as Arbor month.

3. OLD BUSINESS

- a. **Boulevard Tree Update Discussion**-Zanmiller compared many different resources to update the boulevard tree list. She has added many native trees to the list and added more description under the comments. She made sure that the cultivar chosen had the characteristics that the City wants for trees on the boulevard. For people that have the utilities on the boulevard there is an option of bee lawns. Bee lawns are good for the environment; they are part of a new initiative that the U of M is putting forward. Zanmiller hopes that the list is understandable. She asked for comments. Schletty said the white fringe tree is a cousin of the ash tree; the City may not want to list this tree. It is also very rarely in production and hard to find. Zanmiller said that the tree should be available in other nurseries; she made sure that they are available. Otte asked Schletty about the intention of the list and if it would be supplied to developers. Schletty said that his intention is to recommend the list also to developers. Otte thanked Zanmiller for all of her work. It is a lot of research to do on trees. Otte supports adopting the list minus the white fringe tree. Hager wanted to add a marker to the Minnesota native species on the list. Schletty apologized; when he copied the list, the column listing the native species got deleted/cut off from the page. He will add the column. Otte said that the majority of the species are native species. Zanmiller said that this is what she was aiming for. Pennig thanked Zanmiller for her work and said she would use the list for her yard.

A motion was made to adopt the tree list as presented with the one change to delete the white fringe tree and to add the column for the native species by Pennig. Hager seconded the motion. The motion carried. All Ayes

4. Updates

- a. **City Council**-Gulley said thank you to the Committee for supporting No Mow May. It stresses the importance of pollinators and she hopes that the effort becomes an annual one. Gulley also acknowledged the Committee Members that were leaving the committee; she thanked them for their work.
- b. **Staff-**
 - i. **Committee Farewells**- Schletty said that Otte is stepping off the committee; she has a lot on her plate these days and needs to take a step back. Schletty wanted to thank her for her work. She has been instrumental on the progress the City has made on the GreenSteps program. Her leadership has been great for the last three years. Schletty extended the invitation to have her back if she wished to return in the future. Rebecca McCarty has also stepped down from the Committee. McCarty’s schedule has changed; she has some Wednesday commitments that will take her away from the Environmental Committee meetings. It was a tough decision but it was a good time for her to make the change. She would still like updates especially on the Smith Dodd area development. Schletty said Council would work on replacements for the Committee the next two months.
 - ii. **GreenSteps Cities Update**-Schletty said that the City has fulfilled all of the requirements to proceed to Step 3. The City of West St. Paul will be recognized in June at the state conference.

The City will get an award for Step 3. Schletty said, "We are halfway there!" There is still a lot of work to do but the City has fulfilled the minimum requirements in the program. The City would now expand on the steps that the City has accomplished to achieve more steps in the program. Otte added that she would encourage members to "dig deeper" and there are tons of things that the City has not done in the GreenSteps program.

- iii. **Roers Development update-** Schletty said that he City Planner reported that the Roers made modifications in the development plans at the corner of Wentworth Avenue and Robert Street. The plan shows which plants are native and which plants are pollinator friendly. The new plan demonstrated that they cared about the Committee's recommendations. Schletty said the City Planner is leaving the City of West St. Paul. She has taken a new job and will be leaving at the end of the month. This may delay some of the changes proposed by the Environmental Committee that affect the Planning Commission. Otte said that the Committee needed an update on the Landscape Ordinance. A lot of work went into the Landscape Ordinance; the Committee has not heard updates from Planning Commission or Council on the ordinance. Schletty said that some of the delay was because of the confusion of whether or not it was the Renaissance Plan or the Comp Plan that would be addressed. There is confusion because there is conflicting language in the two plans. The City Planner was trying to get Council to weigh in on which plan to look at and focus on. The differences are being studied and Council is trying to come to a resolution on this on updating the landscape plans. The next step will be to focus in on the recommendations put forth by the Environmental Committee. Otte said that the Bird City effort also needed updating. Schletty said that he has the application; it has not been filed yet. The City still needs to designate a site for a friendly bird habitat. Schletty said that one of the hold ups was that the City needed to declare an International Migratory Bird Day for the Bird City effort. The Bird Day was going to be wrapped up in the Arbor Day effort. Because we could not do the Arbor Day effort, they could not fulfill the Bird City requirements. The effort however, has not been forgotten.

- c. **Park & Recreation Committee-** Gausman reported that the City is getting a pickleball court or two. There has been some problems with buckthorn in Marthaler Park and the [run down] shelters. The City now has park dedication funding and about 1-1.5 million dollars to "spiff up the park." The sliding hill is going to be improved; the parking lot will be moved. A warming house may
- d. be put up high on the sliding hill. The lake has been over grown with buckthorn; this will be cleared up and a dock will be installed. The county trail is also coming through Marthaler Park. Many things are going on; it will take 2-3 years. Schletty added that the trail project is a County-City collaborative. The trail will run from the corner of Wentworth and Humboldt all the way to the tunnel at Garlough School. The trail will be upgraded to County standards. It will complete that section of the River to River Trail. The project will start in a week to a week and a half. It is a big improvements and the City is very excited about the project.

e. Planning Commission-NA

- 5. **Other-**Gausman said that his hearing is not great and he sometimes misses a word or two. He is wondering about having a hearing assist for the meeting. Schletty will work with the City's technical staff on this.

6. Adjourn

With no other business before the Committee and no objections, the Environmental Committee meeting was adjourned at approximately 6:41 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Sharon G. Hatfield