

West St. Paul Environmental Committee
December 1, 2021
West St. Paul Municipal Center- City Council Chambers

1. CALL TO ORDER

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

Committee members in attendance: Connie LaCombe, Cindy Joanning, Nicholas Hager, Laura Zanmiller, Jade Pennig, Ken Paulman, Lauren Hazenson, Liz Pearson, Joshua Pryzbylski

Non-voting members in attendance: Lisa Eng-Sarne, Lisa Stevens, Dave Schletty

2. NEW BUSINESS

a. **Approve October 6, 2021 Minutes**-The minutes were approved with the correction.

b. **Introduce New Planning Commission Liaison- Lisa Stevens**

c. **Community Gardens**-Schletty wanted to begin the discussion regarding a community garden program. Joanning suggested Maureen Hauk (St. Paul) as a good resource for this effort; she works on the seed library program. Hazenson has experience with community gardens and a food shelf program. Volunteers grow the produce and donate it to a food shelf on a weekly basis. Having a dedicated volunteer group in place is important. She would like having individual plots for people and there should be plots available to people who cannot afford fees. Zanmiller participated in the City's community garden years ago; it was nice to talk to other people while gardening. As part of the master gardener intern program, she volunteered in the community garden at Dodge Nature Center. Reaching out to the master gardener program maybe a good way to get help with [implementing] the community garden. Joanning offered her help as a master gardener. Hager suggested [using] space and volunteers from the Garlough and Heritage schools and Dodge Nature Center. Hazenson talked about having a multigenerational volunteer group. Zanmiller said nearby residents of the parks would [need to see] the garden as a positive effort. Schletty added that there is some resistance to the community garden. The City has not found a good spot for a community garden within the parks. Starting small with a flower garden might be the right way to begin. Pennig talked about the proposed garden at the Smith Dodd plot. Eng-Sarne said that it is not possible because MN Dot has plans to realign the street soon. Pryzbylski said school property may be better because of less push back. Hazenson said the problem with school property is students and parents move on. Teachers are left to maintain the garden. She suggested the faith community; churches have large properties. They believe in the common good, and in food shelves and have a dedicated volunteer group. Stevens asked about possibly using private space. Schletty said there are apartment complexes on the south end of town that have community gardens. It is something the City could suggest developers provide. Hazenson said that community engagement would be important with the community garden; the City would not want to foist the garden on a community/area that does not want it. Pennig suggested investigating the identified food deserts to see where the need is greatest.

3. OLD BUSINESS

a. **U of M Environmental Change Class Projects**- the students will present their projects to Council on December 13.

4. UPDATES

a. **City Council**- Eng Sarne said one of more interesting subjects was Cannabis laws; the City is readying itself for changes in Minnesota law. The City did not receive another grant for the cleanup of Thompson Oaks; the City, however, will continue bidding the process.

b. **Staff**

- i. **Winter Parade-** Schletty said that tomorrow night the City will have its Winter Parade; the police and firetrucks will drive through the community. Santa Claus will be on the firetruck and everything will be nice and decorated. The routes are posted online and the routes will cover almost the whole city. It is a fun program and a collaboration with Park and Recreation, the Police Department and the Fire Department.
 - ii. **Shoppe with a Cop-**This Sunday, the police will accompany underprivileged youth and do Christmas shopping.
 - iii. **Secret Holiday Shoppe-** Park and Recreation has a program this Sunday in which children come in, get paired up with a buddy, and shop without their parents for very reasonably-priced gifts. After the children buy their presents, they get wrapped up to take home to put under the tree.
 - iv. **Emerald Ash Borer Grant-**Schletty will soon be submitting an application for an EAB similar to the other DNR grants- The new grant is geared toward everything: new tree plants; take-downs; treatments, and planting. The City will find out in February if the city will get the grant.
 - v. **New City Community Celebration-**Council has tasked staff with starting the celebration again. Council would like to hold a 3-day celebration next August. The City will reach out to other community groups like Dodge Nature, South Robert Street Business Association and the school district. The celebration will be rebranded. There should be an environmental component to the celebration, (i.e. recycling or sustainability.) The West St Paul celebration could replace the Arbor Day component in the Tree City USA program. The event could also be used for a Bird City USA component as well.
 - vi. **Park and Recreation Committee-** The committee continues to work on the Marthaler Master Plan; Phase I was approved by Council.
 - vii. **State Grant-** The City received a state grant jointly with Dakota County for a pollinator greenway restoration grant. Schletty will work with Great River Greening for trail restoration
- c. **Planning Commission-**Steven reported that the Commission has approved an ordinance to reduce parking minimums; how much parking each business has to have has been cut in half. The ordinance rids the City of the “wasteland” of parking in “big box” store lots and spurs development for smaller businesses. There have been many requests for drive-throughs; when these come in, the Commission asks for green space and landscaping. The Commission will be reviewing solar array requirements. There is a concern regarding current ordinances for solar power installations. Schletty said that he would add this topic to the committee in the coming year.

5. OTHER-NA

6. ADJOURN

With no other business before the Committee and no objections, the Environmental Committee adjourned at 6:52 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Sharon G. Hatfield