

West St. Paul Environmental Committee
Meeting Minutes
6:00 pm, April 6, 2022
West St. Paul Municipal Center- City Council Chambers

1. Call to order

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 pm

2. Roll Call

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

Non-voting members in attendance: Robyn Gulley, Dave Schletty, Lisa Stevens

Excused: Cindy Joanning, Ken Paulman

3. New Business-

a. Approve March 2, 2022 Minutes

A correction was made to the March 2, 2022 meeting minutes; Hazenson was added to the roll call. With the correction, the March 2, 2022 minutes were approved by the Committee.

b. Presentation regarding Possible Changes to Storm Water Requirements

Schletty introduced Cody Joos, City Engineering Technician and advisor to the Lower Mississippi Watershed District board, (LMWSD,) and Joe Barton from Dakota County. LMWSD is proposing changes to stormwater [management] requirements. Barton is employed by the Dakota County Soil and Water Conservation District, (SWCD). Soil and Water partners with watershed management organizations including the LMWSD. Currently Soil and Water is in the process of evaluation and planning, and redoing their ten-year watershed management plan. The draft plan will be finalized a couple months. They are planning to change the minimal threshold on storm water requirements. LMWR is concerned with runoff from manmade developments. There is less green space now and existing green space is more compacted from construction. Compaction and impervious surfaces create more pollutants and runoff. The polluted runoff contains oil, chemicals, phosphorus, sediment, letter, heavy metals and disease-causing organisms. Lake Augusta (Mendota Heights) is one of the top ten most polluted lakes in Minnesota. Thompson Lake had a "C" grade for water quality. It is also the only lake impaired for chloride. Thompson Lake and Lake Augusta are two of the more important regionally significant lakes that have impairments.

The SWCD is proposing to make incremental improvements to stormwater management. Currently, developers must install permanent stormwater practices if construction disturbs more than one acre of land. The exceptions are for single-family residential properties and road construction. The proposed change would be for construction that disturbs more than ½ acre of land.

Barton gave an example of a development that would have been affected by the proposed change, the Walgreens on Butler Avenue and Robert Street. It is 97 percent impervious pavement and in the watershed area. Under the current standards, if the Walgreens were to redevelop, they would not need to do any permanent stormwater treatment. Under the new standard, they would. The property is right on the cusp at .94 acres. Considerations regarding the change include enforcing the new standard and developer confusion. Cities may also wish to change the stormwater requirement for the whole city, not just the watershed area. Other things that would be affected are parking requirements, costs to the landowner, and permanent maintenance.

Hazenson asked if the City has gone through the smart salting training. Schletty confirmed that the training has been done multiple times. Hazenson expressed concern about the city salt use. She lives near Thompson Lake and has seen a lot of excess salt on the street. Joos said that city street maintenance has a log of the use of brine on the streets.

LaCombe asked about the Environmental Committee's role. Joos explained that the Engineering Department receives site plans from the Planning Department. Joos's job is to review the plan. If the construction disturbs over an acre of land it triggers plan review and the ordinance regarding rate control, (phosphorous levels). It might be beneficial to the City to change the ordinance before it becomes official. Joos and the City Engineer have told the Watershed Board that they support the change. Today's presentation was to inform the Committee of the change. Council will have to approve the ordinance change and it would be nice to have the support of the Environmental Committee.

Gulley asked the Planning Committee to investigate ways developers could meet standards on smaller parcels of land that are not as cost prohibitive.

c. Little Free Seed Library

Pennig asked if there were a way for the City to fund the box. Schletty said that the City could fund it. Pennig said that Marthaler Park would be a good location for the box. Schletty will work on a fundraising letter for members to use for soliciting funds from local businesses for the box. Schletty will work with marketing staff to see if a box could be donated to the City.

4. Old Business

a. No Mow May 2022

Schletty showed the sign/ flyer for the event to the Committee. The signs have been ordered. They will be ready for distribution in 2 weeks. Mendota Heights is interested in participating in the event as well. LaCombe suggested having the sign promoted at the Council meeting. Schletty said that he would bring the sign to the meeting when available. Hager suggested using a QR code for information. Schletty said that the City web page could be used for this in the future. A subcommittee was suggested for the content. Pennig would like to have year round ideas for the residents on the website as was discussed at the last committee meeting. Pennig said that the No Mow May resolution was signed into perpetuity last year.

b. Arbor Day/Migratory Bird Day (Bird city USA)-

Schletty reported that the Committee wanted to have an Arbor Day event in late April or early May. The Migratory Bird Day could be held on the same day. The Committee decided to have the event on Sat. May 14, 1:00 pm. (It is the same day as the Garlough Marthaler Pollinator Planting Event.) Pennig proposed forming a subcommittee for the event. LaCombe, Pearson, Zanmiller and Hazenson volunteered for the subcommittee.

c. **Environmental Fair Discussion-**

Pennig said the Committee has more time to plan now that the program will overlap with the Arbor Day/Migratory Bird Day event. Schletty said he would send an update to the Committee member regarding the fair.

5. Updates

a. **Subcommittee**

Hager and Pearson will work with Dan Nowicki to set up the City website with the Environmental Committee monthly suggestions page.

b. **City Council**

Gulley said she would love to see Committee Members at the Council meeting to promote No Mow May. The Emergency Climate resolution did pass last month.

c. **Staff**

i. **Mayor's Monarch Pledge/Water Conservation Pledge**-Council is on board with the pledge.

The City needs to commit to undertaking three action items:

1. Engagement with community (developers, planners, landscape architects, etc.) to identify opportunities to create monarch habitats,
2. Issuing a proclamation to raise awareness about the decline of the monarch butterfly
3. Planting a program demonstration garden. Technically the City has already planted a garden at the art park and Marthaler Park.

Gulley mentioned the Wyland water challenge. Residents can participate in the challenge and conserve water and raise the West St. Paul city rating. Hazenson suggested becoming an official monarch weigh station through the Monarch Watch Program. The program will provide signage.

ii. **Garlough Marthaler Pollinator Planting Event-NA**

d. **Planning Commission-**

Stevens reported that the Commission reviewed the site plan for the expansion of the Ice Arena. They also reviewed the ordinance for what side of the building loading docks could be installed in industrial zones. Two new Commission members were welcomed to the Commission.

e. **Parks & Recreation Committee**

NA- Schletty reported, "Dave's not here."

6. Other

a. **Migratory Bird Day**- Pennig said that the City needs a resolution in order to be a Bird City. Pennig found a template for the resolution that other cities use.

b. **Earth Day**- Pearson asked if the Committee ever discussed taking part in Earth Day. Schletty said that the Committee has focused mostly on Arbor Day. The events do typically overlap. Pearson asked if members would be interested in participating. Pennig would be interested; it is however a "crunch" to participate this year. The City could promote Earth Day on social media. Schletty will make sure it is on Nowicki's radar. Next year the City could tie in all the events into one event.

c. **2022 Environmental Commission Conference, (April 30)**-LaCombe asked for information regarding the conference. Schletty has not received any information about the event but will follow-up with his contact.

7. Adjournment-The Committee adjourned at 7:41 pm.