

West St. Paul Environmental Committee
January 5, 2022
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, Nicholas Hager, Laura Zanmiller, Ken Paulman, Lauren Hazenson, Liz Pearson, Joshua Pryzbylski

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

2. NEW BUSINESS

- a. **Approve December 2, 2021 Minutes-** The minutes were approved.
- b. **2022 Committee Bylaws and Elections-A motion was made to accept the election of Pennig and Zanmiller as Chair and Vice chair respectively. The motion carried. A motion was made to accept the 2022 Bylaws, (with the change of the number of committee members from seven to nine members.) The motion carried.**
- c. **Solar Ordinance Amendment Discussion-** Schletty reported that he met with the City Planner and the Community Development Director to talk about the ordinance. The City Planner drafted the ordinance. It has been amended to include freestanding solar energy [structures.] Paulman asked if were true that a variance was needed to install a freestanding solar panel if the property already had a freestanding garage and a shed. Schletty confirmed this and added that a solar power structure did not need the Commission's approval if the structure were under 100 square feet. The structure would still need to meet code standards. Paulman asked about business and commercial structures. Schletty said they were not addressed in the draft ordinance. Schletty was asked how the ordinance affects the GreenSteps program. Schletty said that the City would have to incentivize residents to install solar panels in order to further the GreenSteps program. LaCombe asked about the reasoning behind the 50-foot setback for the solar structures on properties larger than 4 acres. Schletty said he would ask about this requirement.

3. OLD BUSINESS

- a. **U of M Students Final Projects-** Schletty reported that the students made their presentation at the Council work session two weeks ago. Since then, he has received the full reports from the students. The reports have been uploaded on line. Zanmiller commented on the fruit bearing trees report; it needs to be scaled down. The Robert Street, "Restoring Native Plants" recommendations could be established for new buildings. Zanmiller recommended that projects like the Adopt a Drain project or the Tree Survey could be coordinated with other organizations like the Girl Scouts. LaCombe commented that apple and pear trees need a lot of attention. There are native plants like wild plums or wild grapes do not need this kind of maintenance and are awesome along fence lines. Nanking cherries are also another low maintenance option. Hager agreed that fruit-bearing plants are very finicky. If the City were to plant native species, community education would be needed for these plants Zanmiller said there would need to be signage for people to indicate they can pick fruit in a food forest. Hazenson was impressed with the presentations. She advised [investigating] how much effort [the recommendations would take,] and determine how much impact they would have environmentally. It would give the Committee some idea on what kind of subcommittees would be needed. The City needs to see if the effort would be beneficial and compare it to the GreenSteps program efforts. Paulman talked about the pedestrian bike plan assessment. His criticism of the plan is that it is framed around recreation. It is not geared for transportation of the most vulnerable people. The plan focuses on

cars first, and then squeezes in bicyclists and pedestrians. [There needs to be a] shift to complete streets/ethos for an equitable city, and a city that is focusing on climate change.

Schletty said he would discuss the park use assessment with the Park and Rec Advisory Board. He will also talk about the fruit trees/tree survey with the Board.

Paulman volunteered for a subcommittee. Schletty said that the City did not need firm commitments right now.

4. UPDATES

a. **City Council**-Gulley thanked the U of M students for their incredible amount of work on the presentations.

b. **Staff**

- i. **No Parks and Recreation Advisory Board meeting last month.**-Schletty reported that there were issues with meeting quorum. He has not been able to discuss the Community Garden. A liaison from the Board needs to be chosen for the Environmental Committee.
- ii. **City Hall Reconstruction**- City hall will be closing up for the remodeling project. Many staff will be working remotely. The conference room in the front will be a makeshift office for a few key staff during the renovation. Residents should not see too much of a shift in services; they will just be done a little differently. The City will still be able to have meetings here. The reconstruction is scheduled to take 6 months.

c. **Planning Commission-NA**-Stevens said the Commission did not meet last month.

d. **Marthaler Park Reconstruction**- Schletty reported that the plan would be taken out to bid in early March. The first phase of the plan is to clear out the site and building up the new parking area. Phase II will be next year.

5. **OTHER**-Zanmiller announced that Dakota County SWCD is conducting their tree sale once again. They are selling shrubs and trees.

6. ADJOURN

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

Respectfully submitted,

Sharon G. Hatfield