

## CITIZENS ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY COMMITTEE MEETING NOTES

DATE: May 7, 2020  
TIME: Scheduled for 4:30 pm (Virtual Zoom Meeting)  
PRESENT: Dan Hall, Julie Fassbender, David Ruff  
GUESTS:  
STAFF: John Howard

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1. **Call to Order**: Meeting called to order at 4:34 pm by Chair Hall.
2. **Review and Approval of January Meeting Minutes**: Dan wanted to check if January was indeed the last meeting? John affirmed it was, so it has been a while. Julie moved the minutes for approval, Dan seconded. All in favor.
3. **HF 1255 Sign on Letter**: Julie thinks it is a worthwhile effort, and made a motion of support. John gave a brief summary that HF 1255 would allow cities to prohibit pollinator damaging pesticides. Currently municipalities are pre-empted from banning pesticides. Dan asked for clarification that the request is to sign onto the letter, and John stated it would. David is also supportive, but wonders if Sen. Gazelga should be Sen. Gazelka? Motion passed with all in favor.
4. **Community Garden Discussion**:  

John updated that the East Rec Garden is up and running with CoVID appropriate precautions. Dan asked who has received the CEQC report on community garden locations. John said he has sent it to the Parks and Rec. leadership. Julie would like Lynette's input as well. Dan asked if there are any time constraints in preparing the report since it is unlikely to proceed this year. John suggested completing the report to help with planning and to potentially seek grant funding.

David made a motion to approve the report with John seeking input with Lynette by David, Dan seconded. All in favor.

Dan asked what grants ideas John has in mind. John said there is a U of M technical assistance grant where students and faculty help with a project and has a June 1 deadline. John also said SHIP funds are a likely source of support, and were used for the East Rec. garden. Dan sees locally produced foods as becoming increasingly important under current conditions.
5. **Grants Update**  

Julie said the list was impressive. Dan asked if the stream dams was one of the grants, and John said it was. David asked if there are any actions needed by the CEQC. John said it would be helpful to spread the word about the Lawns to Legumes grants because some areas in the City are eligible for the neighborhood grant, such as Valley Oaks and the Highway 43 areas.

6. **Earth and Arbor Day Proclamation:** John included this agenda item to keep the CEQC informed that the Mayor passed a proclamation.

7. **Bluff Habitat Restoration applications**

Julie sees these as good projects, with the Garvin Heights oak savannah being very visible and brings good awareness. John noted that the visibility has given staff pause since it would be removing healthy oak trees, albeit at a level higher than what is natural. David asked about how the understory has responded. John said there seems to be some resprouts and seedling generation from the buckthorn remnants. John believes the 300 or so plug planting put in last summer are surviving, and new seed was spread in March 2020, so hopefully they will continue to fight off the buckthorn. Julie asked for clarification about whether this understory is at Garvin Heights or someplace else. John clarified that the understory clearing was an earlier step for Garvin Heights.

David asked about how the City feels about prescribed burns. John said there has not been much discussion, but that since it is a customary best practice, he expects it to be employed sometime. David said it could be a great demonstration. Dan asked about the visibility of the Sugarloaf work. John said it is really only visible from Highway 43, and is not particularly visible.

David suggests good publicity, and to invite neighbors. David and Dan discussed about the suitability of burning at this time. David believes timing would be possible for this year, the main concern on red flag days are big grass areas in western Minnesota. Forests should contain fire since fuels are pretty patchy. Dan asked if the fire regime would be significantly different than California, as it seems to be. David confirmed the fire issues in California are different, and much more severe.

8. **Other business:**

Julie suggests CEQC members review the Broadway walkability materials. John noted that May 12<sup>th</sup> is the comment deadline. Comments can be accessed on the City website. John also noted that the Mankato Ave. road redesign was presented on to the City Council on Monday. Julie would like to know more, and John will send the link ([mankatoavereconstruction.com](http://mankatoavereconstruction.com)).

Dan wondered about morel hunting and if the timing was suitable. Julie said she knew of people finding them earlier this week. Dan heard that elms and southern exposed bluffs are good morel territory.

9. **Adjournment:**

Dan made motion, David seconded. All in favor.

Meeting adjourned at 5:08 PM.

Notes prepared by John Howard.