

CITIZENS ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY COMMITTEE MEETING NOTES

DATE: Thursday, December 7, 2017

TIME: Scheduled for 4:30 p.m.

PRESENT: Chris Meyer, Hans Madland, Dan Hall, and Lynette Power.

GUESTS: Anne Morse (Winona County staff)

STAFF: Natural Resources Sustainability Coordinator John Howard

1. Meeting called to order by Chair Dan Hall at 4:33 pm.
2. Minutes from Nov. 8, 2017 meeting approved unanimously.
3. Recap of presentation to the Planning Commission: Chris commended Dan for his presentation, which appeared to be well received by the Commission. Dan, John and Chris recalled that commissioners did not express comments or concerns about a split between the CEQC and the Commission. During Dan's presentation, Commissioner Shortridge enquired about invasive species and noise pollution, and Commissioner Paddock wondered if the CEQC would have the ability to address such a wide variety of topics.

John and Dan recalled that City Planner Carlos Espinosa agreed that the CEQC goals appeared to go beyond the typical purview of the Planning Commission when he was asked by the Commission.

4. Future steps for CEQC to become an independent Commission:
 - CEQC wondered about the timeline, and when Planning Commission would vote on a separation between the CEQC and Planning Commission. John stated that he believed the Commission would likely only take action if requested by the CEQC.
 - John stated that the CEQC could request a motion to vote at the next Planning Commission meeting, which is Dec. 11. This would be too soon to have a formal written request prepared, so any action would simply be an oral request. Given the tight timeline for the Dec. 11th meeting, John believes it is likely the CEQC will need to wait until January as there is not a second Planning Commission meeting in December.
 - Hans enquired about whether the CEQC should ask the Planning Commission how they would like the CEQC to proceed. CEQC supported Hans's idea. John will talk with the City Planner on the next steps.

5. Ongoing Initiatives

5.1. Invasive Species:

Anne Morse, the Sustainability Coordinator for Winona County, spoke about the growing problem of the Oriental Bittersweet (OBS) vine. She said one good example of the infestation is along Hwy. 14 before reaching Lewiston. Anne said that OBS is on the State's eradicate list of species, meaning property owners are obligated to remove it. Anne and Chris stated that OBS needs to be treated with herbicide to kill the infestation – simply cutting it won't kill it. The Treetops residential development within Winona is a prime example of the kind of damage OBS can do. The vine grows over trees and can choke off the

trunk, shade the tree's leaves, and even topple them from the extra weight – particularly in heavy snow storms.

Anne will be pursuing a grant to train residents on how to kill OBS. Anne asks that the City provide a letter of support for the grant – John will coordinate this.

Anne also discussed Japanese Knotweed, which is another new and devastating species. It has large white flowers that bloom in August that make it easily identifiable, and also a desirable ornamental. If observed, CEQC members should contact Anne or use the [GLEDN reporting app](#). Hans said that knotweed is spread by rhizome, and is a very fast grower. Anne mentioned that the roots are very aggressive, and can damage foundations – this is very true in England.

Anne is hoping to build citizen interest and greater awareness. Duluth has successfully found ways to engage citizens. Anne left invasive species calendars for anyone interested.

5.2. GreenStep:

Lynette asked John to explain the benefits of being a GreenStep City? John stated that it brings forward new training opportunities and programs, and gives a framework to build upon. Chris stated that GreenStep Cities sometimes are given the first chance to participate in a program.

Lynette wondered if GreenStep can be used to qualify the City's bonds as a form of socially responsible investing? John and Chris were not aware of GreenStep being a criterion for considering socially responsible investing, and the program is not marketed as having that benefit, but seems an intriguing idea.

5.3. Complete Streets: John stated that the Complete Streets Policy and Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan passed unanimously at the City Council meeting at the start of the week. It seems the steering committee of the plan is hoping to establish itself as the Active Transportation Committee.

5.4. Partners in Energy: Work continues, no immediate news to report.

6. Other Business:

Lynette shared that WSU has a John Latsch leadership program. It is a new program that recognizes and promotes the virtues of John Latsch to business students.

Hans enquired if other members had read the New Yorker Magazine article about Iowa that he mentioned at the last meeting? No one had, but Hans reiterated that the article makes compelling conclusions including that attracting young families to a town is a key to vibrancy.

Hans asked if Blandin Foundation had official connection with the City? No official connection, but Hans sees a parallel, and is very impressed by their work. Chris said that the head of Engage Winona is active with the Blandin Foundation, and would likely be happy to meet with the CEQC to discuss the Blandin community process.

7. Motion for adjournment made by Hans, second by Lynette. All in favor. Meeting adjourned at 5:36 pm.

John Howard, Natural Resources Sustainability Coordinator