

CITIZENS ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY COMMITTEE MEETING NOTES

DATE: Thursday Jan. 3, 2019

TIME: Scheduled for 4:30 pm at the City Hall Misato Room

PRESENT: Dan Hall, Lynette Power, Fran Goodin, David Schmidt and Bruno Borsari

GUESTS: Sarah Bruihler (Winona GreenCorps Member)

STAFF: Natural Resources Sustainability Coordinator John Howard

1. Call to order at 4:37pm.
2. Approval of December 2018 meeting minutes moved by Bruno, seconded by Lynette. All in favor.

David Schmidt, newest CEQC member, introduced himself. David is a native Winonan, and graduated from Carleton College, and later received a Masters in Forestry from SUNY Syracuse. David works for the Nature Conservancy as the SE Minnesota Conservation coordinator.

Sarah introduced herself. She is the City's GreenCorps member, serving on energy efficiency.

3. GreenCorps Salt Education project:

Sarah relayed that she created a PowerPoint presentation to educate snow removal contractors and maintenance staff (or other interested parties) on reducing de-icing salt. The main goal of the event is to reduce salt use so only the necessary amount of salt is used. Lynette enquired about getting the word out about salt education. Donuts will serve as incentive to attend. Lynette wondered if a list of contractor exists, and yes, Sarah has put one together. Bruno also suggested consulting with the university. Dan wondered if there is an incentive to over salt? Sarah unaware of any incentive. John said he has heard oversalting can be due to liability of having ice and contractors wanting to appear thorough. Lynette wondered about where salt is purchased – Dan said they are not purchasing at retail location. Fran related that the City has a spot to pick up sand and salt.

Lynette suggests a good flyer to share information, which Sarah intends to produce. David suggested targeting businesses with large parking lots. Dan wondered if the big box stores salt or plow. Fran believes big box stores salt as needed.

4. Approved Parks Plan:

CEQC wondered if this Parks Plan text is set in stone? John said it was approved by the City Council, but document is written for general concepts, so is by nature adaptable. Dan noted that there is mention to have an advisory group on environmental issues, but it is not explicitly the CEQC. John said Dan's interpretation is correct: the Park Department will have a group to advise, likely a mix of outdoor rec users and CEQC members.

Lynette commented that the park plan did not list any community gardens, which tend to be very popular. John noted that some of the specific park suggestions are for edible landscape and community gardens, but not listed in the chapter he sent to the CEQC. Lynette noted that gardens would be good fit with buying local and organic emphasis in community.

Dan noted on p. 155 that viewshed is listed – what is it? Bruno said it is what is people can see when they visit a park, or a vista. In 6.2 – user’s should not have apostrophe. Aesthetic should be plural.

David believes that being passive in landscape management is a major threat, which is not fully appreciated by the plan. Ecological quality is not explicitly noted except to some degree in goal 3. Winona has disturbance dependent landscapes. Can’t just clean up and walk away.

Dan and David wondered why campground has first priority of ecological restoration when it is already degraded? David would love to see burn rotation. Bruno concurred that the natural attributes are what make parks attractive. Bruno said Garvin Heights is an example of the challenge of continual maintenance. Fran summarized that funding is needed for the maintenance of areas. Fran asked Bruno about the prescribed burn, and what value it adds. He described that landscapes have been shaped by fire historically, so have become adapted to it.

John noted that the City recently produced a Bluff Traverse trail and conservation plan. Fran wondered about funding and how the plan will be paid for? John said grants are the main focus. Dan believes projects will be phased in on a piecemeal basis so not all at once, but seems tax dollars will need to get involved. Bruno noted that there are many active volunteers who could help this effort. David said that funding from City will need to be leveraged for grant matching. Dan sees this as an opportunity to show that environment does not need to be adversarial to economic interests – in this case tourists and the outdoor recreation industry.

5. UDC review - Article 2, Division 3: Overlay Districts:

As with past meetings, the CEQC reviewed and stopped to discuss if there were questions or comments with the UDC section.

Dan asked about “Karst” definition and use of “solution”. Sarah believes it is scientifically accurate. Bruno said “solubilized” might be better, and David agrees there are better definitions of karst. David sees someone would challenge the presence of karst, so important to have an accurate, understandable and defensible definition.

Bruno and David said “Silvacultural” should be spelled “silvicultural”. Dan asked what this word means, and David explained that silviculture is the study of a stand of trees, and management options to achieve a goal. Dan sees “Intensive Silvicultural” could apply to trail clearing? Fran wonders about applying to residential development.

David said that bluffs are presumed to be forests, which is not natural. Seems we should allow restoration to the natural landscape. John sees the logic in David’s point, but noted that under the UDC, the top 50 feet of bluff are protected from clearing. Dan wonders if rampant logging in the early days of Winona caused open areas, which then became prairies? David believes logging was partly responsible, but still far fewer trees than today. Bruno said oak savanna was predominant habitat during pre-settlement times. The book Immortal River by Cal Fremling partly discusses this. David noted that SE MN bluffs are the most biodiverse landscape in Minnesota. Oaks were dominant, but less so now. Earthworms are a big current problem, Bruno noted, since the worms take in the nutrient before the saplings do. Bruno said adaptive management is key.

John noted one example where the UDC’s rules on land disturbance made it more challenging for residents to clear oriental bittersweet, as a land disturbance permit is required. David believes vegetation clearing rules could be rethought. CEQC in agreement that the UDC should not inhibit removal of invasive species.

John brought up that a shoreland zone classification precludes composting by the MPCA, which is where the current City compost site is located. May need to reconsider how shoreland is applied. Bruno suggests Stone Pointe Park as compost site. Bruno also believes Dick Gallien at the Winona farm is doing good work with composting, particularly with biochar. Fran wondered about biochar, and what it is used for? Bruno explained that it is a soil amendment, and very good for micro-organisms. Bruno said Amazonians used bio-char.

Lynette wondered about lighting standards and pollution? John stated that these would be discussed in a future section of the UDC.

Lynette asked about using roundup/glyphosate herbicide in parks and bluffs? John said that herbicides are really only used for invasive species removal, such as cut stump treatment. Typically the City uses a Garlon/triclopyr formulation, but he knows Roundup was used for buckthorn removal around sugarloaf. David said herbicide is typically used conservatively in restoration, and is a standard best management practice. Bruno noted that glyphosate is now known to cause cancer.

Lynette asked about code with downtown development, and integrating renewable energy. Seems Minnesota is doing good work on renewables, but not included in City code. Dan sees this as telling businesses what to do, which will be opposed by businesses and chamber of Commerce. Dan sees renewable energy as a voluntary choice, which likely makes good economic sense in many cases. Lynette discussed great progress that Gundersen is doing on fully being renewably powered. Lynette suggests having a box or a line on site plan where developers describe what green steps the building or development is doing. She would like to see City promote energy efficiency and renewable by listing it in code as an emphasis.

Bruno believes City can promote without being too overbearing. David said zoning code is not easily used for promoting goals. Zoning is more about what is allowed or not allowed. Fran suggests having City Council ask when seeking permit approval. Lynette thinks solar could be incentive in development by City. Dan reiterated that there is no City code or ability to implement code requiring renewable energy. Bruno thinks it would be very momentous and exciting to have a city choose to promote renewable energy.

6. Ongoing Initiatives: John did not have any updates.

7. Other Business: Lynette provided a letter written by Mickey Maslowski concerning environmental considerations in new buildings. Ms. Maslowski will be invited to a future meeting to talk with the CEQC.

8. Adjournment: Moved to adjourn by Bruno, seconded by Lynette and Fran at 5:45pm. All in favor.

Minutes prepared by John Howard.