

CITIZENS ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY COMMITTEE MEETING NOTES

DATE: Thursday April 4, 2019

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

PRESENT: Dan Hall, Lynette Power, David Schmidt, Julie Fassbender and Bruno Borsari

GUESTS:

STAFF: Natural Resources Sustainability Coordinator John Howard, GreenCorps Member Sarah Bruhler

1. **Call to Order:** Made by Chair Hall at 4:35 pm
2. **Review and approval of March. 7, 2019 meeting notes:** Moved by Bruno, second by Lynette. Approved unanimously.
3. **GreenStep Cities Annual Reporting:**

Sarah gave a recap of current and soon to be reported GreenStep actions.

Dan asked about what is needed to reach Step 2. Sarah clarified that we have completed an adequate number of actions, but they still need to be reported to the GreenStep program.

Julie asked for additional info on the GreenStep City program. John gave a brief summary.

Bruno asked about who sets the criteria and actions? John replied that the best practices are determined and worded by the MPCA and GreenStep partner organizations, but the City selects which of the steps to do. Bruno noted that some actions, such as efficient land use, are hard to define or visualize.

Dan wondered about natural gas vehicles and electric car options. John and Sarah reported that electric vehicles for fleet use are being analyzed, with a report likely ready for the May meeting.

Julie suggests focus on mobility options, such as bikeability and walkability. Sarah noted that we have completed #12, but there are still actions the City can take.

Lynette noted the demolition on 2nd and Washington caused a stormwater issue. John described the issue as being Styrofoam pellets and construction debris being blown to the wind and into the stormsewer. Lynette wonders about filtering of stormwater to control debris, as there is much that is in the street on a regular basis such as plastic cups and bottles. Dan and Lynette were surprised by lack of site protections at the 2nd and Washington site.

4. Unified Development Code Review – Article 4 & 5:

Article 4:

Julie asked about what qualifies as a “collector street”. John was not sure on the specifics, but believes it was a through street that had light traffic, such as 4th or 5th St in downtown. He will look into finding the details. Julie supports requiring the street width to be compatible with the City's complete streets policy.

David said the UDC does not require sidewalks. Maybe should require them (43.04.23.C) p. 127).

Lynette wondered about the 100 foot right of way, and whether that is each side from the road center line or total? (43.04.21.D)) John will check with the planners.

Lynette would like to see raingardens specifically called out as an option, or incorporated as part of street redevelopment. David suggests that there be a capture requirement. John communicated that under the stormwater code, sites are required to not increase runoff rates.

Dan wondered what was meant by iron monuments on (43.04.22.H) p. 126). John said they were survey tools, typically an iron rod, marking a lot corner – not statue monuments.

Julie liked the requirement for open space with subdivision development (43.04.24). Seems reasonable to have cash payment in lieu of open space.

John asked the CEQC for input on whether clean topsoil should be a requirement with development. Currently it is not required. Consensus of the CEQC is that it seems reasonable to require good fill. Lynette noted that reclamation requires certain parameters, so same principle could easily apply to home subdivisions. David suggests 10 inches of good topsoil. Dan said there are probably industry standards. Bruno agrees with requiring parameters, such as organic matter content and size. David suggests texture is easier to determine, and can be done immediately. Bruno said compaction is also a good criterion. Discussion of whether bulk density would be a good criterion, but seems it would require a lab test. John to research other city's requirements for a standard to use.

John asked whether tree replacement/preservation should be included, as this is common among many cities in the Twin Cities, but is not required by Winona. David said this would be nice. Bruno suggests working with the university, which is a Tree Campus US. Seems there could be better use of ash wood. Dan noted that some developments have a tree standard, such as Valley Oaks. David thought maybe one tree per two lot widths. Julie wondered about what other cities do – John to look. David noted that shrubs and grasses can be good additions. Dan asked about what is needed for TreeCity USA. John replied that the TreeCity USA standards are being met by the City, except for needing an annual Arbor Day proclamation, which is going on the next City Council meeting agenda.

Lynette relayed a concern about lake and stream access – and whether it is required from subdividers? John will need to check. David relayed the public water definitions of the state and how waters are public. Typically the ordinary high water level defines the shoreline. The State has purchased stream easements in many places so people generally have stream access points. Does not seem to be a reference in the UDC, but Lynette believes it should be. David not sure required access could be mandated by the City.

Article 5:

Lynette feels there are some obnoxious signs in town, such as a flashing sign on a pizza delivery car. Lynette believes signs should not be obnoxious or distract drivers. John noted that there are some provisions about driving distraction. David read the section of code (43.05.15 B)).

Julie feels sign section was thorough.

David would like to see dark skies considerations into the city sign code. Parking lots of car dealership add a lot of light to the bluffs, and likely impact wildlife. Lynette felt the light pollution around sugarloaf also takes away from the natural feel of the environment.

5. SolSmart Review:

John gave a brief summary of the SolSmart program. John asked for input on the recommendation made by the SolSmart program, which reviewed the City's zoning code for barriers to solar development.

David made a motion: The CEQC supports the recommendations by SolSmart. Second by Bruno. All in favor. John will take the SolSmart recommendations to a Planning Commission meeting for their review and consideration.

6. April Environmental Events:

John ran through the events that the City is participating in. Many in April in conjunction with Earth and Arbor Day.

7. Other Business:

Bruno stated that banning chlorpyrifos is now being debated. This is an insecticide related to those in Rachel Carson's Silent Spring, but still in use.

Lynette shared article about the Morris, MN water softening initiative. Morris is installing a centralized water softening system at the water plant to reduce total chlorides entering the wastewater stream.

Bruno wondered about helping the Winona Farm be the official compost site of the City. Bruno sees opportunity for the farm to educate the public and make use of organic waste. Educational institutions are not utilizing the Farm's potential. Dan has read Dick Gallien's letters to the editor about continuing the Farm's work. John noted that Mr. Gallien has talked with the City, but no agreement about the farm was ever reached. Dan suggests Bruno write out the arguments for taking on the farm, and presenting back to the CEQC or submitting an op-ed. John reminded the CEQC members that they should write op-eds as private citizens, and not claim they are speaking/writing on behalf of the CEQC. The CEQC would need to review articles being claimed as representing their views.

8. **Adjournment:** by acclamation at 6:10 pm.

Minutes prepared by John Howard.