



## ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY AND ENERGY COMMISSION

Fridley Municipal Center, 6431 University Ave Ne

### DRAFT MINUTES

February 15, 2017, 7:00 p.m.

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Location: City Hall, Conference Room B

In attendance: Commissioners Mark Hansen (Chairman), Justin Foell (Vice Chairman), Sam Stoxen, Kyle Mulrooney, Jack Velin and Nick Olberding. Guest speaker was Sam Graf, U-MN Researcher.

#### **Call to Order**

Vice Chairman Foell called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m., as Chairman Hansen was detained by the Planning Commission meeting briefly. Chairman Hansen asked that Vice Chair Foell continue to run the meeting, once he joined the group.

#### **Approve Environmental Quality and Energy Commission Minutes**

After Commissioners reviewed the January 31<sup>st</sup>, 2017 minutes, there were no changes or corrections. A motion was entertained by Commissioner Mulrooney and seconded by Commissioner Stoxen to approve.

MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO APPROVE JANUARY 31, 2017 MINUTES

#### **New Business**

**Item 1: Sam Graf, a University of Minnesota Urban Forestry researcher working with Professor Gary Johnson (U-MN Forestry), has a new research project that will include the City of Fridley.**

Mr. Graf, prior to graduation, was part of a pivotal University urban forestry research team whose work inspired and informed our GreenCorps Member Erika Van Krevelen during her time working on City Urban Forestry. Sam and several member of that group also lent their expertise and personal time for Fridley's first Arbor Day ceremony on April 30, 2016 to help Middle School children plant trees. They demonstrated how to properly dig a hole to the right depth, watering tools and techniques and mulching. In addition, the group answered questions at an invasive species table, which had Emerald Ash borer information. Mr. Graf stated that his group enjoyed both the event and working with the City of Fridley.

Last fall, the City was asked if we could be a part of Mr. Graf's University research about *Urban Forestry Community Engagement and Preparedness* (original working title) in regard to programming and methods, building off of his 2016 Urban Forestry work for the City. Mr. Graf is specifically conducting a case study analysis of the status of community engagement in four distinctly different metropolitan communities.

Techniques being employed by cities will be compared to identify and recognize the best ways to sustain urban forestry volunteerism, and the development of regularized tree steward training. The goal is not exactly to share the most successful and efficient techniques for installation and care of urban forests by volunteers, as those best management practices exist, but rather to determine the best ways to configure volunteer capacity-building in a sustainable way. The cities of Plymouth, Shakopee and Maple Grove will also be studied. Two handouts were distributed about his research. One is "A Case Study of Urban and Community Forestry Volunteer Programs" and the second was "Volunteer Urban and Community Forestry Program Case Study", the latter more specifically about Fridley.

Fridley Environmental Planner, Kay Qualley, explained that due to the receipt of grants for trees such as the 2016-2018 DNR-LCCMR (Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota's Resources), Minnesota Department

of Transportation Community Landscaping Grant (2016) and the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency Arbor Day funding (2016), which required that the trees be planted by volunteers, the City of Fridley made excellent strides in volunteer recruitment, but has plans to create the structure for a more complete volunteer program. Recruitment of volunteers from local corporations (large and small) and personal efforts by the Environmental Quality and Energy Commissions led to six tree planting projects in City parks and a raingarden restoration and tree mulching and winterization work in 2016. For 2017, the City has received preliminary commitments for volunteer tree plantings by Home Depot, Medtronic and BMO Harris Bank employee. In addition, the City plans to put a volunteer signup and project link onto an Urban Forestry page on their website.

Mr. Graf went on to talk about some of the other challenges of volunteer program sustainability such as overcoming hurdles that are political, City budget-oriented, identifying sources of grant funding and policies which may slow progress. He encouraged Fridley to celebrate small successes and victories from 2016 toward the development of greater consistency in the program and increased volunteer commitments. He asked staff to let him know how much training volunteers get and to provide a list of tools, projects and what materials (flyers, training info) were developed for volunteers. He said he was in the early stages of his research. Commissioners asked if they will receive the completed study information and Mr. Graf replied in the affirmative.

Commissioner Mulrooney stated that his workplace, BMO Harris Bank, will be able to muster about 20-25 people for tree planting if they have about a month leeway to recruit. When asked about whether that would be a challenge to find that many individuals, Commissioner Mulrooney said he thought that any time office workers could spend a day outside instead of inside, it is very appealing. He also said that afternoons are preferable to morning events because people can go home to clean up thereafter.

Commission Chair Hansen asked that the City web calendar reflect volunteer opportunities, and include ways to get involved with Urban Forestry projects to attract more people to events. Staff mentioned that in order to have sufficient tools, potential volunteers would likely have to reserve a spot, so to speak. Staff followed up on a lead to Home Depot of Fridley and their store manager Adam said that he would help with scheduling in order to create a group for tree planting. Commissioner Hansen said that volunteers might also check their health insurance policies because it might be possible that healthy behavior incentives could be available.

Commissioner Stoxen mentioned that Federal employees need to fulfill EEO (Equal Employment Opportunity) for their workplace review every year. Activities like giving tours, judging science fairs or volunteering at places like Open Arms or Feed My Starving Children have qualified in the past. He will check to see if a tree planting would count toward this EEO so he could gather federal people to do a planting during the day. The activity may be justified because it would fall under credit for a green activity.

All of this indicates that, with good planning and structure, ongoing volunteerism for tree planting and care is can be part of a viable and sustainable program.

## **Item 2: Plans for Arbor Day, Earth Week and April 22 Activities and Plans.**

Staff requested input on where the Arbor Day plantings should take place and asked which Saturday dates would be best: April 22, the same date as the Green Expo at the Blaine Sports Center, or the Saturday after Arbor Day, April 29. The original idea was to have it take place on the terrace along 73<sup>rd</sup> Ave., engaging nearby schools or religious institutions. Commissioners talked about where, in that location a tree sale could safely be held, and expressed concerns overall about traffic and safety issues for children and families who may participate. Based on some new information from staff who met with frequent urban forestry volunteer Karim Aly, partnering with the Islamic Center, or schools in the vicinity of West Moore Lake for a tree planting

project that would be compatible with future master planning for the park might be better. Commissioners Foell and Hansen stated that parking would be better and safety of the participants would be enhanced. The EQEC recommends that Arbor Day ceremony and plantings take place on April 29<sup>th</sup> at West Moore Lake Park.

Staff will make contact with Public Works, the Tree Trust and the schools and will order trees as part of year two of the DNR-LCCMR grant.

There was brief discussion about trash cleanup during Earth Week. Fridley will be part of the new Green Expo on April 22, along with Blaine and Coon Rapids. It is an excellent opportunity to introduce information about Organics collection and Sustainable Landscaping.

### **Item 3: Fridley Bike & Hike ideas.**

This topic was tabled, to be continued at the March meeting in the interest of time.

### **Items 4: Report from Nick Olberding about Home & Garden Show and Mississippi Watershed Management Organization Citizen Volunteer Group activities.**

Commissioner Olberding is a member of the Mississippi Watershed Management Organization Citizen Advisory Group. He volunteered for MWMO at the Anoka County Home and Garden Show in the booth next to the City of Fridley. They gave out 75 bottles of non-toxic cleaner. The City booth had the recipe. 51 people took brochures about native plants.

### **Items 5: Results of citizen outreach at Home & Garden Show for Comprehensive Planning**

The sticky notes from community input from the Home & Garden Show will be sent out separately.

## **Old Business**

### **Safe Routes to School update**

The residents along West Moore Lake proposed trail were concerned about losing parking along their residences and there is concern about the grant being unable to be completed if there is not support by school and biking/walking proponents. A task force may be formed.

### **Pollinator planting project on University Ave. latest info.**

Anthony Wotzka, landscape architect from MnDOT grant project of 2016 stated that there are concerns about the proposed plantings along University Ave. between 57<sup>th</sup> and 61<sup>st</sup> and that more meetings or information about specifics and maintenance will have to be brought to bear to the decision makers at the Metro MnDOT in Roseville. Commissioner Hansen stated that if information was ready by February 23, his meeting with Sheila Kaupii and possibly Paul Jung from MnDOT might be a time to have a small group discussion about the project.

## **Other**

Commissioner Olberding is also working on a Master Water Steward rain garden design art poster project and asked for input from the group.

## **Next Meetings/Announcements**

Tuesday, March 7<sup>th</sup>, 2017 at 7:00 p.m.

## **Adjourn**

The meeting was ended by a motion by Commission Hansen and seconded by Commissioner Olberding at 8:45 p.m. All were in favor of concluding the proceedings.