

City of Woodbury
Woodbury City Hall
8301 Valley Creek Road
Woodbury, MN 55125
651-714-3583

Minutes of
Parks and Natural Resources Commission Regular Meeting
Tuesday, March 1, 2022

Commission Members Present: Chair Greta Bjerckness, Arin Kurttila (Co-chair), Bruce Montgomery, Rachel Nelson, Wallace Wadd, Brandon Mersch, Emerson Siefken

Commission Member(s) Absent: Deborah Musser

Commission Member Virtual: Timothy Brewington, II

Councilmember In-person: Councilmember Jennifer Santini

Staff Present: Michelle Okada, Parks and Recreation Director
Sarah Alig, Senior Management Analyst
Jennifer McLoughlin, Senior Environmental Resources Coordinator
Belinda Reed, Recording Secretary

Staff Virtual: Jodi Sauro, Parks and Recreation Coordinator
Reed Smidt, Recreation Manager

Call to Order

Chair Bjerckness called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Open Forum

Members of the public were in attendance in-person and virtually.

Action Items

A. February 8, 2022, Parks and Natural Resources Commission Meeting Minutes

Chair Bjerckness asked for the approval of the Minutes of the February 8, 2022, meeting of the Parks and Natural Resources Commission.

Motion: Moved by Commissioner Montgomery, seconded by Commissioner Nelson, to approve the February 8, 2022, Parks and Natural Resources Commission Minutes.

Vote: In favor All in-person and virtual
Against None
Absent Commissioner Musser

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B. Environmental Stewardship Context Overview – Memorandum No. 22 – 09

Ms. Okada highlighted the informational items previously provided the Commission noting that at the meeting the Commissioners were being provided recently received email communications, related to environmental stewardship, from three residents.

Ms. Sarah Alig and Ms. Jennifer McLoughlin were introduced. Ms. Alig noted that the presentation at the meeting would be a follow-up to the environmental stewardship conversation and questions posed during the February 8, PNRC meeting, which covered the accomplishments and work produced by the city during the past 20-year period. The takeaways from the February meeting included: celebrating the city's many accomplishments related to environmental stewardship and recognizing and responding to the increase of emerging issues such as Emerald Ash Borer, drought, flooding and water contamination.

While reviewing community values, Ms. Alig provided examples of risks and immediate threats facing the city, attributed to the unseasonably warmer winter temperatures including: the cancellation of the January Recreation Division's annual Cold Cat Fish Cup at Carver Lake Park; the decrease in the number of ice skating days at the outdoor refrigerated pleasure rink, the shortening of outdoor ice fishing season; the unprecedented rain events which resulted in flooding, including damage to the outdoor athletic fields and trails; the June, 2021, heatwave, which resulted in empty playgrounds; outdoor air quality affected by wild fire smoke; the blue green algae bloom that closed Carver Lake Beach in July, 2021, and the survival of the southernmost Tamarack stand in the state, which is also being threatened by the warming climate.

A list of Minnesota cities, with published climate action and sustainability plans was reviewed. Ms. Alig noted that a goal for the evening's discussion would be to begin narrowing down ideas and applying local solutions that make sense for the City of Woodbury in addressing climate change.

Ms. Alig noted that while the issue of global warming is enormous, local solutions don't have to mean doing everything possible; rather, focusing on and applying resources on the primary contributors, might be where Woodbury can have the biggest impact.

Ms. Alig noted that actions can have compound benefits. For instance, investment in the urban forest can sequester carbon, cools down neighborhoods, provides habitat for wildlife, mitigates stormwater runoff, and increases property values.

It was noted that other actions such as insulating buildings, can reduce heating costs, while more alternative and active modes of transportation can improve health, lower infrastructure costs, and shift consumption from fossil fuels and internal combustion.

Ms. McLoughlin noted that the city recently changed the tree ordinance with respect to incentivizing developers to evaluate and save existing trees that are identified as valuable during the development phase. For instance, if a 30" tree were removed, one-half of the lost 30" tree, or a 15" replacement tree was required. The new ordinance requires a two to one replacement of any removed tree that is identified as a Specimen tree (over 30").

Ms. McLoughlin noted that since 2013, the City of Woodbury has been a member of the voluntary recognition program "MN GreenStep Cities." The program, which is geared toward the suburbs, helps cities achieve their sustainability goals through implementation of actions that focus on cost

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savings, energy use reduction and innovation. Woodbury, having met the metrics set up in Step 4 of the program, has reached Step 5.

Ms. McLoughlin noted that one example of a metric the city has improved in is the number of electric vehicles in the fleet.

Ms. Alig asked the Commissioners to share why they chose to serve on the PNRC.

Responses varied with some reoccurring themes:

- Community garden
- Tree canopy
- Composting
- Phase II planning
- Parks, Trails and Open Space and maintaining green space
- Large city with small town feel, interacting with neighbors
- Environmental stewardship
- Concerns related to climate changes
- Schools
- Safety of children
- Clean air
- Love of nature, flora, and fauna
- Enjoying spending time out of doors
- Experience government at work
- Giving back to the community

Ms. Alig asked the Commissioners what were some event or factors/information that influenced their understanding or impression of environmental stewardship over time and what trends they see emerging?

Again, responses varied with some reoccurring themes:

- Air quality after having experienced breathing difficulties with smoke from forest fires
- Balance community values and not lose perspective on what is important
- Understanding climate change and communicating same with the community members
- Fresh and clean air
- Water quality and clean drinking water
- Safety for children
- Crime and worries about trying to achieve things that are not achievable in the community
- Retrofit an already developed community
- City built around car transportation
- Animals becoming extinct due to loss of flora and fauna

Ms. Alig asked the Commissioners how might a changing environmental context affect our community, specifically?

Again, responses varied with some reoccurring themes:

- Loss of seasons and the natural cycle. Changes to what were four, distinct seasons in Minnesota: winter, spring, summer and fall.
- Don't rely on engineering aspects to get us out of this mess

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- High density building and number of multiple units being built compounding the issues such as water

Ms. Alig asked the Commissioners to share their key take way and what they would like known?

- With the number of items to be tackled, concerns with whether staff will be in a position to take it to the next level – hire a consultant
- Making sure we can provide water to the new developments

Ms. Alig asked for one thing that the Commissioners would want city staff or City Council to know.

- Massive topic with multiple tracks to tackle, need a clear entry way to chip away at the issues. Beneficial to have an approach that provides information on what community members can do at home and what the city can and will do.
- Clear definition to citizenry as to what they can do. Hire consultant or work with the University of Minnesota. Without a clear laundry list nothing will get done.
- Clearly defining what we want to solve. Minnesota GreenStep Cities is a good first step.
- Tree canopy has a cooling effect. Example: Tamarack Road could have been built with a median with planted trees.
- “Teach a man to fish they will eat for a lifetime.” Teach them how to do the process.

It was noted that staff will summarize the evening’s conversation/discussion and a more formal recommendation will be presented for the PNRC to review and provide formal approval as to what will be presented for City Council consideration.

C. Monthly Update – Memorandum No. 22 – 10

The summer 2022 Recreation brochure will be available on the city’s website March 7. The city is accepting applications for a variety of exciting summer jobs, including golf course and recreation programs. Anyone having an interest is encouraged to visit the city’s website [employment section](#).

Council Report – Councilmember Santini

Councilmember Santini noted that the water treatment plant was discussed during the Council’s last workshop meeting.

Announcements/Miscellaneous

Ms. Okada noted that the rebranding of the “HealthEast Sports Center” to “M Health Fairview Sports Center,” will be communicated during the week. The city’s newsletter and social media accounts will be highlighting the change and the city’s website will be updated. Additionally, signage, including monument signs, will be replaced throughout the coming year.

Ms. Okada noted that Ms. Shelly Schafer, has joined the city team as the Community Engagement and Equity Coordinator.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:46 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Belinda Reed

Belinda Reed
Administrative Assistant

Approved by the Parks and Natural Resources Commission on April 5, 2022.