

City of White Bear Lake Environmental Advisory Commission

MINUTES

Date: November 18, 2020	Time: 6:30pm	Location: WBL City Hall
COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT	Sheryl Bolstad, Chris Greene, Bonnie Greenleaf, Rick Johnston, Gary Schroeher (Chair), Robert Winkler, Valeria Diaz, Sage Durdle	
COMMISSION MEMBERS ABSENT	None	
STAFF PRESENT	Connie Taillon, Environmental Specialist	
VISITORS	None	
NOTETAKER	Connie Taillon	

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:39pm.

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

The commission members reviewed the agenda and had no changes. Commissioner Johnston moved, seconded by Commissioner Bolstad, to approve the agenda as presented.

Roll call vote:

Bolstad: Aye
Greene: Absent
Greenleaf: Aye
Johnston: Aye
Schroeher: Aye
Winkler: Aye
Diaz: Aye
Durdle: Absent

Motion carried.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

a) October 21, 2020 regular meeting

The commission members reviewed the October 21, 2020 draft minutes and had no changes.

Commissioner Johnston moved, seconded by Commissioner Bolstad, to approve the minutes of the October 21, 2020 meeting as presented.

Roll call vote:

Bolstad: Aye
Greene: Absent
Greenleaf: Aye
Johnston: Aye
Schroeher: Aye
Winkler: Aye
Diaz: Aye
Durdle: Absent

Motion carried.

4. VISITORS & PRESENTATIONS

None

5. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

a) 2020 work plan high priority goals

Commissioner Greenleaf asked staff about the status of the Zero Waste policy. Taillon stated that the policy will be presented at a Council meeting in the near future. She will email the commission members when the Council meeting date is set. Commissioner Johnston reminded commission members to start saving milk jugs to be used as tent weights at the 2021 Expo.

b) 2020 budget

Commissioner Greenleaf stated that she would like the commission to purchase native seeds to give away at the Expo with the remaining 2020 budget. Commissioner Greenleaf and Commissioner Bolstad will meet and come up with ideas for seed purchases. Taillon will place the order with a native seed company.

c) 2021 draft work plan

- Top 3 projects

Each commission member listed their top three priority projects they would like to see on the 2021 work plan. Taillon will tally the top three 2021 work plan priorities from each commission member for discussion at the December meeting.

- Chair Schroeder: pollinator plantings, zero waste City events, plastic bag ordinance
- Commissioner Bolstad: downtown area recycling, zero waste City events, plastic bag ordinance
- Commissioner Greenleaf: pollinator plantings, solar on buildings, plastic bag ordinance
- Commissioner Johnston: plastic bag ordinance, downtown recycling and expand to other areas, zero waste events
- Commissioner Winkler: IDDE lawn clippings and trash, partnering with Xcel Energy on special projects, salt management education

Commissioner Johnston stated that in addition to the top three priorities, the commissioner members should continue to focus on educating the public.

- EAC Roles

The commission members discussed possible additional roles. Commissioner Greenleaf would like to see the commission take on more projects. Commissioner Johnston stated that he reviewed the Environmental Advisory Commission web page and would like to add language to expand the commissioner's duties without being too specific and locking the commission into certain roles. Commissioner Johnston offered to revise the language on the website.

Commission member joined the meeting

6. NEW BUSINESS

a) Surface Water Management Plan review

Taillon provided an overview of the draft Surface Water Management Plan which is currently out for a 60-day agency review. The plan was submitted to the four Watershed Management Organizations, Ramsey County, Washington County, and Metropolitan Council for review. Taillon asked the commission members to review the plan in the next month and bring comments and questions to the December meeting. The draft plan is found on the City's website at whitebearlake.org/engineering/page/surface-water-management-plan.

7. DISCUSSION

a) Staff updates

- VLAWMO Award

Taillon mentioned that the City recently received the VLAWMO Watershed Partner award for our work on the 4th and Otter iron sand filter project. Formal recognition will take place at the VLAWMO Board of Directors meeting on December 9, 2020. Taillon will attend the meeting.

b) Commission member updates

- Recycling ambassador program, Chair Schroeher

Chair Schroeher stated that he is participating in the master recycling ambassador program, and is currently attending the training sessions. There are approximately 23 people in the program from communities including St. Paul and Roseville. He showed a few slides from one of the training sessions. One slide showed the trash composition at the Newport facility, with 49% of the trash made up of organics. The Counties started an organics recycling program to try remove this material from the trash. Ramsey and Washington County's goal is to have curbside organics recycling available by 2022. The organic waste would go to Specialized Environmental Technologies, a commercial compost site in Dakota County. The current organic waste contamination rate is at 6%; anything over 10% contamination and the load is rejected. Chair Schroeher suggested inviting Specialized Environmental Technologies to a future commission meeting. Chair Schroeher showed other slides from the training that depicted how raw materials and organics are distributed. Trash brought to the Newport Facility from both Ramsey and Washington Counties is burned to provide electricity for 44,000 homes. Only 11% of the trash generated in both Counties is landfilled. Commission members discussed scheduling a tour of the Newport facility in the future.

Commission member joined the meeting

- Duluth and Minneapolis plastic bag restrictions, Commissioner Greenleaf

Commissioner Greenleaf provided an update on her plastic bag restriction research. She stated that there are 300 community's nationwide that have implemented a plastic bag restriction using different approaches such as charging for plastic bags, charging for both plastic and paper, or eliminating plastic bags altogether. The Cities of Duluth and Minneapolis are currently the only Cities in Minnesota that have implemented a bag restriction. Duluth eliminated plastic bags and require stores to charge 5 cents for paper bags. Minneapolis requires stores to charge 5 cents for both paper and plastic bags. Commissioner Greenleaf wants the City to be a leader and create a plastic bag ordinance. The commission members discussed next steps, such as involving the business community and City Council.

- Other reports

The student commission representatives provided an update about the High School Environmental Club. The club's general mission is to make the school more environmentally friendly. One initiative is to look at ways of reducing waste by offering edible cups for liquid to hand out during races. Because of the recent lock down, the Environmental Club activities have been put on hold.

Taillon updated the commission on the food scraps dumpster audit provided by Ramsey County. The audit was conducted at the Public Works site over a period of two weeks, from September 14th through September 25th. For each of the two 4-yard dumpsters, the weight, visual fullness, and volume was recorded each week. The first week recorded 90% full for one dumpster and 10% full for the second dumpster. Week two recorded 60% full and 0% full. Chair Schroeher mentioned that he is interested in how many people use it per day. Commissioner Greenleaf stated that we need to keep providing education, and suggested including an article in the spring newsletter on organics recycling.

c) Do-outs

New do-out items for November 18, 2020 include:

- Commission members or staff to purchase native seed packets with the remaining 2020 EAC budget
- Staff to tally top three 2021 work plan priorities from each commission member to discuss at the December meeting.
- Commissioner Johnston to review the EAC website language
- Commission members to review the draft Surface Water Management Plan and bring their comments and questions to the December meeting.
- Commission members to consider inviting Jake from Specialized Technologies to speak at a future EAC meeting.
- Staff to schedule tour of Newport facility at a date TBD.
- Staff to include a food scraps recycling article in the spring newsletter.

d) December agenda

Include SWMP discussion and 2021 work plan on the December agenda.

8. ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Greenleaf moved, seconded by Commissioner Johnston to adjourn the meeting at 8:28 pm.

Roll call vote:

Bolstad: Aye

Greene: Aye

Greenleaf: Aye

Johnston: Aye

Schroeder: Aye

Winkler: Aye

Diaz: Aye

Durdle: Aye

Motion carried.