

City of White Bear Lake Environmental Advisory Commission

MINUTES

Date: April 17, 2019	Time: 6:30pm	Location: WBL City Hall
COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT	Chris Greene, Bonnie Greenleaf, Rick Johnston, Gary Schroeder (Chair), June Sinnott	
COMMISSION MEMBERS ABSENT	Sheryl Bolstad, Robert Winkler	
STAFF PRESENT	Connie Taillon, Environmental Specialist	
VISITORS	None	
NOTETAKER	Connie Taillon	

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:34 pm.

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

The commission members reviewed the agenda and had no changes. Commissioner Johnston moved, seconded by Commissioner Sinnott, to approve the agenda as presented. Motion carried, vote 5/0.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

a) March 20, 2019 regular meeting

The commission members reviewed the March 20, 2019 draft minutes and had no changes. Commissioner Greenleaf moved, seconded by Commissioner Greene, to approve the minutes of the March 20, 2019 meeting as presented. Motion carried, vote 5/0.

4. VISITORS & PRESENTATIONS

Dan Sandor, Postdoctoral Associate, Turfgrass Science, University of Minnesota was in attendance to discuss turfgrass alternatives and water conservation measures. All lawn grasses are cool season grasses, meaning they actively grow in cooler weather and slow in warmer weather. Management in hotter months cause stress. He recommended mowing the grass at a higher mower setting and only removing a third of the leaf blade at a time, and focusing on spring and fall fertilizing. The U of M extension website provides guidelines for fertilizer application rates. If the soil is compacted, Dan recommended aerating the lawn every couple of years in the fall and filling the holes with a sand/fertilizer mixture. He also recommended leaving grass clippings on the lawn to provide nutrients to the soil. This practice does not cause thatch to build up.

Dan noted that irrigation restrictions tend to increase irrigation use. Overwatering has more severe consequences than under watering. Lawn grass only needs one inch of water per week, including rainfall. He suggested timing how long it takes to fill a tuna can to determine how long to run the irrigation each week, and to also check to make sure the pavement is not being irrigated. Rain and soil moisture sensors help prevent overwatering. Soil moisture sensors installed in the root zone are most efficient at saving water and can be retrofitted to existing controllers. Irrigation systems sold after 2003 are required to have rain shutoffs; however, there are no compliance officers checking these systems.

The U of M is researching drought tolerant fescues as alternatives to Kentucky bluegrass. They are working with MnDOT to find grasses that perform well in snow pack and high salt areas. Fine fescue is a species that is drought and salt tolerant but does not tolerate foot traffic. Tall fescue is appropriate in recreational areas but does not tolerate wet areas with prolonged ice cover. Both species will grow in shady conditions. Additional information on low input turf alternatives can be found on the U of M website at lowinputturf.umn.edu.

5. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

a) Adopt a Drain program

Staff reported that the Adopt a Drain website is now live. Staff is working with VLAWMO to promote the Adopt a Drain program in the Goose Lake subwatershed. VLAWMO and the City plan to purchase customized Goose Lake welcome packets and yard signs for residents in the Goose Lake subwatershed who sign up to adopt a drain. VLAWMO will also purchase customized door hangers to promote the program. VLAWMO is looking for volunteers to distribute the door hangers. Commissioner Greene stated that the Boy Scouts might be interested in distributing door hangers. Staff will connect Commissioner Greene with the VLAWMO Adopt a Drain coordinator.

b) Downtown area recycling

Commissioner Johnston reported on the results of his survey of the downtown area trash and recycling containers. There are 28 trash containers and 8 recycling containers within two square blocks, from Highway 61 to Cook, and 3rd to 5th. Commissioner Johnston recommended pairing recycling bins with trash bins, providing clear instructions on the containers, and providing a different shaped opening bins for recycling. Commissioner members viewed photos of two examples of combined trash and recycling designs. Commission members reviewed the options and recommend the Excel Dome Top from Clean River with the round recycling opening, clear signage stating 'trash' and 'cans and bottles' with photos, and a forest green and light brown color to complement the Downtown area street lighting and building colors. Staff stated Ramsey County offers a public recycling container grant to cover the cost to purchase the containers. Staff will work on next steps and contact the County to get more information about the public space recycling container grant.

Commissioner Johnston also surveyed the trash and recycling in the Boatworks Commons area and found contamination in the recycling container. To reduce contamination, he recommended switching the position of the trash and recycling container, installing a circular opening on the recycling container and stenciling "bottles and cans" on the lid, and emptying the trash more frequently.

c) Pollinator plantings in parks

Chair Schroeher provided an update on his meeting with the Parks Commission in February. The Parks Commission seemed receptive to planting more pollinator plants and bee friendly lawns. They expressed interest in continuing the conversation about pollinator plantings and will consider planting pollinator plants as part of Arbor Day. Chair Schroeher will follow up with the Parks Commission to determine next steps.

d) 2019 Environmental Resources Expo

The commission members discussed changes to the exhibitor list. Rush Line will be removed from this list and the U of M Turfgrass Science added. Chair Schroeher volunteered to invite a representative from the Adopt a Drain program to exhibit at the event. Commissioner Greenleaf reported that the MN State Horticultural Society will provide books and a membership to be raffled at the event. The commission members want to give away a rain barrel again this year. Staff will purchase the rain barrel through the Recycling Association of Minnesota this month.

6. NEW BUSINESS

None

Commission member left at 8:20pm

7. DISCUSSION

a) Staff updates

- MPCA Site Review
The MPCA has not yet started their planned April testing. Staff will provide an update on any progress at the May 15th meeting.
- Spring into Horticulture - April 20
The Spring Into Horticulture event on April 20th at Century College will feature a topic on gardening for pollinators. The event is from 11am to 2 pm at Lincoln Mall on the East Campus.
- SWPPP Annual Meeting - April 23
Staff will present the City's 2018 Surface Water Pollution Prevention Program activities at the April 23rd City Council Meeting.
- Resilient Turf Workshop – May 21
The City is hosting a Resilient Turf Workshop at City Hall on May 21st from 6pm to 7:30pm, in partnership with Rice Creek Watershed District and Blue Thumb: Planting for Clean Water.

b) Commission member updates

Chair Schroeher provided an update on the statewide environmental commission conference held on Saturday, April 13. Approximately 60 people from various communities attended. Each community came prepared to share recent initiatives. Eden Prairie and Mahtomedi offer grants for low flow toilets and showerheads. The grant is funded through their internal budget. St Anthony Village plants pollinator gardens in City parks and encourages residents to plant pollinator gardens. The Mayor conducts tours of these gardens. Shoreview Public Works Department gives out tracking devices to track water use. There are also phone apps that monitor water use. Commission members expressed interested in researching the water tracking phone apps.

The Clean Energy Resource Teams (CERT's) presented on how to get people engaged. There were four breakout sessions, each focusing on a different topic: water use, transportation, recycling, and turf care. There were also panel discussions including high school students that are on Environmental Commissions. Chair Schroeher noted that some of the environmental commissions allow student representatives to vote.

c) Do-outs

Commission members and staff discussed items on the current do-out list and added the following:

- Staff to connect Commissioner Greene with Nick Voss at VLAWMO to coordinate the door hanging volunteer effort in Goose Lake priority areas.
- Staff to create a scaled map showing proposed trash/recycling container locations and present to the project to Public Works staff.
- Commissioners and staff will continue to invite their respective Expo participants.
- Staff will purchase a rain barrel from the EAC budget to give away at the Expo
- Chair Schroeher to continue working with the Parks Department on pollinator plantings
- Staff will research water use tracking app and add information in the fall newsletter.

d) May agenda

Include Adopt a Drain program, Environmental Resource Expo, and Conservation MN guest.

8. ADJOURNMENT

The next meeting will be held at City Hall on May 15, 2019 at 6:30pm. Commissioner Johnston moved, seconded by Commissioner Sinnott, to adjourn the meeting at 8:30 pm. Motion carried, vote 4/0.