

**West St. Paul Environmental Committee**  
**September 2, 2020**  
**West St. Paul Municipal Center-City Council Chambers**

**1. Call to order**

**The meeting was called to order at 6:00 pm.**

Committee members in attendance: Jade Pennig, Tara Wright, Jonathan Wagner, Rebecca McCarty, Polly Saatzer, Kristy Otte, Laura Zanmiller

Non-voting members present: Dave Schletty, Lisa Eng-Sarne, Bob Gausman

**2. NEW BUSINESS**

**a. Minutes** –The August 5, 2020 minutes were approved.

**b. 1700 Marthaler Lane Site Plan Review** – Schletty reviewed the site plan report memo for an expansion at 1700 Marthaler Lane, the Canine Coach facility. It is an expansion of the existing building. Most of the present site is open with “just a roof” covering. The expansion will allow courses year-round. There will be some new landscaping; a 12-inch cotton wood tree will be removed. Code requires that 30 percent tree replacement be done which would only be 4 inches. Code also necessitates that one quality tree is required for every 20 linear feet of property line. Staff would like new shrubs as well. However, the owner, has said that shrubs do not last long on the property because dogs likes shrubs very much. The owner, instead of replacing the shrubs, is planning to install planter boxes and just having annuals in them to “dress up the front end.” Staff is comfortable with the option. Schletty said that there is nothing in the landscaping plan that pertains directly to the committee in regards to permanent plantings. Wright asked if the green space was being currently used for dog training; Schletty confirmed that it was and that it was fenced in. Wagner asked if they had any drainage issues. Schletty said they have no current issues. Wagner asked about how the facility deals with dog waste. Schletty said that the owners deal with it on site during the training. The dogs are usually there for only an hour. A committee member asked if there were a list of annuals [preferred by the City]. Schletty said that the City does not have a list.

**A motion was made by Pennig to recommend that the applicant adhere using non-neonicotinoid treated plants in the flower beds. A friendly amendment was made by Otte to recommend annuals that are pollinator friendly. Pennig amended the motion to include Otte’s recommendation. McCarty seconded the motion. The motion carried. All Ayes.**

**c. Zoning Code Update Discussion**-Schletty said that the committee has been reviewing landscape plans for many years. The committee has been instrumental in getting the GreenSteps program advanced. Recently the Planning Commission discussed updating portions of code; the Commission would like to get input from the Committee on an ordinance involving pollinator and native species planting. If the suggestions from the Committee could be made part of ordinance, the Committee would not need to make recommendation every time [a site plan came into review.] The Planning Commission will also like feedback on updating energy and green building codes, and incorporating the GreenSteps recommendations. Schletty said that Michael Orange document would work well for part of committee discussion. Additionally, staff is considering a tree replacement dedication ordinance. It would work like the park dedication fund. A developer is required to dedicate part of a site to park land. For the tree replacement dedication, the applicant would be required to plant certain number of trees. If a developer cannot, they pay the city to plant the trees. Money would be

set aside specifically for the city to plant trees elsewhere in the city. Schletty said that the committee does not need to make final decisions yet. The committee would make recommendations to Council. Otte said it seems like there would be 3 ordinances: Landscape, Energy Code, and one for Tree Replacement. Schletty said that yes it would be three; the Committee can make more. Otte has a preference of Orange's draft; some cities only centered on trees only or pollinators only. She does like the idea of an all-encompassing ordinance that covers trees, rainwater conservation, and shoreline care. If the committee does it right and is comprehensive, the ordinance can cover three best practices just for the land use. Another part of the ordinance could cover the SB23 Energy standards, (Dark Sky and Green Roof stuff.) This could be built into Building Practices. McCarty thought the Orange document was very comprehensive. She referenced the pesticide use along with the pollinator-friendly stuff. She also noted the water resource capture was good too. Otte would like to sift through the document and start a draft. Schletty said that the Committee should definitely dive into it and not make a quick decision. Otte would like to cross reference both the Orange document and the GreenSteps documents to make sure the best practices definitions fit. Schletty said the committee does not need to limit themselves only to the documents before them. There are other city resources. Otte asked if the committee should draw up a deadline for the draft. Schletty suggested putting together a list of things they feel are important. It would be good to know what the current ordinance is, and "beef it up." Schletty will work with the City Planner to get a draft of what is out there. It was an exercise that was done about 8-9 years ago. A couple of interns looked at the code and updated some things at that time. Otte said the discussion will be continued on the next agenda. Schletty asked committee members to send questions only to himself in order to adhere to open meeting law.

### **3. OLD BUSINESS-NA**

### **4. UPDATES**

- a. Green Steps** –Otte reported that everything was put on hold this summer. It will get ramped up now. Wright said that the next step for the Bird City USA project was to hold a public meeting. This has been put on hold as well. She will reach out to Kathryn to see how to proceed without a community gathering. She will see if there is an alternative. Schletty said that if a meeting is handled using social distancing measures, the City may be able to have a public meeting. The City could also use virtual meeting technology as well. Otte said that the 2040 Plan could qualify the City for the GreenSteps program. The subcommittee just has to get these measures documented and entered into the system. Schletty confirmed that GreenSteps is still making assessments. Their main coordinator retired. There is a new staff person in place.
- b. Council-Eng-Sarne** said a lot has been happening lately. Last Thursday, they broke ground for the workforce housing at Robert and Annapolis. There has been advancement as to the trees and shrubs being planted at that corner. It will be a great entrance to the City. The Council will be talking about ponds. Some citizens raised some concerns about smell of ponds. She has learned a lot about the different categories of ponds and the conservation of wetlands and citizens' responsibility for treatment. She has heard "Let's pave around Mud Lake," and "Don't pave Mud Lake." Schletty said that staff is going to be doing a complete inventory of every pond in the City. They will investigate what ponds are private and what ponds are public. They will look at how many residents' properties about the ponds and how much of the property is public. It will be an agenda item for next month. The Committee will talk about how the ponds are handled, be it educational or if there should be treatment plans in place. The committee will put forth a recommendation to

Council probably in late October. Otte asked if the City was going to check the water quality of the ponds. Schletty replied that the City works with Dakota County on this. Volunteers take samples and monitor a few ponds each year for water quality. An assessment is done at the end of the year. The City has some data from the last ten years from different ponds. The City has a baseline for these ponds. However, the City does not have data from all the ponds. There is no funding to do the testing. Schletty said that the committee would probably look at the information and determine if more water quality testing is needed and more improvements. Otte asked if a survey would be done of private property owners asking about things like lawn maintenance, and the use of lawn chemicals, how frequently they mowed and if there were a buffer zone. Eng-Sarne said there may be an education aspect to this; it is very preliminary.

**c. Staff-NA**

**d. Parks and Recreation Committee-** Gausman reported that the art park subcommittee met. The project is shaping up. It is not only an art project but a system change. The County trail is under construction by the library; there are piles in Robert Street; they have cut up a path between the lake and the library. It is an interesting change.

**e. Planning Commission- NA**

**5. OTHER-Bullfrogs-** Gausman is doing a personal inquiry into bullfrogs. As a child in Wisconsin, there were big bullfrogs in his grandparents' lake. They could be 8 inches long and they were a regular chorus. It was fun. He remembers a Dayton Avenue Church cookbook from the 19<sup>th</sup> century featuring frog legs. The frogs were probably trapped for their legs during the Victorian Era. He has contacted the DNR to see about the possibility of bringing them back to the lakes in West St Paul. The bullfrogs would add another dimension to the lakes.

**6. ADJOURN**

With no other business before the Committee and with no objections, the Environmental Committee meeting was adjourned at approximately 6:35 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Sharon G. Hatfield