

West St. Paul Environmental Committee
Environmental Committee March 3, 2021
West St. Paul Municipal Center-City Council Chambers/Virtual Meeting

1. CALL TO ORDER

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

Committee members in attendance: Kristy Otte, Rebecca McCarty, Jade Pennig, Ken Paulman, Nicholas Hager, Lauren Hazenson, Laura Zanmiller

Non-voting in attendance: Robert Gausman, Samantha Green, Robyn Gulley, Dave Schletty

2. NEW BUSINESS

a. Introduction of New Members Nicholas Hager, Lauren Hazenson and Ken Paulman

The new members introduced themselves. Hager has been a resident of West St. Paul for 3 years. He teaches at Heritage Middle School. Hazenson has lived in Ward I been for 1 ½ years and is a communications and outreach coordinator for the Ramsey-Washington Metro Watershed District. She has done some work in selling raingardens in environmental focused fairs. Paulman has lived in Ward 3 since 2009 and works in a non-profit news service that covers climate and clean energy based in St. Paul. As a disclaimer, Paulman said that he is not representing his employers in any way. His is excited to be on the Committee.

b. Minutes-The Feb 3, 2021 minutes were approved.

c. Site Plan Review 1650 Robert St

Schletty reviewed the site plan memo for the construction of a fast food Burger King restaurant with a drive-through lane at 1650 Robert Street. Crave Enterprises on behalf of Burger King, has applied for the site plan conditional use permit. The applicant would demolish the existing building and reconstruct a similar size Burger King in a similar location with a drive-through. The submitted plan calls for the removal of 4 trees equaling 27 caliper inches. Per City code, the applicant must replace 30 percent caliper inches, (8.1 inches); they are proposing quite a bit more than that. The trees planting includes: 28 deciduous trees, 6 evergreen trees and a number of different shrubs and perennials. City Code also states that the number of trees required is 1 per every 20 linear feet of property line. There are 758 of property line; this would require 38 trees. The applicant is proposing 34 trees as well as maintain the 4 existing trees. So the minimum requirement is being met on site. Otte talked about the Norway Maple being listed on the plan; at the last meeting the Committee discussed that the Norway Maple is an invasive species. She wondered if it could be replaced. Schletty said that the tree is a columnar; it is the same species and a slightly different variant. He does not know if it is considered invasive. He will research it. Zanmiller was looking into the trees. All Norway Maples are susceptible to several diseases. The cultivars are bred to get rid of certain features and enhance certain features. She has suggested getting rid of the Norway Maples. They are not on any other city-recommended tree list. The Committee could replace the species with a Linden or something similar. Schletty added said that the Committee previously had chosen the tree for its shape (columnar); it grows more straight up and does not have much mass going outward. It grows nicely along property lines. There are other tree varieties that have a similar shape that could replace the Norway Maple. He is not sure of a specific one yet. Otte talked about the perennial list; the Karl Foerster and the Day Lily are ornamental and pretty but they are not native pollinator plants. More variety would be a good option, i.e. Echinacea or Butterfly weed. Otte is not seeing the drainage on the lot; Schletty said there is a drain in the middle of the parking lot, and there are catch basins all around the site. All the stormwater on the site will funnel into the City's system. Schletty talked to the City Engineer about the site. Because the lot is under one acre, the applicant is not required to do any treatment of stormwater on their site. The restriction they have is that they have to control the rate of flow; they can do this by sizing their stormwater pipe to the City

system. McCarty asked if it were possible to investigate raingarden installation. Schletty said that the Committee can ask; they cannot require it. Otte said that it seems like a small space and that the applicant is trying to maximize the space; the number of trees is commendable. Otte asked if it were possible for less black top and more raingarden. Schletty said that may be more of a question for the Planning Commission. Green does not know the requirement. However, every single time the Planning Commission reviews a site, they ask if parking can be reduced. Paulman asked about the hardiness of the trees, and if the applicant were required to maintain the trees. Schletty said that they are required to maintain the trees for one year. After that time, if there were a number of trees that died, the City Code Compliance officer would contact the property owner. The applicant is required to irrigate the area. In retail areas, it usually is more about looks and not long-term maintenance. Retailers often plant trees that will eventually be replaced. Honey Locust and Bass Wood are good trees for hardiness; they are salt tolerant and tolerant for areas near parking. Schletty is not sure of the maple trees. All of the trees should grow well in the strips. Hazenson said that she also would like to have the perennials substituted with native plant species. A deeper root system would slow down the flow of water and have some filtration advantages and be more resilient. The substitution could also be done with the deciduous shrubs. Hazenson suggested Lutsen (for the grass in that variety,) Coneflower, and Black-Eyed Susan. That area has a lot light and both those varieties do well in berm planting.

Otte summarized the recommendations from the Committee: changing out the Norway Maple; looking at changing out the shrubs to a native shrub or grass; and instead of the 19 and 19 with the feathery grass and day lilies, and adding more variety with more pollinator-friendly plants.

A motion was by McCarty to approve the plan with the friendly amendments that Chair Otte mentioned. Pennig seconded the motion. Schletty asked for a point of clarification; a raingarden was discussed earlier in the meeting; does McCarty wish to include this in an amendment? McCarty said yes and added the addition of investigating the reduction of parking for the installation of a rain garden on the site. The motion carried. All Ayes.

Schletty said that he will add the "usual verbiage" on the pollinator-friendly non neonicotinoid treated plantings.

3. OLD BUSINESS

- a. **Boulevard Tree List Review**-Zanmiller is working on the list. She is fulfilling the mission of having more native plants on the recommended tree list. She wanted more of a wide variety of trees on the list. (To avoid situations like Dutch Elm Disease or Emerald Ash Borer infestation. She wanted trees originating in the United States; she cross referenced with the DNR and the U of MN Extension for her work. She looked at other cities to see what they recommended. Rochester has 21 trees that could work under power lines. The city as a whole is trying to get away from planting under power lines. The Committee has talked about getting rid of the Maple trees; they are invasive. Otte asked if she need more time or comment from the Committee. Zanmiller would like to add more trees to the list. She was thinking of working on it another month. Schletty asked if Princess Kay is a non fruit-bearing; Zanmiller said a lot of the trees produce seeds; some of the new varieties the fruit stays on the tree. On this variety the fruit stays on; they hold onto their fruit and feed birds. Zanmiller wants to investigate more about the fruit. Schletty said that the City wants to stay away from fruit bearing trees to protect the storm sewer system. Gulley suggested that the City make a City fruit tree map marking the trees that are available to the public for fruit picking. Schletty said it sounds like a good assignment for the Committee. Paulman

asked about the hardiness zones shifting; in 20 years, the City will be solidly in zone 5. Zanmiller said that she was working up to Zone 6; the list should be okay. McCarty asked about the trees being deleted from the list. A lot of tree species are being deleted; more species will have to be added. Zanmiller agreed. The list was done in 2008 and there has been a lot of progress since then. Otte thanked Zanmiller for her work. Otte asked Schletty if there were anything else to be reviewed under "Boulevard Tree." Schletty said no. He will look at the list and contact Zanmiller about the list later with any comments.

- b. Landscape Ordinance Revision Discussion-** Otte asked for an update from Schletty. Schletty said that the Planning Commission was going to have a work session on the ordinance revision but decided not to have the work session in February. The revision was not reviewed by the Commission. Schletty kept the agenda item on for the Committee to see if members had anything to add. Otte asked the new members of the Committee to read the ordinance and come back to the meeting with any input. Schletty said that the Planning Commission has been looking at updating some of the zoning ordinances and codes. Part of this is the Environmental Committee's recommendations on landscaping ordinances and zoning code. Hopefully, the Planning Commission will review the Environmental Committee's recommendations soon and update the code to send to Council for adoption.

4. Updates

- a. GreenSteps Cities Updates-**Otte said that the City is only a few steps away from achieving Step 3 of the GreenSteps Cities program. The City is getting close to another milestone. Schletty said that the City is now down to 2 steps: 11.1 Complete Streets Policy and 1.1 Public Buildings. Schletty said that Complete Streets is a holistic way of looking at road or street construction; the City looks at the vehicular traffic and the pedestrian traffic of a road, and how the road gets used by everybody. It is something that the City has been doing for a while. Example of this are the BikePed Master Plan and the ADA Transition Plan. However, it is not a practice that the City has adopted formerly in policy. Schletty has drafted a policy looking at a few other cities as models. It is going to be on Monday night's Council Agenda to approve the policy. It will mean a slight increase in costs when planning road construction. It will take more staff time to review all of the elements. Schletty talked about 1.1 Public Buildings; it is a way to look at all of the City's public buildings and their energy uses. About 10 years ago the City had been calculating and recording the usages in the buildings. It was discontinued because the City did not have the staff time and did not need to use the information. It fell by the wayside. Schletty has started it again. A couple new buildings have been built; right now Schletty is trying to go through the energy bills to tabulate and get the data entered in. The City needs to enter 6 months' worth of data to get the one star. It would take a year to two years' worth of information to get the two stars. The goal for Schletty is to get 6 months' data entered to get the [step] checked off. Schletty said that the City will meet the April 1 deadline for the step. He is sure that both the Complete Streets and Public Buildings should be entered by April 1. Schletty said that Step Four is about continuing on the path. To reach Step Four, the City has to meet the criteria of increasing and meeting action steps. Otte said that Step 4 and Step 5 are a lot of about data collection. There will have to be a lot of monitoring and data entry for the next steps. Otte asked about the Bird City USA application; the resolution passed last year. Schletty is currently working on the application. Otte said that they will have to discuss how the eventual Bird City Committee will work. The City will also have to do something around International Migration Day which is in mid-May or so. Gausman asked if [printed] booklets on the GreenSteps programs were available. Schletty will send this information out to Committee Members.
- b. City Council-** Gulley said that she was really glad to be here and she welcomed the new Committee Members. She is excited to bring the work of the Committee to Council this week. In the next two weeks, Council will be working on Strategic Planning and the hiring of the new City Manager.

c. Staff

- i. **Committee Appointments-** Schletty reported that Council is also looking at committee appointments and refining the process. They are thinking of expanding the committees to two more members. This would help with additional subcommittee work.
- ii. **City County Conservation Collaborative-** The County has been working hard on a land conservation plan; their next step is to form a collaborative with all the cities in Dakota County and to get third party funding for a lot of the efforts. The plan will be taken to Council and to see if they want to be part of the effort. Under the collaborative, some of the City's lands could be restored to prairie. The restoration of forest areas and shorelines could also be done through this partnership.

d. Parks & Recreation Committee- Gausman did not have anything to report at this meeting.

e. Planning Commission- Green said that they did not have the planned worksession. Depending on the length of the agenda at the next session, she is hoping that staff brings about the landscape initiative to their attention. If not, she will request a worksession. She does not have much to report; they did not have a meeting last month.

5. Other-

a. Election of Officers- This will be postponed until next meeting.

b. Development on Wentworth and Robert-Gausman asked about the activity on the corner of Wentworth Avenue and Robert Street South. Schletty said that Roers' group is putting in an apartment complex in that corner. The building will be four-story and have dog park with some retail shops on the bottom floor.

6. ADJOURN

With no other business before the Committee and no objections, the Environmental Committee meeting was adjourned at approximately 6:56 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Sharon G. Hatfield