

West St. Paul Environmental Committee
September 4, 2019
West St. Paul Municipal Center-Administrative Conference Room

1. Call to order

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

2. ROLL CALL

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

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

Members excused: Carol Hall

Guests: Dave Heller, Lisa Heller

3. NEW BUSINESS

a. The August meeting minutes were approved by the committee. (It was mentioned that Lisa Eng-Sarne was excused from the June meeting.)

b. Site Plan Review 938 Robert Street

Schletty presented the site plan to 938 Robert Street. Hampton Companies proposed a new 32-unit senior memory care residential building at the site, which is currently vacant. The plan calls for removal of 11 existing quality trees, (132 caliper inches.) The applicant proposed to replace the trees with 16 quality trees, (40 caliper inches.) The applicant is also planning to install an underground filtration basin. Otte expressed concern regarding the removal of all the trees. Schletty said that the applicant is following city code and replacing 30 percent of the trees removed. Otte asked about how to change the city code. Schletty said the change would have to be done by Council. Wagner said that the trees that are being removed do not cover as much area as the new tree plantings.

A motion was made to approve the site plan with the friendly amendment to recommend planting native tree species not treated with neonicotinoids. The motion carried. All Ayes.

c. Site Plan Review 240 Thompson Avenue East

Schletty presented the plan for 240 Thompson East; Paul Tucci of Oppidan has proposed a market-rate apartment complex with 153 units. Based on city code, the plan calls for 62 quality trees to be planted. The plan proposes 280 shrubs and 476 perennials to be planted as well. The plan is still being reviewed by city staff for grading issues; therefore the number of trees removed from the site has not been determined. Staff anticipates minimal tree removal. Staff recommended a condition of approval for additional trees to provide screening to nearby residents. Otte noticed that non-native trees and shrubs are being used in the plan. Wagner commented that Japanese lilac has higher allergy response; he suggested natural lilacs. Otte recommended planting bee balm, coneflower and Black-eyed Susans instead of daylilies. More pollinator-friendly plantings were recommended. Saatzer asked if contractors had a list of the recommended plantings from the city. Schletty said the list of trees in on the city website. Otte talked about the Hy-Vee building and the committee recommendations made regarding lighting, raingardens, plantings and a green roof. The recommendations were "lost," even though they fell in line with the GreenStep program.

Dave Heller and Lisa Heller of 28 Thompson Avenue came before the committee to talk about the proposed apartment building. They have lived in their home for the past 20 years. They are concerned with having a 50-foot, four-story building in their backyard, and are opposed to it. They are concerned with the drainage issues as well. [The Hellers] appreciate the proposed tree cover in the plan, but they do not think an adequate tree inventory has been done, especially of the older trees. They feel that the proposed plan is "city planning by desperation." The city is stuck with bad soils, and they were opposed to any development prior to this plan. If the apartment complex is

built, their house value will plummet. There is a shortage of affordable single-family homes, and Heller wondered why the city was not building more single-family homes. Wagner expressed appreciation for Heller's concerns/opinions. Otte said that the committee could not move forward with a recommendation to approve the site plan without knowing more information. Schletty suggested forwarding a list of recommendations to be addressed.

The list included:

- Plantings that are neonicotinoid free
- Native species planting
- Pollinator-friendly planting
- Addressing the swampland
- Addition of a rain garden
- Reassessment of tree inventory
- Soil amendment due to swampy conditions
- Analysis of soil types
- Additional screening for adjacent resident property
- Dark Sky/Lighting considerations
- Green Roof Construction

A motion was made to move the list of recommendations to Schletty for review. The motion carried. All Ayes.

4. OLD BUSINESS

a. Review Draft Climate Change Resolution

The committee discussed the Climate Change draft resolution and the Climate Change Support Statement put forth by Claudia Hoffman. Committee members expressed general support but would like to add the date of the Paris agreement (Cop 21 2015) to the draft resolution and to add language regarding carbon sequestration and providing financial incentives to reward the "right things." Pennig and Wagner volunteered to refine the language. Englehoff will come to the October meeting to discuss the documents.

5. UPDATES

a. Subcommittee Update

- i. **GreenStep Cities Program-** Otte and Wright are "plugging away" on the GreenStep program. They are currently working toward Step III, which includes Living Streets, Mobility, and the B3 Inventory (existing public buildings). Schletty said that the committee would also need to work on "green" businesses and incentives for commercial developments. The Bird City initiative has been put on the "back burner," for the time being.

b. City Council- Update

Eng-Sarne welcomed questions from the committee members regarding anything they would like to discuss. Committee members talked about what single affordable family housing would look like. Eng-Sarne said that data regarding median income is taken from Dakota County not from the City of West St. Paul. Affordable means something different in West St. Paul than in Burnsville. Eng-Sarne would like to look at these numbers more closely.

c. Staff Update- NA

d. Park and Recreation Committee- Schletty reported that the committee is working on some development ideas for the Art Park with Kevin Hendricks.

e. Planning Commission- NA

6. OTHER- Schletty reported that the Adopt a Drain and Water Steward projects were advertised in the latest newsletter.

7. ADJOURNMENT

With no other business before the Committee and with no objections, the Environmental Committee meeting was adjourned at approximately 7:23 pm.