

Natural Resources Commission Minutes
March 21, 2018
7:00 P.M.

Call to Order:

Chair Bob Larson called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Roll Call:

Present: Chair Bob Larson, Vice Chair Kate Winsor, Commissioners David White, Damien LePoutre, Dan McDermott, City Council Liaison Gregg Nelson and NOHOA Liaison Diane Gorder
Staff: City Administrator Mike Robertson and Recording Secretary Debbie Breen.

Commissioners asked that staff advertise for a new Natural Resources Commissioner.

Approval of Agenda:

Commissioner Winsor moved to approve the agenda. Commissioner White seconded. Motion approved unanimously.

Pollinator Resolution Discussion – U of M student Presentation

Four students from the Agriculture Sciences Department from the University of Minnesota were present to request that North Oaks pass a Pollinator friendly resolution. They discussed the state of bees, butterflies, bats and moths, which make up $\frac{3}{4}$ of pollination of all crops. Fifty percent of the world's honeybees were lost last year due human causes and weather, pathogens, pesticides, habitat and loss of food. A pollinator resolution is a set of guidelines on how to treat the landscape in a pollinator friendly way, that can be tailored to fit community's needs. They said that Shoreview had recently passed a similar resolution.

Commissioner White asked if this was typically adopted as resolution or as an ordinance. The students confirmed that it is a non-binding Resolution, more like a pledge. Commissioner McDermott asked if there is any data yet on results from passing the ordinances. They stated it is too soon to determine as it is a world problem and initiatives are just underway and there are over 400 species of bees. Commissioner LePoutre asked if forests like North Oaks is a better source of pollinators, or worse source than a more urban environment. They provided a brochure that shows what works best in a wooded environment.

Mayor Nelson confirmed that the NRC should come up with the Resolution and then propose it to the City Council for approval once NOHOA has given approval. The Commission agreed to move ahead.

Review of Coyote Presentation

Chair Larson gave a summary of the Coyote presentation on March 14th. The State specialists noted that the removal of Coyotes just makes room for others coming in, and said that residents should harass them with loud noises, firecrackers, etc. and that is usually enough to be effective. The overall emphasis of the presentation was on coexisting with coyotes. It was a really good turnout for the presentation and the recording is on the website.

Commission Winsor asked how the City plans to address Coyote inquiries going forward. Administrator Robertson stated they would refer residents to the presentation. The Ramsey County Sheriff's office also recently instructed Deputy Burrell to not shoot coyotes unless there was an imminent threat to life. Chair Larson noted a few people in attendance asked for additional presentations on other nature/wildlife topics. Commissioner White asked if there is a sense of community input on the topic. Robertson stated there have been many sightings reported, but only a few of a more aggressive nature. The City is tracking reports of sightings, and will send out the Deputy or animal control for any direct threats.

Review of Proposed Water Plan

Administrator Robertson noted the Water Plan is part of Comp Plan update to the 2018. He asked the Commissioners if they had any feedback on the plan.

Commissioner Winsor mentioned in Part B of Page 10 – might want to add information on Blandings turtles found in North Oaks. Page 18, section 3 – wondered if salt use should be mentioned as part of water quality. NOHOA Gorder mentioned that Mel's is trying to use more sand and less salt now. Commissioner Winsor asked if Climate change was addressed in document. Administrator Robertson noted that the 100-year rainfall event has been changed from 5.5 inches to 7.0 inches and that future stormwater systems have to be sized accordingly. Commissioner White stated in yesterday's paper there was an article about what happens to the salt used on road, and that it doesn't go away but just settles in the bottom. Robertson stated that there is an alternative to salt, but it is a chemical mixture that is much more expensive. Sand / Salt combination is the cheapest solution. Commissioner LePoutre asked if there was anything specific to Black Lake on page 14 – if not, may need to add since it is important to VLAMO. He suggested inclusion of water willow on Page 10. Robertson stated they will receive the next document to be revised in 2-3 months. NOHOA Gorder mentioned on page 11 top and Page 17 – need to make consistent all the townships involved. Page 11, area 3 – revise to mention North Oaks parks are open to NOHOA members. Page 14 there is mention of the Mississippi water and how much water comes in to the watershed. Page 20 #12 – state NOHOA contractors instead of Public Works officials. Page 26 #5, mention of the environmental commission should be Natural Resource Commission.

Commissioner LePoutre requested the related maps be sent over to NRC and for them to be put on the website. Robertson stated that our City Engineer Sambatek put together the original document and continues to help maintain the document and maps.

Environmental Assessment Worksheet Review

Administrator Robertson said that last month's minutes had a mentioned an environmental impact study. He said that the Commission needs specific reasons to request either an environmental impact study or a revised EAW. Robertson noted that the North Oaks Company has withdrawn their proposed concept plan. Mayor Nelson clarified that the North Oaks Company could return with a new concept plan which proposed some of the same options. At the next Planning Commission meeting, they will be closing the public hearing on the concept plan and just focusing on the applications remaining.

Robertson noted that an EAW is required whenever more than 80 acres are proposed for development. The EAW done in 1999 is one of the most thorough he has ever reviewed. He reviewed some of the issues that have been brought up about the EAW. With the withdrawal of the concept plan none of these issues rise to the level necessary to require a new or revised EAW.

Commissioner LePoutre requested that the City Attorney review documents closely to make sure the new plan is compatible with what was approved in 1999. Commissioner LePoutre believes that topography maps show water flowing south into Black Lake. Robertson said that the water flows north from Black Lake to Wilkinson Lake.

Commissioner White asked if there's anything in deeds that restricts people from building based on environmental concerns. Robertson said there was nothing in City ordinances.

Public Comment – Susan Hinrichs thanked NRC and city for their review of upcoming project and encouraged the North Oaks Company, NOHOA and City to work together. She shared what she learned from VLAMO regarding wetlands.

Leanne Saveride – mentioned that original plan had road coming off of Sherwood for the Nord parcel.

Mayor Nelson has asked that residents forward any comments to the Planning Commission and the City Council.

City Update:

Grant – Administrator Robertson reported that the City received grant for \$2,750 for removal of oriental bittersweet.

Deer Management – They have been 24 deer removed this year. The City seems to be meeting its target of having less than 8 deer per acre.

Approval of Minutes:

Administrator Robertson asked to correct the February minutes to more accurately reflect the EAW discussion.

Commissioner White moved to correct the February 21, 2019 minutes to state “Motion was made to review the EAW on the proposed East Oaks Development in greater detail”.

Commissioner Winsor seconded. Motion unanimously approved with Mayor Nelson abstaining.

Commissioner Lepoutre asked if there was a need to include more information on wildlife importance in the Comp Plan. Robertson clarified that the Comp Plan is a land use document and what he was talking about was a governance issue.

Tick Task Force Report

Commissioner White stated next meeting is Tuesday, April 16th at 7:00 p.m. Commissioner McDermott referenced a publication from White Bear about Lyme disease. He will provide this document to Administrator Robertson for sharing with Tick Task Force.

Kate Winsor's Report

Submitted a North Oaks news article re: Are there any Weeds in My Seeds and a Happy Earth Day article.

NOHOA/NEST Update

NOHOA Liaison Gorder stated Justin Townsend has approval from NOHOA and VLAMO to conduct training at the end of April or early May for residents on identifying oriental bittersweet. Possibly put up signs and conduct seminar and he has offered to take care of anything identified right away. Administrator Robertson mentioned that Emerald Ash Borer was detected in a tree by the St. Paul Water Department Pumphouse. They are going to meet with NOHOA and Rehder Forestry on Monday to discuss an overall management plan.

Other Business

Commissioner McDermott asked if the Commissioners were vulnerable on any decisions made in relation to the Comp Plan or developments. Administrator Robertson stated that as City Commissioners they were covered under the City's liability insurance policy.

Adjournment:

Commissioner White made a motion to adjourn. Commissioner McDermott seconded. The motion was approved unanimously. The meeting ended at 9:15 p.m. Next Meeting is April 18, 2019.