

Environmental Board Minutes, January 14th, 2015

Meeting called to order at 7:01pm

Members Present: Chair Ruth Caputo, Vice-Chair Martha Dahlinger, Catherine Niessink, William Beck, Christin DeJong, Jamie McCarthy, Spencer Welling, David Mayfield, Tim Winslow, Director of Transportation & Utilities Christopher Barnes

Members Absent: Henry Zhou, representative from the student advisory committee.

Bill made a motion to approve the minutes, seconded by Martha. Motion passes.

Recycling Update

We're working on a presentation to city council that will put forth the case for single-stream recycling. We are looking also at expanding the program to the businesses in the city as well. Most of them are on the cusp of recycling anyways but they just need more of an incentive. The case will look at convincing the city to make the biggest investment into single-stream recycling that is possible in order to make it happen. There are some components that we may have to abandon depending on the economic climate, feasibility, etc. The survey to the city found that most constituents were happy with the current recycling program.

Our goal was to present to the city council at one of their March meetings. The bids have to be approved by July. Chris thinks March would be a good timeframe to attend a city council meeting.

We're looking into the various options as well with regard to carts for constituents to use to recycle. The 96-gallon one will be great for most but may not be the best option for all.

We are also looking to combining our program/bid with the City of Kalamazoo as well. We are going to attend their Environmental Concerns Committee meeting next Wednesday and plan to discuss to their counterpart there as well. We may even see if other communities in the area are interested as well including Oshtemo Township.

We'll call the clerk to get on the agenda for this meeting. We also plan to have people who support the program attend that meeting. We will ask the environmental board to approve a recommendation that will also be part of the presentation to the city council.

Invasives Group

It was suggested that we would focus on fewer parks to simplify things. The parks suggested were Liberty Park, Lakeview Park, the water treatment plant, and West Lake Nature Preserve. Ruth will also work with the Friends of Ramona Park group regarding their invasives. We are also going to do fewer pulls and avoid busy weekends. We will strive to do at least one pull on either May 2nd or May 16th. We may also do a pull during the week as well. Jamie is checking with the high schools regarding their volunteer hours and whether students wanted to possibly volunteer for a pull or even if a class wanted to work on it. Jamie has made some progress on this.

Ruth and Tim are going to meet with the Parks Department regarding native plantings and how the current program works. There is no point in planting native plantings if there is not the wherewithal to maintain these plantings. So we want to see what their department currently can do. The Parks Department will be hiring a new head this year as the current head Bill Deming is retiring.

We'd like to continue the Purple Loosestrife beetle buying program for now to see what the benefits are and if they continue. Eventually, our population of beetles may become self-sustaining and we may not have to purchase beetles. The beetles are also traveling on their own to newer areas as well.

Bill suggests possibly choosing just one park instead of even three so that we can do one big event that is more visible to people. This way we can potentially make more of a difference and get more people interested.

We will continue the current Purple Loosestrife beetle buying program. Ruth and Tim will plan to meet with the new head in a month or so regarding native planting maintenance. We will also continue working on putting together a schedule for the invasive plant pulls with the thought to focus on one or two on May 2nd or 16th in the West Lake-Bishop's Bog-Schrier Park corridor.

Deer Predation

Are there too many deer in Portage? One resident has brought this concern to the City of Portage that there might be too many deer in the City of Portage. The best way to determine if this is a problem we should look into how many car-deer accidents have occurred in the City of Portage and ask the residents if this is a concern of theirs. We could do this with an article in the Portager with a link to where people can express their concerns regarding this issue.

Tim will write an article for the Portager and Bill work on an online survey as well.

New Invasive Species—Beavers

These species have been moving into the City of Portage including West Lake Nature Preserve and Sugarloaf Lake. Then they will build a dam and cause property/damage upstream. This could be a concern in the future along with deer. One of the big areas of concern is Sugarloaf drain that crosses Westledge by Portage Central high school. A beaver dam has caused damage to property there.

Announcements

Tuesday, January 20th the City Council is meeting before the meeting to discuss enhanced economic development and balancing that with our environmental values as well. This meeting will start at 6pm and run to 7:15pm.

Monday, January 19th our chair, Ruth Caputo will be giving a presentation to the master gardeners on rain gardens.

Thursday, January 22nd, the Kalamazoo Climate Change Coalition is meeting at the Kalamazoo Nature Center from 8:30am to 11am.

/s/ Tim Winslow