

## **Environmental Board Minutes, May 13, 2015**

Meeting called to order at 7:05pm

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

Members Absent: Nobody

Martha made a motion to approve the minutes as amended, seconded by Henry. Motion passes.

### **Meeting with Mr. Shaffer, City Manager**

Ruth and Bill met with the City Manager, Rod Russell, Ray Waurio, and Rob Boulis. They discussed the bids with Ruth and Bill. They received bids from Best Way and Republic regarding single-stream and dual stream recycling. Both bids looked great. Mr. Shaffer liked both bids and encouraged the Environmental Board to write a letter to the city council in support of accepting a bid for single-stream recycling. Ruth drafted a letter and sent it around to the board.

Bill discussed educational opportunities as well. He brought educating the public through the kids since they can relay the message to their parents. Additionally, the schools do not currently participate with the city in the dual stream recycling program. We'd like to use this as an opportunity to bring the schools into Portage's recycling program. We also want to hit the ground running and be ready to get started on this.

Henry brings up contacting the student government at both Portage Northern and Portage Central in order to get some buy-in from the schools. Henry has some contact information regarding these people.

The recycling subcommittee will get together to discuss how to educate the public regarding single-stream recycling.

David brings up an organization called The Recycling Partnership that will help fund and do some educational things regarding recycling. This group helps fund these types of transitions. Thus, the City of Portage may want to work with this group regarding single-stream recycling.

Ruth brings up that both vendors that submitted bids have materials regarding recycling ready.

Mr. Shaffer thought that the issue might go before the city council at the May 26<sup>th</sup> meeting, but it might be later.

Ruth will send an edited letter to the city council in support of single-stream recycling.

Mr. Shaffer also discussed some other environmental ideas such as recycling latex paint. The city currently does not do anything with its paint. He also brought up that the city is looking into purchasing more hybrid vehicles and possibly using solar panels on some of the city's buildings as well.

### **Fishing Fair**

Martha and Catherine will be at the fishing fair. It starts at 10am at Ramona Park. Martha has prepared extensive materials for use at the fair.

### **Invasive Plants**

There is a pull this Saturday, May 16<sup>th</sup> from 9am to 12pm at Schrier Park. Christin and Tim will be at the pull. They are hoping for a big turnout to this event. This is the last scheduled pull for the year.

Martha brings up potentially doing a pull with the City of Kalamazoo as part of the mayor's bike ride in order to bring more publicity to invasives.

At our last pull at West Lake Nature Preserve, there were roughly 15 people who volunteered. We had a good cross-section of students, local neighborhood citizens, and master gardeners. They responded that some heard of the pull through the signs and others through the email list and the Portager.

Henry brought up contacting some folks at the National Honor Society and Peace Jam and provided some contact information.

Bill brings up sending thank you notes to the people that helped in order to encourage people to come back and help. Jamie reinforces this idea and said it would be good something to consider in order getting more people involved. Bill mentions that this is a good way to connect with people.

### **Educational Goals and Funding**

Martha wrote up a summary regarding having the environmental board asking for funds to help with its educational goals. This summary is pasted below.

I am requesting that the EB discuss & set educational goals for this next year; to consider how to achieve them, and how to fund them when cost is involved. Especially in regard to meeting our obligations concerning the Green-A-Thon and the display case at Lakeview Park, and our participation in the Fishing Fair.

In the time I've been on the board, we have more or less acted when an idea comes up, or a request is made, by asking who is willing to take the project on, and with the exception of the Phragmites burn and purchasing the beetles for the Purple loosestrife eradication there has been little discussion or planning on how we will fund anything that has a financial cost. We just kind of hope that somewhere there will be funds to pay for it. I believe some of the reasons for this is that as board members, we are not fully aware of the how to, or the time and cost involved for some of the activities and projects, and we don't have discretionary funds allocated from the city council.

I am not asking the board to make decisions at this meeting, but I do want you to have some background for thought and to be aware of some (I think exciting) possibilities.

To get the nitty-gritty out of the way first, the cost to produce the displays for our three activities since 2012 has been approximately \$400 dollars, plus another \$80 dollars for an A-Frame to display materials. (This does not include the Tri-fold display board purchased by Chris). An example of cost - production of materials to display for this 2015 Green-A-Thon, not including notebooks was \$74.13 cents. I have receipts since 2012 for all reproductions. Don't get frightened, I am not asking to be reimbursed. I this because I wanted something more than 8 1/2" by 11" posters and photos. Anything larger than this has to be sent out by the city to be produced and laminated.

Because I realize that this is not a sustainable method for the EB, and I am aware that others volunteering and working with the city have asked the EB for help with producing displays, I decided to explore.

First, I sent an e-mail to Judy asking- (Who can I contact that has information concerning the number of display cases, their location, and whom, or which department, or city board- has the responsibility for maintaining particular cases? This led to meeting and talking with our new Director of Parks, Recreation & Senior Services, Kendall Klingelsmith, which led to him talking with Bill Demming, recently retired Director, which led to, on & on.. It appears there is interest in collaborating with other boards and departments to explore and work in areas where we have similar objectives. Kendall has asked to meet for further discussion when he has more information. The Parks Board Pres. is on board to collaborate, and you already know that our City Manger, Mr. Shaffer has asked to meet concerning funding for EB projects. In order for Chris to be part of this

planing, decision making will need to wait for his return.

Meanwhile the exploration will continue. Mr. Shaffer has asked again about meeting concerning funding and knows that information is being gathered to be prepared for the meeting. I will keep you informed on what is discovered.

The City Council has always been supportive of the EB, the City manager has offered support and has some ideas for the EB, some have asked for our help, and others appear ready to explore collaboration. So put on your thinking caps and start brain storming what you want to see happen in the funding of projects, and in collaborating with others on projects when there is opportunity to save time, energy, and resources.

I am requesting this topic to be on the June agenda for discussion and further direction before meeting with Mr. Shaffer.

Martha DAHLINGER

Ruth brings up it would be good for the board to determine what they want to do in terms of displays, signs, etc. regarding what topics we want to educate to the public.

Martha's main goal is to have a better strategy regarding how we want to educate the public regarding our displays, advertising materials, etc. Martha is willing to work with the Parks Board chair regarding this topic as well as the new Director of Parks, Recreation, and Senior Services Kendall Klingelsmith.

Ruth suggests forming a small group to look into this issue. This group can then present at our next meeting and we can make some decisions.

Bill brings up that anything we ask for must tie into a strategy that helps the city in some manner. Otherwise, asking for money isn't going to work.

Ruth is okay with they piecemeal approach of asking certain departments when the board needs funds and thinks that the current approach is okay. Martha would like there to be a more defined budget for the board to help accomplish the goals that the city/city council gives the board.

Henry brings up that the board should hopefully be able to collaborate with the city regarding this especially since the city manager has asked us to do more.

Christin and Martha bring up emailing suggestions to Martha regarding this topic and then we can possibly have a group meet and come up with some

recommendations regarding this topic. Martha would like input from the entire board.

## **Deer**

Tim has gotten some data from the public safety department and has included this in a draft article that would be submitted to the Portager. This data shows that the number of car/deer accidents are decreasing so the local herd size might be decreasing as well. In isolated parts of Portage, there do seem to be more deer than in other areas but in some other areas there does not seem to be many deer if any. Martha brings up some other reasons regarding why the deer population has decreased. Christin thinks that we may want to be more opinionated regarding our thoughts regarding the deer population. Bill thinks we should do some type of threat assessment and ask people if they are having problems with deer and where.

We have gathered some data regarding the number of deer within Portage city limits. The board would like to build a better relationship with its citizens and see if there are citizens having problems with too many deer in their areas. We can then gather such information and pass it on to the city administration.

The board suggests incorporating some of Martha's suggestions regarding the deer article and sending out another draft. Henry brings up adding a question at the end of the article asking people their thoughts on the number of deer in their area.

We hope that next meeting we can approve a draft of the article.

## **Water Treatment Plant Native Plant Maintenance**

Martha has contacted Jared from Native Connections regarding a bid for the native plant maintenance. He will try to send something to Martha and the city soon.

Martha also met with Judy and others from the city on where to place the signs regarding the native planting there. They selected a location for these signs.

## **Purple Loosestrife**

The beetles are ready. Tim is going to go out this weekend and try to determine how past year's beetles offspring are doing to determine where to place this year's beetles. West Lake has agreed to purchase two releases. \$500 should buy us six more releases. Tim will go out this weekend and take stock of everything. Tim will publicize the release event

## **Announcements**

Portage Garden Club is doing a plant sale at Bill's house this Friday, May 15<sup>th</sup> and Saturday, May 16<sup>th</sup>.

David went to the Recycling Conference in town. He met with a lot of people that could help us with our outreach regarding single-stream recycling. He will have a lot of information to help us.

Jamie brought up that the State of Michigan settled with Enbridge regarding the oil spill in our area for \$75 million.

Tim talked to Sarah Redding about the possible restoration of Eliason Reserve and next steps and she suggested meeting with her about this. Christin mentioned that she did look into grants regarding this topic and this might be tough to get some funds helping us on this. Tim, Christin, and Ruth will discuss this topic more in depth.

Motion to adjourn made by David. Seconded by Spencer. Motion passes.

Meeting adjourned at 8:34pm

/s/ Tim Winslow