

Environmental Board Minutes, February 10, 2016

Meeting Called to order at 7:07pm

Members Present: Chair Ruth Caputo, Vice Chair Martha Dahlinger, Catherine Niessink, Jamie McCarthy, Jerry Kroehn, Bill Beck, David Mayfield, Tim Winslow, Assistant City Engineer Jamie Harmon, Director of Transportation and Utilities Christopher Barnes

Excused Members: Mike Sergeant and Student Advisory member Daniel Saba

Motion to approve the minutes made by Catherine, seconded by Jerry. Motion passes.

Old Business

Deer

The Deer forum is tentatively scheduled for Wednesday, April 13th. Mark Mills with the Michigan DNR is available that date. We are going to use the City Council chambers for the meeting as long as they are available. We will have a facilitator "run" the forum. Bill brings up making sure to have a balanced discussion on this issue. We believe that we should have both sides fairly represented at the meeting. Mark Mills will be well prepared to discuss the topic at this meeting. We might try to see if Kristin Bissell, the DNR person that covers Ann Arbor/Jackson, can attend the meeting as well. This will be an informational meeting. We are going to try to get this in the March and April Portagers. There is a new survey that we need to publicize as well. We will try to do this in the Portager articles too. The Kalamazoo Christian students might try to go out after a snowfall and count deer/deer tracks. Jerry brings up that we might not get a very reliable estimate from the deer tracking survey. This was suggested by the DNR. This might be something we can do every year as a way to help estimate our deer population. We won't get an aerial survey done because of the trouble brewing in Ann Arbor due to a recent lawsuit. This also expands to the use of drones. The Kalamazoo Christian class would like to give the board a presentation on deer. We should potentially discuss preparing for this forum at our next meeting or have another meeting regarding the topic. Ruth will work on scheduling another meeting to help meet regarding the Deer forum.

Costs of Treating Invasive Species

Ruth asks if the Purple Loosestrife Beetle money will eventually run out and is there any type of budget for treating invasive species on city property. The beetle funding has been fairly consistent and ongoing and Chris budgets for the beetles every year. Chris can budget for some of these things within his budget regarding transportation and utilities. But there are limited funds for this and some of these types of treatments do not fit within his budget. For example, most of the treatment of invasive species needs to come out of the parks budget because these species are mainly on city park property. Unfortunately, the parks department has very limited funds. Thus, it might be time for the board to recommend to the city to have a committed budget to this issue coming under some type of department. Bill brings up that invasive species really are an issue that cuts across many departments within the city. And thus, we can't limit ourselves to certain geographies. Ruth believes that we should make a recommendation to city council regarding this issue. Budgets for next year are being finalized as we speak. Bill brings up doing some type of threat assessment would help us justify the need for a budget regarding this issue. Chris thinks we should have a recommendation ready in the first or second week of March regarding this issue. Ruth will work on drafting a letter to Chris and Rod Russell regarding this issue and will send it out to the board before she sends.

Catherine makes a motion that the environmental board is 100% behind the board sending a letter to the city council and the city itself recommending that the city provide a budget for the treatment of invasive species on city property. Martha seconds this motion. Motion passes.

Invasive Species Control

Catherine found out the graduation date for Western Michigan University is April 30th. She also found out the Spring into the Streets event will be held on Friday, April 8th. This is a volunteer event held by Western Michigan University. They are also trying to coordinate with Kalamazoo College. We will try to organize a pull for Garlic Mustard that day. Catherine will check to see what is the latest day to add an event for volunteering.

Ruth will get back to Bill about providing materials for the meeting with the Portage Rotary.

Jamie will contact the schools to see if there is any interest in helping at such events.

Goals

Some of the goals for the following year that we are considering: maintaining a purchase program for Purple Loosestrife beetles, supporting the Greenathon,

supporting the Fishing Fair, organizing 2-3 invasive species pulls for this year, maintaining the native plantings at the Water Treatment Plant, maintaining the display board at Lakeview Park, treating the Phragmites that we've already treated last year in 2015, educating the parks department regarding invasive species and how it affects their parks, recommending a budget regarding the treatment of these species, continue to promote recycling, the management of hazardous and solid waste disposal, protect the water quality of our water, promote environmental protection, and potentially wildlife management. The one goal that is part of our mission statement is to enhance environmental quality and protect natural resources. The three objectives for this goal in our mission statement are to continue to promote effective recycling plans, the use of recycled/recyclable products, and the responsible disposal of hazardous and solid waste; protect water quality through the continued implementation of water management principles, including surface water, groundwater, and stormwater programs; and promote environmental protection, planning, monitoring, and educational programs.

We decided that we'd send these goals out over email, discuss the goals over email, and then vote at our next meeting what goal should be our priority.

Jerry asks if the city employs someone regarding trees within the city limits. Jamie H. says that the city does employ an arborist one day a week to look into these issues.

Water Treatment Plant Open House

Martha will offer to do guided tours of the mesic prairie that is planted in front of the Water Treatment Plant. One of the open houses for the Water Treatment Plant will be hosted on the same day as the Greenathon this year (April 23rd). They will also host another open house on Saturday, March 19th.

New Business

Butterfly Gardens

The city council brought up this issue with Ruth when she gave them an update on the environmental board. Martha is willing to work on potentially setting up a few butterfly gardens on city property as she has one on their property and has experience with this issue. Tim brings up whether this should be an issue that the second invasives subgroup should undertake. Ruth does think it is premature to do a native butterfly garden without the city currently having a plan regarding other native plantings. Martha will reach out to Bill regarding if one of the groups might be interested in this topic.

Jamie H. brings up that the trail extension for Eliason Reserve is going in this year. The city did get the proper permits for this trail as it does go through some wetlands. The project is ongoing and will be done this summer. They are also working on relocating the Portage Bicentennial Trail along Portage Creek. That will get done this summer. They are basically realigning the trail along the creek.

Motion to adjourn made by David, seconded by Tim. Motion passes.

Meeting adjourned at 8:40pm

/s/ Tim Winslow