



ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY AND ENERGY COMMISSION

Fridley Municipal Center, 6431 University Ave Ne

DRAFT MINUTES

January 12, 2016, 7:00 p.m.

Location: Conference Room A (Main Level, Fridley City Hall)

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 p.m. by Vice Chairman Mark Hansen.

Introductions

Introductions of Commissioners and guest Heidi Ferris, community environmental educator.

Approve Environmental Quality and Energy Commission Minutes

Approve Minutes of December 8th, 2015.

MOTION by Commissioner Westby and seconded by Commissioner Mulrooney to approve the December 8th,

The motion passed unanimously.

New Business

DNR Grant opportunities. Fridley's GreenCorp member, Erika Van Krevelen has been active during her 11-month service for the City of Fridley, in finding opportunities to obtain trees. One such opportunity was discussed with Commissioners: a DNR-LCCMR grant which would be submitted in February. This grant is to improve community urban forests through citizen engagement. Grant funds of \$36,000, if obtained, will be used to conduct activities to strengthen urban forestry in Fridley. Examples of this would be the planting of new trees in small groves, creating and maintaining City gravel tree beds to grow small trees onward for planting in parks and public locations along with tree care. Technical assistance will provided by project partners like U-MN. The in-kind match of \$4,500 of staff time over a 2 ½ year period and a \$4,500 City cash match (total) will not require any budget or staff changes. Jeff Jensen, our Street and Parks Manager, has approved exploration of the grant opportunity because the operation budget could be modestly adjusted for the cash match, creating no additional budget impact, if the grant is received. This essentially trades planting of a few large trees each year

during the grant period, for planting more small trees of a size similar to those installed in City of Minneapolis boulevards.

Recruiting and training citizen volunteers to help with watering and care as a green team group would be a part of the project. Commissioner Foell mentioned that an acquaintance at St. Philips Lutheran Church might be a good contact. Vice Chairman Hansen stated that obtaining a list of groups and their contacts is key, so that the City might take advantage of grant opportunities when they arise. Commissioner Velin has seen Boy Scouts, like Troop 714, participate in activities for community betterment, and thought contact should be made with them. A general discussion about locating volunteers ensued. School key clubs, ICWCs, and garden clubs (Commissioner Westby) were recommended as potential project partners. Guest Heidi Ferris thought that posters could be distributed in several key locations to solidify a volunteer group.

The Commissioners, in support of this DNR urban forestry tree grant opportunity, asked staff to prepare the grant application, which, if accepted, will be presented to Council for review.

The discussion continued regarding volunteers, raising resource awareness through events, for a 2016 National Trails Day celebration. Commissioners discussed ways to increase attendance and attract interest. Local kids came to the first NTD event for the free popcorn! Suggestions were made about ways to engage youth through activities like puppet wagons and it was mentioned that local business *Grandpa's Ice Cream* has an ice cream truck, which could be a great draw for an event. Commissioner Hansen suggested that a public relations article be sent to the Sun Focus newspaper, if a National Trails Day celebration moves forward.

Participation in the Fridley 49er Parade was broached. Staff asked the EQEC to consider volunteering at organics collection stations at the event itself to promote awareness of recycling and organics collections as an alternative, which met with approval from EQEC.

Old Business

Approve dates of 2016 EQEC meetings per attachment.

MOTION by Commissioner Velin and seconded by Commissioner Foell to approve the dates, as proposed for 2016.

In other old business, from December's meeting, Commissioners had been asked by Vice Chairman Hansen to bring their 2016 Goals and Priorities List-top 3, to the meeting regarding EQEC objectives for the year and toward achievement of GreenStep Cities Step Two. This will help to narrow the focus of the EQEC, according to Vice Chairman Hansen. His three goals are:

- 1) Prepare and get stormwater regulations and revisions into City ordinances in 2016. He stated that he was very proud of the work done by the fall 2015 U-MN environmental class to further this aim. He worked closely with the group to provide direction and technical advice.
- 2) Trail connectivity
- 3) Safe Routes to School
- 4) And if two more could be added, Volunteer Development and ways to make progress in EQEC areas in the City outside the meetings, with more neighbors and community members.

Commissioner Foell stated that Safe Routes to School is a focus and that he would like to see grant applications for current initiatives by the City. He said that his top priorities are:

- 1) East Moore Lake water quality and park re-design
- 2) Promotion of a Mississippi St. road diet and re-design, to improve safety near schools
- 3) Recycling in schools, in association with Anoka County programming opportunities
- 4) Getting bike route signs and information in alignment with the 2012 Active Transportation Plan, as this was suspended after the SHIP grants were not pursued by Anoka County in 2013.

Commissioner Velin declared that for him, the effectiveness of street alternations for pedestrians, bicyclists and motorists was a big concern. He gave the example of the 3rd St. bumpout as one that did not seem to be as successful as was hoped. He also emphasized volunteerism for EQEC projects through renewing of connections to the Boy Scouts. Other Commissioners mentioned talking to businesses like Cummins and Medtronic about volunteer opportunities.

Commissioner Mulrooney stated that the Girl Scouts should also be considered for a pool of volunteers. He

would like 2016 to be more targeted, in terms of what the EQEC is accomplishing. He also stated an interest in Parks, as reiterated from the December meeting.

Commissioner Westby mentioned that continuing with a water focus and selection of a significant water improvement project in Rice Creek Watershed District is a priority for him. Commissioner Hansen volunteered his expertise for a water quality project selected, if needed. Commissioner Westby further, sees building momentum for volunteerism, increasing the amount of pollinator plantings city-wide, reducing mowing of low-priority turf areas and food shelves as his other areas of interest. Commissioner Hansen asked if native plantings were allowed in the City. Staff stated that they are, but it is important for residents to edge and border these plantings with turf, possibly to also include signage, to show the public that it isn't just a regular turfgrass lawn gone wild and not maintained. Keeping invasive species out of wildflower plantings and removing quack grass and annual weeds should be part of any maintenance program.

Commissioner Westby wants to have further discussion about how EQEC moves forward.

Chairman Olin, who could not be in attendance, will add his priority items for 2016, as he is available to do so.

Other

Fridley has been approved by MnDOT to participate in the Community Landscape Roadside Partnership Program for a small pilot project near the Mississippi River Trail just north of 694, at East River Road. This project falls within the East River Road Corridor objectives by increasing trees and decreasing the effects of vehicle traffic in that area of the corridor through removal of ash trees, re-planting of more pest-resistant species, decreasing thistles and invasive species and planting wildflowers and pollinators. This grant provides plants, "Gater Bags" as watering aids, mulch and design services. It does not install the trees and other plants. GreenCorp member Erika Van Krevelen is working on obtaining a Youth Conservation Corps grant in March for planting in June/July of 2016. If this grant for labor to plant these small trees and perennials is not obtained, other service groups and volunteers would be coordinated to do this work (as per above discussion about volunteers). The City Council will review acceptance of the MnDOT grant at their Jan. 25th meeting, if

Commissioners would like to attend in support.

Commissioners were invited to attend a presentation called *The New Resources for Comprehensive Plans: a Workshop for Cities in Anoka County* being held on Tuesday January 26, at 6:15 p.m. at the Coon Rapids Civic Center, 11155 Robinson Drive, Coon Rapids. This free event was co-sponsored by the City of Coon Rapids, the MPCA, the Great Plains Institute (clean energy and energy conservation), GreenStep Cities (Philipp Muessig of the MPCA), our local watershed districts, the Anoka County Public Health and the Alliance for Sustainability. The latter organization acted to bring the agencies and local officials together to facilitate Metropolitan Council representative Eric Wojchik's presentation about the 2040 Comprehensive Plan and allow cities to ask questions regarding the process, local planning handbook and more. Commissioners are encouraged to attend this important event.

Staff Environmental Planner, Kay Qualley has been asked to participate in the State DNR Water Conservation Task Force during 2016. She stated that her goal was to find out what other cities are doing in terms of cost-effective programming and to find out what requirements and grants are under discussion.

Next Meetings/Announcements

Tuesday, Feb. 9th, 2015, 7:00 p.m., location is Woodcrest School, 880 Osborne Rd, for County informational presentation and EQEC meeting. In March EQEC will be back at City Hall.

Adjourn

MOTION by Commissioner Velin and seconded by Commissioner Westby to adjourn at 8:25 p.m. The motion passed unanimously.