Environment Committee Minutes

April 26, 2017

St. Anthony Park Community Council

In attendance: Michael Russelle (chair), Stephen Mastey, Steve Yetter, Tim Wulling

Guests: Karlyn Eckman, Jen Keville (MWMO), Udai Singh (MWMO), Lisa Hesbrook

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| 7:02 pm Introductions and approve minutes and agenda | The minutes and agenda passed unanimously. |
| 7:08 pm MWMO Presentation on Kasota Ponds  Several community members are trying to galvanize support for the ponds, but some of the issues go beyond what just more money will help with. The unclear boundaries and jurisdictions make determining responsibility and involvement difficult.  MWMO staff Udai and Jen reported back on the MWMO Kasota Ponds Monitoring Program. They plan to do a feasibility study on what is possible to do at Kasota Ponds and come back to us with that information and begin to develop an implementation plan.  Before 2005, a group of community members from the Citizen Science Program worked on monitoring. They now test for water level, temperature, pH, and conductivity. They do a monthly analysis and a biological assessment every five years. They shared results from chloride and pH testing. Some of the ponds have relatively okay pH levels, but others reach the level of high stress assigned by the MN Pollution Control Agency. Chloride levels tend to dip down in summer because the most chloride comes from the salt on the roads.  The MWMO plans to do more data gathering and get a graduate student to put it all together. Then comes the feasibility study. The MWMO plans to figure out where the water comes from.  The west pond needs the most restoration work. It’s also surprisingly deep at 10 feet.  The first thing the Environment Committee asked for was help in placing signs in the area to raise awareness of the important wetland, which has proven especially difficult over the years because of the complication in property lines.  The process to get Kasota Ponds moving forward is such:   1. The Environment Committee subgroup will identify a list of priorities/a vision for the ponds 2. Cailin, as a commissioner on the MWMO, will bring it to the MWMO and discuss it with their staff 3. The MWMO staff will figure out the best direction to take this (in terms of studying or grants to apply for or money to acquire for it). 4. Cailin will report back to the Environment Committee.   The process will continue in an iterative way between both groups. | We will write up a letter of priorities for Kasota Ponds. Cailin will return to the MWMO with the priorities and have a meeting right before the next board meeting. |
| 8:09 pm Ten Year Planning Process  Issues this group has worked on:  Air quality  Water Quality  Trash  Noise  Pollinators  We could rank various options of what is most important.  Green space is a big issue.  Dark skies is an issue.  What local environmental issues and topics are important to you? Is there something you would be excited to work on?  What are your ideas for adding green space to the area?  Should we work on reducing carbon emissions? Is it a priority?  Your neighborhood has “too many” “just right” “not enough”   * Green spaces - noise - trees - garden spaces - nature areas - rain gardens - natural water features - urban forests - playgrounds   Are there enough opportunities to access or build energy efficient housing and buildings in the neighborhood?  Is there enough net zero housing or sustainable housing in the neighborhood?  Do you feel like there are enough opportunities or information about net zero or energy saving homes?  Would you support a green rating system for buildings?  Did you know enough about the energy costs for your rental unit (business or residential) before you agreed to rent it?  Where in the neighborhood do we have wet basements? Where are there radon issues?  What is your energy bill? Is it more than you can afford?  Part of the goal is to let people know that there is a Community Council. This is a key part of connecting with people--to let them know that we’re an advocate and an ally. You can come to us if you have an issue.  We should consider doing outreach in Hampden Park during the evenings of the HPC movie nights because of the work we did to redo the park. |  |
| 8:44 pm Tree preservation ordinance -- Stephen Mastey  The city has a current Tree Preservation Plan. There are three areas of the town that you have to be concerned about tree preservation in: 1. An area near Newport that used to be wooded over on the East Side. 2. Where there are slopes beyond a certain slope (12%). 3. On some of the bluffs. These areas are in the mapping software of the City, but they are difficult to find otherwise in that they aren’t publicized online and aren’t communicated well otherwise. The DNR has updated their rules on the critical zones.  We can perhaps have a role in working with the City to remind them of their important role in publicizing and advising on requirements. There is nothing in the general requirements on the City’s website that talk about the critical areas or the 12% requirement. We don’t necessarily need to have the City change its requirements, but we do need them to catch the violations in site plan review and also to communicate about them better.  The second step may be having a city-wide tree preservation plan.  We should have a map of slopes greater than 12% in our ten year plan.  There is a map that exists that outlines the entire historic bluff throughout the entire metro. It might be important to re-define where the bluff is from a historic perspective.  Trees are really important for pollinator species as well.  Maybe we should have the forestry folks at the City come to the meeting and talk to them about future tree preservation planning.  It’s further important to keep the aesthetics of large trees. There are such a variety of reasons to keep big trees around. | Cailin to invite a member of the City’s Forestry Department to see if someone can join us for the next committee meeting. |
| 9:15 pm Adjourn |  |