

Environment Committee Meeting Summary

July 28, 2021

Members present: Michael Russelle (co-chair), Stephen Mastey (co-chair), Ben Bauer, Karlyn Eckman, Rennie Gaither, Aaron Hinz, Manu Junemann, Betty Wheeler

Guest present: Ben Shardlow
(Quorum present)

Votes taken:

- 1 - Minutes from May, 2021 (as edited) were approved unanimously.
- 2 - Minutes from June, 2021 (as edited) were approved unanimously.
- 3 - Val Cervenka applied to become a member of this Committee, approved unanimously.

Consensus 1 (but no vote taken):

We strongly support the city's processes of putting out a call for native artists through its usual channels to propose educational and interpretive artwork and sculptures for the new park. However, we also agreed that we can facilitate the dissemination of that call by sending the city's media releases to Indigenous people for whom we have contact information.

Consensus 2 (but no vote taken):

We encourage the Board to strongly support and advocate to the city for native artists to be recruited to produce the educational and interpretive artwork and sculptures for the new park in South St. Anthony Park at Emerald St. SE and Sharon Ave. SE, with designs that are meaningful and relevant to native beliefs and/or culture.

In addition, we also encourage the Board to advocate to the city that the artists chosen should be awarded higher payments than the minimal amounts required from the art reserves for a new park. We recognize that this will require some additional funds out of the entire park budget, but this is particularly justified because artists generally do not have salaries or other security for their income.

Additional note regarding the Board: The Committee understands that Liz Hixton (from the St. Paul Park and Recreation Dept.) will attend a Board meeting in either August or September.

Topics discussed:

- 1 - "100 Trees Initiative" update (from Ben Shardlow, primary manager and collaborator for this project).
- 2 - Val Cervenka's membership vote.
- 3 - Update on the city's process in approving the name of the new park in South St. Anthony Park.
- 4 - Discussion of how to solicit native artists to propose artwork for the new park.
- 5 - Discussion of current conditions at the new park: currently looks unkempt, review of soil borings, questionable soil quality for planting new trees. (Mon. 8/2 update: the current vegetation is primarily sweet clover and birdsfoot trefoil, which were seeded.) We also discussed the tradeoffs between asking the city to spend money on more soil borings, and, rather, to encourage the city to save that money but invest it into digging an oversized hole and adding compost and composted manure before planting each tree.
- 6 - No new updates available on jumping worms.

7 - Eckman suggested to consider adding to our work: studying chimney swifts in SAP, making efforts to support chimney swift habitat, to find and/or build suitable nests, and educate the public to protect existing chimneys.

8 - Status update on Kasota Ponds: Eckman provided observations of inhabiting species, the need to compile all records of biological monitoring at the ponds, and the need to continue to attack buckthorn. Mastey suggested to strengthen partnerships and apply for a longer-term MWMO grant to systematically attack buckthorn. Eckman observed some sandbar willow has been establishing around the ponds and would be a suitable competitor to buckthorn.

9 - The SAPCC Board sent a letter to PK Properties Management (in the NAPA building and which is managing the property) about the application of deicing salt and how it damages the water quality in the Kasota Ponds (letter originally written by Eckman). The letter explained where they can find further information and assistance, and the advantages in applying less salt and keeping it out of the ponds. The ponds are protected as public waters.

10 - Hinz described a potential federal grant on desalination being offered by the Department of the Interior, which he is investigating. He also mentioned the possibility of using plants to tie up salt from the water at the Kasota Ponds, as opposed to developing a technical design. Eckman added that alder (*Alnus*) species can take up contaminants, but she am not sure if they also absorb chlorides. Once dissolved in water, chlorides will migrate and pass through soil, and cannot be trapped in detention basins or rain gardens. She is not aware of anyone using halophytes to absorb salt in Minnesota.

11 - Mastey described the need for rain garden maintenance and the potential for applying for a community-based grant to set up a longer-term management process.

Respectfully submitted, Betty Wheeler, Aug. 1, 2021