**Minutes of the Environment Committee of the SAP Community Council**

Meeting Wednesday, August 22, 2018

Committee Members Present: Roberto de Freitas (new SAPCC Community Organizer), Stephen Mastey (Co-Chair), Michael Russelle (Co-Chair, Convenor), Betty Wheeler, Tim Willing

Location: Patio on sidewalk next to Finnish Bistro, 2264 Como Avenue, St. Paul, MN. 55108

**Item 1:** Introduction of Roberto de Freitas

Roberto introduced himself to the Environment Committee. He has just started in his role at SAPCC as the Community Organizer. He has a background in Educational Psychology and Organizational Management. He is also living in South SAP. Welcome, Roberto!

**Item 2:** Minutes of July 25, 2018 Meeting

Betty noted that the minutes of the last meeting which she submitted had accidentally left out the discussion of truck traffic on Raymond, so the minutes should be amended to include that. The Committee agreed to review the minutes of the last meeting at home when revised, and email our consent.

**Item 3:** Luther Seminary Update

Michael stated that there are at least two developers considering whether to make bids for Luther Seminary’s property. Both have indicated an interest in building at least some housing, including some condominiums.

One developer is interested in sustainability, and may build at least one condo for affordable housing. An idea floated could include a hotel, which could be a useful nearby option for patients coming to the Como Health Partners Clinic. Another idea would be a possible connection to an accessible trail through Breck Woods. Michael stated that he will be keeping an eye on more information about the proposals as they develop, and whether any input from the community will be considered by the Seminary as it decides which offer to accept.

**Item 4:** Minnesota Chemical Building

Michael reported that he received paperwork about this legacy pollution site, but he has not as yet had time to read it. He will review it as he has time. He will forward to the rest of this committee any parts he wants us to read for further discussion.

We will review the issues and discuss whether we need to meet with the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) first, or if this committee feels we should go directly to a full public meeting about the site and the plans for cleanup.

As a recap: the new owner is Exeter Company. They, plus the former owner, are responsible for the costs of cleanup. They have received a $1 million grant from the Port Authority. Due to the proximity of nearby housing, the committee feels we need to be vigilant regarding the potential for vapor intrusion into homes from legacy pollutants.

Exeter is planning to ultimately build market rate housing on the MN Chemical Building site. Stephen said their track record is to build nice developments, but they typically do not build affordable housing.

**Item 5:** SAPCC 10-Year Plan

Michael reported that the city has given us their comments on our 10-Year Draft Plan. They remarked that we did not include anything about having a healthy soils initiative. Stephen thinks that issue would be of particular interest to Zach Jorgensen (City Forester). The committee seems to be in favor of adding a section on that. Perhaps this is a section that we can use to reinforce our commitment to maintaining soils on steep slopes. Hopefully, that will help the city to enforce their own steep slope preservation plan.

Also, we can identify the poor fill and soil problems put onto boulevards after street reconstruction (which we discussed in detail at our last meeting) as an example for improvement, within our healthy soils initiative proposals.

Our timeframe for reviewing, changing and finalizing our 10-Year plan is probably only 1 to 2 months. The City’s Comprehensive Plan is not expected to be ready until next spring.

Michael will get us our parts to read. We should enter our changes directly into the text.

**Item 6:** Issues of Infiltration Ponds and Infiltration on Reconstructed Boulevards

Michael was waiting for rain to do his infiltration tests. Hopefully, it will begin raining soon.

Stephen mentioned that pavers around the tree trench designs are not infiltrating correctly. They are getting silted up. He stated that they should be vacuumed at least one time per year, to function properly. He said he will check with Nate Zwonitzer (Capitol Region Water Resources Project Manager). He has been communicating with Nate and with Forrest Kelley (Capitol Region Regulatory Division Manager).

The Watershed District helped to fund the plants that were planted in and around the stormwater infiltration pond on the boulevard at the Lakes and Plains building at 842 Raymond Avenue. Shirley Reider (one of the five Capitol Region Board of Managers), was contacted about that property, likely by the new owner. Shirley has stated that she does not feel we have our processes correctly prioritized. She relayed to Nate Zwonitzer and Forrest Kelley that she was told the structure at 842 Raymond has accumulated waste and weeds.

About 1-1/2 weeks ago and since the last Committee meeting, Stephen and a horticultural worker which he hired, cleaned out that pond. (The Committee expresses its thanks to Stephen.)

Such stormwater infiltration ponds have a regulatory component, which calls for Best Management Plans (BMPs). Nate told Stephen that the city should be taking more responsibility for the maintenance of such ponds.

Stephen also spoke with Andrew Novak (Capitol Region Urban BMP Specialist) about these issues. Andrew reported that he perceives that property owners really like the look of the early stage of the infiltration ponds, when plants are small and a lot of mulch is visible. Eventually, all of these ponds mature, as the plants grow larger and infill, such as has happened at 842 Raymond, which is now better bird habitat and is functioning well. Andrew says that at least some landowners are expecting the Capitol Region WD to come out every month to maintain it or to keep the plants small. Neither of those is a reasonable expectation.

Stephen is keeping in contact with the Watershed District. He believes they generally approve of our work. He will follow up with Shirley, to ensure she is apprised of the cleanup of the 842 Raymond pond.

Stephen also discussed the water and sediment issues that certain built stormwater structures have had, due to faulty construction. One issue involves using the incorrect depth of mulch. The original design calls for a maximum of 12 inches of mulch. In at least one case, the basin was dug too deeply, so the final structure had up to 24 inches of mulch. With this excessive depth, a water pocket filled up in the mulch, so the structure is not functioning correctly. When the water does not infiltrate, standing water at the surface invites mosquitos and becomes a nuisance for the public.

Another type of problem that has developed is where too much sediment was allowed to build up or was added in the original construction. Here, the design did not call for the excess sediment, so after being built, water moves the excess sediment downstream to pinch points, where it is re-deposited and begins to choke the system. Again, this causes faulty functioning. Better cleaning of excess sediment can improve these problems. Of course, correct construction according to the original design is the best solution.

**Item 7:** Mature Elm Tree at the SAP Library

Stephen left a message with Zach Jorgensen to ask for an update; but he has not heard back yet.

**Item 8:** Kasota Ponds

Previously, Karlyn volunteered to find out about the ownership of the property around the ponds. We have not yet heard an update. Michael said she is now out of town.

Stephen reported that the Mississippi Watershed Management Organization (MWMO) provided the SAPCC one of its annual grants for work at the Kasota Ponds. The grant will be used to hire a professional service to do the work. Stephen will meet with Jake Janski at the ponds to identify where we want buckthorn to be removed.

Stephen asked the committee if we want the stumps removed? If so, do we want them to use chemicals or to do it mechanically? The consensus of the committee was in favor of mechanical removal, especially because it is so close to water. Stump removal will open up the area to more light, and allow new seeds to sprout. Although there are some steep areas, the professional service has the equipment which can mow even in that terrain.

Stephen thinks that the work can be done in only a month, after the grant has been received. Karlyn should be invited to be involved in helping to decide priorities, when she is back.

Karlyn previously expressed an interest in applying for one of the MWMO’s larger grants, which would be a planning grant. Of course, it would need to be used for work within the area of the MWMO. Therefore, the committee is in favor of applying for a planning grant for work around the Kasota Ponds, which are the only surface waters within St. Anthony Park that are also within the area of the MWMO.

Michael will ask the MWMO whether the water balance calculations are completed, which they were planning to do.

The next meeting will be on September 26, 2018. It might be held at the Co-Lab St Paul (details pending).

Respectfully submitted,

Betty Wheeler