

DRAFT
Saint Anthony Park Community Council
Environment Committee
Zoom meeting minutes, February 23, 2022

Present: Bill Anderson, Val Cervenka, Karlyn Eckman, Rennie Gaither, Lisa Habeck, Lizzy Logas-Lindstrom, Stephen Massey (co-chair), Kerry Morgan, Ryan Murphy, Michael Russelle (co-chair)

Visitors: Caroline Gaither (visitor), Matt Loth (visitor), Ian McRoberts (visitor), Ryan Murphy (visitor, UMN in Urban Forestry), Patricia Ohmans (visitor, lives in Frogtown and owns a rental in SAP, runs Frogtown Green)

Meeting called to order at 7:02 p.m. – Michael Russelle (co-chair)

Land acknowledgment - Kerry Morgan

Introductions

Approval of minutes from last January 2022 meeting – no edits, Bill moved, Rennie seconded, approved with no abstentions.

Election of co-chairs

- Please volunteer! The amount of work varies, includes planning meetings, delegating responsibilities.
- Michael has been a co-chair for many years
- Stephen has been co-chair, was on the Board and on the Land Committee, also willing to have someone else be co-chair
- At least one co-chair has to be a board member to serve as a liaison with the Board.
- Bill and Corey are both on the Board so one of them could step in.
- Bill does not want to be co-chair, he nominates Karlyn, but she also does not have the time
- No conclusion reached; will be taken up again at next meeting(?)

PaveDrain Project – Matt Loth

- His interest in learning about storm water runoff and concern about deteriorating alleyways has led him to research ways in which St. Paul alleys could be used to divert unfiltered storm water runoff from local bodies of water.
- Hoping that he could find funding to use permeable pavers in his alleyway and use it as a learning project to encourage its implementation in a number of alleys.
- Chicago and Des Moines have already changed some of their alleyways, making them greener, more inviting, and protecting urban areas.
- Why permeable pavers? Rain gardens are good, but not practical, lots of garages, hardscape
- Most permeable pavers did not seem like a good idea, lots of work to maintain them
- Research into PaveDrain seems to offer another option; not just marketing, does a better job; endorsed by Metro Blooms, which has measured the runoff collected
- If we got the alleys paved, 330 miles of alley in St. Paul would divert approx. ____ gallons of storm water
- Matt's questions and concerns:
 - Is this valuable? Does this seem helpful?
 - City owns the alley but slow and reluctant to do anything, not sure if it would be allowed.

Discussion/Feedback:

Michael:

- He has brought this up, and the city has said no because the heavy garbage trucks go up and down the alleys so often; permeable pavers might not last long for infiltration rate; in Switzerland they know how to use coarse rock as a base, then add pavers, so it does not sink.

Matt:

- PaveDrain does use 3 ft. of rock.

Stephen:

- Great ideas! If City of St. Paul would have to take it on, they would have to do storm water treatment, but as a voluntary project then that would get around having to do the treatment.
- Next 5 years' worth of public works projects are underway, so hard to get them excited, proactive.
- We could take this on as a group of neighbors, use the Watershed District.
- If you try to pave the entire alleyway with high end product, it would be cost prohibitive. Might want to use the product at the low end of the alley. If it flows to one end, just do the bottom, might cost \$30,000-\$40,000.
- Perhaps use permeable paver or below-grade system, use recycled materials like shredded tires or recycled concrete, then pave it with whatever you want.
- There are ways to capture more water with spending less money.
- Permeable pavers might be good for the environment and aesthetically pleasing, but expensive.
- Have they reached out to Capitol Region Watershed District?

Matt:

- Yes, they started to apply for a grant, their hang up is that they have not worked with the City, the city owns the alleyway. City has not been responsive.

Stephen:

- It is the city land, so we need permission, they have to be a project partner.
- EX: Edgumbe Road project, city is redoing streets/gutters in front of 25 houses, not environmentally appropriate, not sensitive to tree cover, so neighbors worked with Stephen and they came up with ideas, reduce pavement, save 100 trees. Public Works engineers are not in concert with this. So, the neighbors are suing the City.
- Get Joe Lochner (sp?) to help them with concept and act as liaison, needs to push it forward, use whatever capitol they have, get someone at Public Works to see this happen
- Perhaps group could provide free design, like UMN School of Architecture; or pay to find a project consultant

Ian:

- Does the city have a sustainable committee?

Bill:

- Reach out to Russ Stark, city's Chief Resilience Officer. He will be getting some infrastructure funding from the Biden Administration. We have progressive council members. Need advocates. Public Works are not ultimate authority.

Stephen:

- When we think of things like this, the EC has taken it on as an initiative. We have goals set every year. Ex: tree preservation. If you become members of the committee, it can become a goal, get the green alleys initiative. They have a good candidate. Then bring to a table, so not doing it all by themselves.

Michael:

- Open to a motion. Is the committee interested in this? No one raised their hands.

Michael:

- Suggestion to Matt and Ian to talk to property owners who have had used these particular pavers, find out how they have been working.

Short updates and requests:

Chimney Swift Tower update - Karlyn et al.

- Got money from the SAPC Foundation to put up one or more chimney swift towers; setting up a meeting, the birds should be returning in May and looking for a nesting habitat; want it put into place before then, but need city approval.
- Possible location: south end of Hampton Park by sumac bushes or Langford Park by the school; need ideas for plans; how to construct one; need a carpenter; volunteers to build it. Stephen had ideas as a moveable tower; not sure if that will work for the chimney swifts.
- Meeting in evening, either Monday, Feb. 28 at 7 p.m. or Thurs., Mar. 3, 6-6:30 p.m. Karlyn will send out an email. Meet via Zoom or at the Urban Growler.

Patricia Ohmans:

- Frogtown neighborhood has one tower; only one bird couple come and hang out, only one roosts, do not want to move it, tower is a work of art! Done by Daniel Westhoven, built it for \$1500. Rennie worked on it.
- One chimney swift roost by Jimmy Johns, and a large roost in South Minneapolis. They are around, but without old trees they need more of a habitat.

100 Trees Initiative update - Corey, Rennie, and Michael

- Rennie, Michael and Corey met with Ben Sharlow of CEZ last week, exchanged information
- Ben is concerned about money coming forward to continue the project, only \$ through the spring
- Ben wants EC to promote the project more and find ways of getting people involved, such as SAP e-newsletter and SAP List-serve; got donations last year—about \$1900; just \$50 to sponsor a tree, but need more. Get a youth corps to water them.
- Moving beds to the previous Sunrise Bank site on University that was sold to CEZ and is their first real estate purchase.
- Needs to order trees soon, some species in gravel bed, some species ready to plant.
- Would like to ask people what types of species they want to have on the public property; developing a webpage where people could find sites, indicate where they want trees, etc.

Update on the new park in South Saint Anthony Park – Michael

- No update on the proposed name – still being reviewed by the Tribal Historic Preservation Officers.
- Breaking ground this spring.

Bill:

- What do the plans look like? Were they presented to the neighborhood? Could the EC focus on this? Where is the Park & Recs? Could we invite someone to present on the topic with the Environment Committee?

Michael:

- EC sponsored an open house some years ago, afraid we have worn out our welcome, want to replace with our ideas and they said “No.” They incorporated a few ideas, but not as extensively as we wished. Stephen has been disappointed with the park committee.
- Kathryn Murray has been the person checking in; all of the different SAPCC committees were interested in it.

Bill:

- The Parks & Rec should be able to show us the design before it goes out to bid; disappointed in the parks; the mayor should know this; not engaging in community.

Stephen:

- He can send Westgate park drawings to anyone who is interested.

Partner with CEZ in the Citywide Spring clean-up, April 23, 9-11:30 am?

Michael:

- Usually that event conflicts with Kasota Ponds. Picking up litter, good to do with kids.

Volunteers: Rennie, Kerry, Lizzy, Val interested in working on it

Kasota Ponds clean-up 2022

Michael:

- Several ponds are important to us. Have not done it for a couple of years due to Covid. Usually get school classes, kids, families, etc. to participate; we provide gloves and vests. Fun and exhausting. City takes away the trash. Sometimes massive amounts.

Karlyn:

- We should set a date, get a dumpster, access to bathrooms, and contact railroad; will have person to keep kids off the track.
- Need supplies, not sure where they are located. Kathryn Murray might know. Worked with Brueggers Bagels in the past. Margo Munson, aquatic entomologist, goes into the ponds with waders and brings out samples. Great educational opportunity. Others have worked on it. Goes way back. First started the early 1990s.

Michael:

- Do we want to proceed on this? Steve Yetter is a good contact, the railroad needs to be involved. Bring recyclables and trash. Also lots to clean up in the woods. There are three ponds to clean up. Major job to do and organize. The city picks it up. Not sure if schools will be involved.
- Needs to do in spring, before early green up.
- Yetter can provide a spreadsheet to help organize

Volunteers: Lizzy, Kerry, Michael, Karlyn, Lisa (maybe) – will get together with Steve Yetter and pick a date.

Co-sponsor the EcoFair? August 13, Como Park?

Michael:

- Learned about this fair from Jennifer Victor-Larson, Chair, District 10 Environment Committee and founder of Good Stuff
- Already has a shelter reserved. Thinking of having tables. Out in open. Exhibit what they do.
- Early stages of planning. District Council wants to do it. Transition Town will co-sponsor.
- Should we co-sponsor the Eco-Fair? Staffing?

Patricia Ohmans:

- Did Transition Town do something like it?

Michael:

- Yes, but Transition Town does not have the person power to repeat it this year. Unfortunately, the very hot and humid conditions last August reduced attendance to only 100-150 visitors. There were good connections made among the participants, which was another of our goals.

- This would be to connect to District 10 Environment Committee; event will include community building, arts, 5k
- SAP EC may not offer much money or labor.

Rennie:

- Important to make the connection, market it, sponsor it in some way, have to decide on what capacity; adds to our credibility; want to leverage it.

Lizzie:

- Good way to reach out to neighbors, opportunities, volunteers

Do we sponsor the District 10 Eco Fair on August 13, 2022? Motion by Rennie, seconded by Kerry.

Unanimously passed.

- The Council does not have to be a full sponsor, but Michael will take it to the full council.

Climate Impact Corps –

- Goals are to reduce impact of climate change, provide more canopy
- Need site supervisor

Patricia:

- She had a community forestry corps – a position, Rennie was one. It is like Americorps, 10-month engagement, get an education stipend; start time is in flux
- Does the committee or the council want to share the work of a forestry corps member, to help with 100 trees project and other related items about the climate?
- If you get a talented person, you have labor, but if you get a student who needs guidance then that is supervisory.

Michael:

- rewilding project, re-forestry around the railroad and transit ways, they seem interested. Not sure if the Council will move forward with it. Need a good site supervisor.
- The corps service members have lots of training to get and have duties outside of the work, we will just get a portion, our expectations need to be right; we need more education and expertise

Lizzy:

- She has supervised some of these corps, got a lot out of them, takes a lot of time, good to have a detailed work plan, frequent check-ins, usually young professionals, how to communicate; sounds amazing but important to have eyes wide open; want the service member to have a good experience.

Ryan:

- He has worked with some different corps over 3-5 years, “climate impact” corps; trying to increase the capacity; with additional funding at national level, there could be some more money coming, these organizations will benefit, Dylan is interested in building annual or perennial relationships with committees. One partner could be St. Paul Forestry. Could be a coalition of different organizations, that would qualify.

Patricia:

- Interest in volunteer-planting of trees. An accessible climate changing; community forestry coordinator—ideally that would be a staff position—it would be a start to get the city to recognize that in addition to replace trees, we have to help residents. Her groups has only tried to do it on private space. It would be amazing to talk with someone at forestry about this possibility that would be the ideal placement. If not, Frogtown Green could be the supervisor to grow this Forestry Coalition.

Rennie:

- He is concerned that the site supervisor would be a huge job, better to have in St. Paul Forestry.

Ryan:

- Frogtown Green serves important niche, St. Paul Forestry cannot do that on private property. UMN trains volunteers. Do not have a nexus figured out. Piecing it together.

Bill:

- What about Twin Cities Tree Trust? Would they be a home for the coordinator? Pilot program in the metro? Can operate in private and public realms.

Patricia:

- That is a good idea. Possible person to be involved. Multi-neighborhood

Michael:

- Sounds like EC would like to be a part of this. He will ask for volunteers to be in contact with the people involved in this Climate Corps. He wants volunteers who want to be involved. The more the better. Even if not in committee.
- Rennie is already on the committee, he has been part of the exchange

Volunteers: Bill, Lizzie, Karlyn.

Ryan: would like to work with whatever organization makes sense; UMN Forestry Lab could also be a host institution; could house them in their volunteer group; works with Tree Trust.

2022 Action Plan and timeline – everyone

Rethinking I-94

Karlyn:

- This project involves environmental, geographic, cultural neighborhoods along I-94. She spent an hour with Bridgit Borklund, who knows little about the neighborhood. Unaware of the Kasota Ponds. Tibetan Cultural Center, changing demographics, the Green Line, the SAPCC. She wants to do more interviews. MNDOT is interested in working with neighborhoods so they do not cause harm. Highways have historically been built through neighborhoods. Wants to continue the conversation. Meetings with other folks. Concerned about changes to I-94 and its impact on St. Anthony Park.

Michael: anyone interested in having a conversation with Bridgit Borklund?

Patricia:

- She will be talking with her; can we talk about plantings, bike routes, or they thinking just signs or a sculpture of a tree?

Karlyn:

- She had a note-taker, not a video, but seemed to be a good listener. Seemed receptive, asked good questions. Not sure if MNDOT will work on them. Very interested in topics about diversity, LGBTQ, ethnicities, where do people gather?

Bill:

- Worked with I-394 and I-35, they seem to be in pre-design phase; where are they in the process? How receptive would they be? Might be a good time to interact with them. With 35W, you can break noise with the right types of plantings, different sizes of trees, also dissipate plumes that form and get into neighborhoods. Ask about engagement process.

Michael:

- Lots of East Africans along Green Line and University, we all need quiet areas and birdsong. Landbridge in Rondo is a good possibility. We wanted one over 280 years ago. If they expand I-94 we will have noise and chemical pollution, and we need to mitigate that! Transportation Committee interested in making it move slower.

Ryan:

- Put link in the chat; new tool from MetCouncil, the Growing Shade project, a quantification for areas of concern; where are there specific areas, where there is low shade, check it out! YouTube: Increasing tree canopy cover through an interactive prioritization tool:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9sMt_zifsJ0

Major work to do next time, action items and timeline!

Adjourn at 8:57 p.m.

Next meeting: March 23, 7pm, presumably by Zoom

Minutes respectfully submitted by Kerry Morgan.