

**DRAFT**  
**Saint Anthony Park Community Council**  
**Environment Committee**  
**Zoom meeting minutes, May 25, 2022**

Present: Corey Butler, Patricia Ohmans, Val Cervenka, Lizzy Logas-Lindstrom, Bill Anderson, Michael Russelle (co-chair), Ryan Murphy, Karlyn Eckman, Manu Junemann, Kerry Morgan, Rennie Gaither (co-chair)

Absent: Lisa Habeck

Land acknowledgment - **Rennie**

Introductions

Review and approval of April minutes (Thanks to Patricia and Kerry!): Edits? Bill moved and Patricia seconds approval of minutes. Approved, unanimous, no abstentions.

**CERT Training review – Rennie**

Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) – FEMA program, organized by Ramsey County

- Designed to help prepare communities and families in times of major disasters.
- All volunteer work; you do not have to work with Sheriff's Department, you sign up to do it.
- Met Wednesday nights, classes covered topics, how it fits into FEMA and Sheriff
- Topics include: fire safety, search and rescue, disaster psychology, medical, terrorism, simulations for disasters
- Important for as many neighbors as possible to be trained to assist in emergency situations

**Potential tour at West Rock — Manu**

- 8-10 people right now – Tuesday, June 14 after 1 p.m., 6:00 p.m. will be proposed
- Jessica, Karlyn, James, Rennie, Patricia, Kerry, Corey
- Patricia: Is there an agenda? Informational focus, environmental waste processing.
- Community building
- Michael: One of the biggest employers in the neighborhood, like 600 people; a major paper recycling plant. Find out how they deal with all of the mixed waste in the paper, how they conserve water and electricity
- If there is an issue we feel comfortable reaching out to them; Mike Gunderson seems very responsive; good to keep up a good relationship; be able to calm down the neighborhood, like last year when there was a bad odor, WestRock responded and invested in new equipment to mitigate the problem
- Michael: expects it will take an hour to an hour and a half; see the entire process

- Patricia: encourage someone from the Bugle; Patricia is willing to ask someone if Mike is open to it

### **100 Trees Initiative**

Neither Rennie nor Michael were available to go

- Ben Shadlow from CEZ sent out schedule about the planting of trees happened this past week, May 20 and May 21, digging holes for trees, and planting took place on Saturday afternoon
- Manu volunteered at the Chromazone Festival info table, they did not have to recruit any more volunteers
- May 25, there was planting going on, 5:30 to 8 p.m.
- Looking to find out what types of problems developed, what he learned
- New approach: getting trees that do not do well in gravel beds, planted now in spring
- Looking for efficient way to water the trees; not gotten far with the St. Paul Port Authority, bonding for taking care of trees like this
- Patricia: She is going to send a letter to the St. Paul Port Authority; was waiting to see if there were other groups to sign on; looking for other district councils; want to remind them to water the trees, need to involve youth
- Karlyn: are there plans to replace the trees that did not survive?
- Michael and Rennie: Not something that has been discussed
- Manu thinks they are waiting to see what survives; thinks that most of them made it
- Michael: it was a hard summer and winter for these trees
- Karlyn: would be good to know the survival rate, types of species and where planted; seems many did not make it around Hampton Co-op and Kasota Ponds
- Michael will follow up with Ben about those that did not make it

### **Cleveland Avenue - Michael**

- Michael: He is working on helping identify trees that are in good health, significant ones that should be saved
- Background about this issue:
  - Cleveland is a County Road, needs to be built to current specs, needs to be redone, since it has never had proper curbs and gutters
  - The Ramsey County 2018 and 2019 and into 2020 there was some community input; one lane of traffic in each direction, limited parking, regular sidewalk and multi-use for walkers, skaters, bikers
  - SAPCC did not like it, was 8 ft wider than it needed to be, encroached on trees
  - Told that 56 trees would be lost; but that number grew to losing 150 to 160 trees. Argument is that they have to dig deeper and put in retaining walls, excavation is going to be so wide, lots of fill, taking out more trees
  - 2 oaks are about 200 years old—when Dakota went by Gibbs farm on their way to the wild rice lakes; before statehood, those trees have been there 150-170 years, 120 years, planted when sewers were put in c. 1890-1910

- County people a few City people met with SAPCC, which asked them to redesign to narrow the road by removing the bike lanes, move the narrower street within roadbed, told NO by the county -- need to use the funds, cannot ask for another extension, contractor could sue
- Michael requested to go out with Nick Fischer and contractor to examine which ones to may be spared.
- Only take out trees Como to Buford this year, not north of there; time to reconsider how to reduce removals in that section
- Do you know anyone in role of decision making, contact them; there could be some litigation to put an injunction in place, but it could cost county too much money;
- If open to redesign, that might give them a chance to rethink things
- Amazing chatter on the SAP listserve; exhausting work keeping up with and responding to it
- We have asked that they will leave as many trees as possible standing during construction.
- Michael wants to hear more details about the engineering requirements.
- Karlyn: There was an Ojibwe trail that was along this street, one oak, branches were all pointing in the directional indication of a trail, some historical significance, last ones that she has seen are in Lauderdale, forestry faculty has mentioned them; Historical Society could get involved.
- Bill: could the Sierra Club get involved? Was there an environmental review?
- Karlyn: some of the Ojibwe or Dakota tribes could get involved; the Saint Paul Parks and Rec might be of much help
- Manu: These trees are cleaning the air, it is a health issue
- Michael: the gingkoes are 100 years old and can live 100s more
- Karlyn: This is nesting season for migratory birds
- Bill: we need to call them out on this, we should not accept it; will send out press releases to media, get more attention, at a minimum it should cost the county something in the court of public opinion; trees are essential; we cannot afford to lose any more
- Michael: We requested that the City offer a bulk buy deal to run a camera down into the sewer, to learn if it is a good pipe that could be lined. Then maybe they do not have to dig it out. Are there foundations that could help support this?
- Michael: If there is legal action, it would mean filing suit in court and to be pretty sure you could prove that you will win. Could be based on air quality, carbon sequestration, noise reduction, storm water management, code of ethics. Whoever is interested would have to come up with a bond that would guarantee a payment to the county if the plaintiffs lose the suit, some source for 2-4 million dollars; some people will need to have that money; such suits by non-profits and communities often fail; no guarantees; SAPCC will not be party to an injunction; okay to do some things as individuals
- Patricia: Nature Conservancy has been interested in tree planting; Met Council has spent \$ to have people become aware of tree loss!
- Rennie: What is the county's commitment to replacing the lost trees?

- Michael: They only want to plant 50-some new ones; this is not adequate, replacing the trees is not the same as saving old ones
- Michael: Some of the trees north of Buford are “weed trees,” variety of them, a thicket; we are focused on the older trees; old cottonwoods, oaks, etc. The U has had their forestry personnel checking on the trees
- Send people to the SAP website; write to people who are powerful; newspaper articles make a big difference; get all TV stations involved; go down to the elementary school and talk about trees (SAP, Murray Middle School)
- SAPCC contacts are Pat Thompson and Michael
- Michael: The County will let us choose the tree species that get replanted, our expertise and Corey’s research will be helpful

#### **Storm Drain stenciling - Kerry**

- The SAPCC Territorial Road Project celebration is taking place on Saturday, June 11, begins at 10:00 a.m.
- Ribbon cutting at 10:30, the storm stenciling activity can take place after that
- Kerry to pick up DIY materials at Friends of the Mississippi River offices on June 10, return them a week later; four kits to use that include all materials necessary, including safety vests; they will provide maps of the storm drains in the area
- Rennie had suggested also providing trash bags, brooms, and dust pan to each of the 4 kits as the drains will need to be swept clean before the stenciling
- Rennie: would be useful to ask if we can set up a table at the event site on Sat., put our materials advertising the stenciling and Adopt-a-Drain opportunities (Kerry has info pamphlets)
- Take photos and record hours

#### **Update about storm water control on unimproved alleys - Patricia**

- No updates, have not heard back from Stephen, Matt, or Ian
- Capitol Watershed gave advice about the type of rain garden to do
- Still an unimproved alley
- Michael: Green alleys were big deal in Chicago and LA—worth checking on how those got funded, developed

#### **Progress on grant applications - Bill**

- Will find out shortly if we get grant for Robbins Street improvement
- Applied for Good Neighbor grant for Robbins and Raymond
- SAP likely the largest property owner along Robbins
- That parcel from Raymond to 280 is really unique—along 280 bridge, community garden, restored prairie, forest, wetlands
- He is going to propose looking at this as an opportunity zone, apply for US EPA, environment justice grant
- We are on the border between the two watersheds, Mississippi Watershed and Capitol Region Watershed, with \$10-12 million in assets, engage them in conversation, develop

wetlands and develop it better, become environmental learning center for the neighborhoods, organizations, see wetlands and ponds and forested area; would like to apply for a number of grants over several years

- Karlyn: underpass to ponds—two branches of the creek intersect there—it was a 10,000 acre wetland, all destroyed, good source of info about the history, 400 page document by industrial archeologist, would be great to reconnect those sections along with the EPA! Region 5 with an environmental justice grant.
- Legacy things for the neighborhood: forested area, prairie areas, with the University Transit Way
- Karlyn: MNDot controls 280 and also area that they use to capture runoff from 280, forested parcel of land
- Val: What is the name of the pond by the Ramsey County compost site?
- Karlyn: It goes by several names - Fairview Pond, Burlington Pond, etc. The compost site is all filled in, no fishery survey, seen eagles there, shrimp, pocket mussels, a healthy wetland

#### **Environmental considerations of the Twin Cities Boulevard proposal - Michael**

- SAPCC board agreed to sign on to the Twin Cities Boulevard
- SAPCC is sending a follow-up letter
- Michael is asking for what MN DOT needs to think about along 1-94 regarding soil, noise, hydrology... share it with other committees. Also, how do we keep land affordable
- Can anyone draft that? It would be using our minutes from the last meeting and flushing them out a bit.
- Board meeting is June 9, need to get it to committees soon
- Patricia can write letters; she is willing to work on it in response to the discussion last month (see April minutes); Kerry will also willing to help out

#### **Westgate Park development - Michael**

- Michael: Park is off next to Emerald, south of Franklin; have done some land forming, hills are maybe 10 ft high, cannot see over them; sidewalks and railroad tracks, nod to the history of rail here. The material appears to be mostly soil; tiny piles of topsoil; what will hold them up is the playground equipment; supply chain issue
- Bill and Equity committee are planning opening celebration this fall
- Karlyn: name is Westgate; she is steamed about that, after all the work that they did on the history of the site; could be anywhere in the country; so generic; she is angry at the Parks Dept.
- Michael: Parks Dept. has stated that they want to do a better job of connecting with Native American groups. They shared the history and took it to Dakota elders, who did not like the name “chekpa” to be used as it has a heavy spiritual connotation; other names were brought up by Jim and Ramona, but the Dakota say never had a name for this particular bit of land, it has a history, but they do not think of it as a place with a name

- We are disappointed in the name that was selected, but the call for public art was going to put to good use; see if any Native artists were willing to do it
- Karlyn: the name is useless, the Red River Oxcart trail went through it. Parks is ignoring a relevant local name
- Bill: the name could have been much more inspired by historical significance, sounds like a mall in Woodbury, relates to nothing in the area; it was a name to refer to the project; he thinks they will be thoughtful again, should not use temporary names for final names
- Michael: They claim this was the result of a survey, public meetings 4-5 years ago, asked people there for ideas, gave them 3 or 4 names, but not sure the scope of other surveys they did; the oxcart trail went through the NW corner of the park

#### **Chimney Swift tower - Karlyn, Val, Aaron Hinz**

- Karlyn: Not heard from Bill Delanis, he is constructing it with Aaron Hinz (note correct spelling of his last name)
- Val: Need approval of the homeowner who is in line of it, there is a crabapple in the way, not sure why she would not want it there, it is commons area, they do not “own” the greenspace. Board approval hinges on the neighbor’s approval to have it.
- Karyln: there is an alternative site, easy access to parking so simple moving materials
- Base will weigh 1300 lbs, will not tip over, not a deep one, just wide, couple of inches deep, base about 6 in. thick.; another swift tower in Lauderdale behind golf course
- Michael: want to get someone to photograph the installation and write it up for the Park Bugle
- How about the grant \$? That needs to be accounted for; going to use repurposed materials, can buy binoculars, have \$ for signage as well

#### **CRWD Rain garden maintenance grant - volunteer hours**

- Stephen and Kathryn wrote grant that was funded to cover maintenance of the two large rain gardens on Raymond that will include vendor work, more mulch, some new species, need volunteers to pick out garbage; the ones by Hampden Park, Bayless Place and Long Ave and some small ones along the way that can be included; if you feel like it, pick up litter, keep track of time, any expertise on rain gardens get involved, will work with Rennie and Stephen about species that do well; Stephen recommended we work with Matt Wildenauer, a landscape architect.
- Val: Only 10% of the dogwood is alive, not sure why it has died; might not have been installed well, has not leafed out, really sad, could have been last summer’s drought
- Karlyn: could be salt from the trees
- Manu: can we get some info to building owners and private contractors about how to use less salt
- Karlyn: MWMO.org and CRWO.org through both watershed districts, free training for municipal and private homeowners and private contractors, a couple of times a year,

certified to being, good for snowplow drivers, they save money by not spending money on salt! Very convincing!

- Lizzy: Will be interested in cleaning up rain gardens

**Other business**

Adjourn at 9:13 p.m.

Next meeting – Wednesday, June 22, 7 pm via Zoom