

DRAFT MINUTES
Saint Anthony Park Community Council
Environment Committee
Zoom meeting minutes, June 22, 2022

Present: Michael Russelle (co-chair), Rennie Gaither (co-chair), Corey Butler, Karlyn Eckman, Manu Junemann, Ryan Murphy, Kerry Morgan, Patricia Ohmans, Aaron Hinz, Val Cervenka (arrived 7:30 p.m.)

Regrets: Lisa Habeck, Lizzy Logas-Lindstrom, Bill Anderson

Visitors: Pat Thompson (co-chair, SAPCC Transportation Committee), Karen Williams (SAPCC Garden Club)

Land Acknowledgment – Rennie

Cleveland Ave – Michael

- Environmental Assessment Worksheet has been denied; Environment Quality Board made Ramsey County the responsible governmental unit; they are the defendant, but they can claim that a request is invalid, which they have done.
- The county made the claim that all of these trees were in the boulevards, where the lawn is mowed and raked and disturbed so cannot be part of rusty patched bumble bee habitat; we cannot prove that they are there.
- It is a county highway, so certain aspects of the law say that they are exempt, operating within a right-of-way
- How do we proceed? SAPCC Exec Committee decided that we should proceed but focus on second phase, give us time to prove that they are old trees.
- *Pat*: we might not be able to file a second EAW, if we appeal it, it would cost money for a lawyer, would have to put down a bond, which is a problem.
- *Rennie*: St. Paul Pioneer Press gave a synopsis of what has been going on and found it helpful. (<https://www.twincities.com/2022/06/21/moving-forward-with-cleveland-avenue-tree-removal-ramsey-county-shuts-down-petition-for-mn-environmental-review/>)
- *Michael*: Lots of people, including many from our committee, put a lot of work into the EAW, thanks to them.
- *Karen*: Expressed thanks to the people on the SAPCC committees; since it seems we have lost this battle, she asks that all the trees be planted be native to MN, so as to support biodiversity of wildlife; local insect species benefit most from this food web; important to the neighborhood.
- *Michael*: We intend to do that. If we cannot stop the destruction of trees, then the county needs to replant the trees and shrubs and they need to be properly selected;

they have agreed to consider recommendations from SAPCC—Corey has already created a document that outlines what trees are adapted to a changing climate.

- *Corey*: Most trees are native on the list.
- *Michael*: Need to establish subgroup to work on the list of tree species, run through committee and board, then send to the county, making sure we include understory species, and mix and match species.

Motion made to form the subgroup to select tree species and understory plants, seconded by Patricia; committee support is unanimous; subgroup volunteers include Ryan, Rennie, Karlyn, Corey, Karen Williams (kare14will@gmail.com).

- *Rennie*: Is the replanting going to be a one to one? Every tree should be replaced.
- *Pat*: Yes, according to the county
- *Aaron*: Asked about clarification of the government agency; he does issuing of permits for these types of things, wondering if he should worry about a conflict of interest; suggested that he should ask his supervisor at MPCA (Minnesota Pollution Control Agency), he will look at permits
- *Ryan*: Might be some different approaches with regard to 1 for 1 replacement, thinking of area with Siberian elm, do we want to replant a forest, we would ordinarily not plant it that way, not sure if under UMN jurisdiction or not
- *Patricia*: Questioned the need for multiple bike lanes; can Phase II bike lanes be different from Larpenteur to Buford? Need a good strategy. Go beyond “okay,” need to put pressure on the county.
- *Michael*: We are asking the county to rethink the design.
- *Pat*: Agreed with Patricia, she personally feels no longer effective, presenting this more of an environmental issue could have more sway, might be better to make these arguments; she and others are working on asking to not have a retaining wall north of Folwell. With the Data Practices Act, we are going to have a ton of documents and need to look at them. Does anyone have any expertise?
- *Patricia*: Two possibly conflicting issues are 1) How to work with the county? 2) How to risk burning every bridge? County has not been forthright. County has overreached and needs to be reprimanded; make sure that this does not happen again. Do Phase II better!
- *Rennie*: Legal profession is involved in the process, have a lot of sway in what gets approved; challenge and opportunity to change the existing way that communities give voice to concerns; system is set in place for its own benefit, which is done through the taxation of citizens.
- *Michael*: As the co-chair of the Environment Committee and SAPCC Board member, the Executive Committee selected him to be the spokesperson for SAPCC; need to think through Phase II strategy, talk in friendly way to help the county understand that they need to do the work; they misled us about having federal money for the project.

Need to create subgroup to consider redesign modifications before they cut more trees. Call for creation of an ad hoc subgroup. Should include some civil engineers.

Subgroup volunteers: Patricia, Rennie, Kerry (willing to reach out to SAP community members who are engineers and also avid cyclists), Val (available after February), Karlyn (not experienced with county officials, but can provide context for ecology), Michael

- *Michael:* Who can review documents? Environment Committee members?
- *Patricia:* Can some things happen outside of this committee with its record-keeping? What is the goal of Phase II?
- *Rennie:* Community survey was done, but attitudes have changed, what are their thoughts now?
- *Michael:* Official community involvement happened 2-3 years ago. Council did not want in-street bike lanes, the road already has to include subcuts, underneath the road, already 4 ft wider; this new design is going make it a faster road. Asked county to narrow road and not have to have retaining walls as they require lots of excavation. County said that they would “think about it.”
- *Patricia:* How can we convince them?
- *Michael:* We do not have the software tools or the background plans and data to present detailed alternative plans. We need the engineering plans.
- *Karlyn:* Do we know the quantity of the documents? Suggested that we have a session when the documents arrive, have people volunteer based on experience, interest.
- *Ryan:* Combing through records for what purpose?
- *Michael:* Data was not asked by anyone directly affiliated with SAPCC; regardless, we would like to find out when they chose a different design (that included the elimination of more than 150 trees), late addition for the in-street bike lanes and multi-use trail; what input the county got and from whom? What made the difference? Estimates of stormwater runoff? Infiltration basin in east side? Why do that? Not sure they are hearing us; if we have evidence and numbers that might help.

Ryan, Karlyn, and Michael volunteered to review documents in their areas of expertise and interest.

Drain stenciling – Kerry & Rennie

- *Kerry:* Day for Territorial Road Party was rescheduled to Saturday, June 18 due to rain, so did not have a substantial turnout; could have benefitted from more publicity.
- Despite poor turnout, still were able to stencil 60 drains as Rennie, Kerry, and a group of 4 teenagers did work for 2+ hours.
- Friends of the Mississippi River (FMR) have the process well organized; easy to pick up supplies and return them to downtown St. Paul.
- It is a hot activity, the maps that FMR made up would take 2+ hours to walk, better to do in the early morning or later summer/fall when cooler.

- *Rennie*: Hard to do with just one person as you are stenciling the drain and distributing door hangers to residences (the door hangers explain why having clean storm drains matter so much and is part of the FMR outreach).
- *Kerry*: Best as a group of 3-4; the group of 4 teenagers picked up a lot of trash as well, which is also encouraged as part of the activity.
- Committee could look into doing it in the fall – perhaps early September.

Chimney Swift tower - Karlyn

- Has not heard from Bill Delanis; he was working on the chimney swift boxes last she heard; she will follow up.
- *Michael*: Pleased to have a location, thanks to Val, housing association has approved it.
- *Val*: She has not met Bill, not in on the coordination.

Update on the Raymond rain gardens - Kerry & Val

- *Val*: Spent two hours cleaning up the rain garden at Raymond and Ellis, barely made a dent, a neighbor worked on it as well; Stephen Mastey suggested we look back at grant; does it include maintenance? Might need to start over as it is a mass of nettles and thistle.
- *Patricia*: Is this a Capitol Region Watershed grant? They have maintenance grants, write to Rachel Funke, manager, adding maintenance grant to their database of CRWD funded, reapply every year, not enough to make one-time grant; Frogtown Park and Farm and garden at Dale Street got approval without problem; possibly hire someone to replant; think you can bill for labor if it is contracted labor
- *Michael*: Sent an email about this to the EC group today, included a copy of the grant; we may need professional help; Matt Wildenauer lives in neighborhood, is a horticulturist, could advise us if we need to change the plant materials; hope we can keep it as a functioning rain garden as it is a mess, collects trash and evidence that people were partying there; the one at Bayless and Raymond does not have correct infiltration; volunteer labor is considered at \$25 an hour and considered a match; we can use \$2K for mulch, new plants, contract labor.
- Val volunteered to look over grant proposal. Kerry will help.
- *Michael*: Stephen Mastey is most knowledgeable as he might have original sketches and maintenance records; need to determine what is the problem with the plantings, do soil sampling, to determine what is next.
- *Patricia*: Master Water Stewards – they advise, are trained, some are very knowledgeable, that would be a good start; can apply for second grant, look at Fresh Water Society Institute and CRWD. (*See note at end of document for reference added in the “chat.”)

TC Boulevard letter – Michael

- Shared letter in email to EC members; any edits before it is given to other SAPCC committees?

- This is the proposal to fill in valley, tie together neighborhoods; our committee had mixed feelings about it, need to do more environmental assessment.
- Agreed that it would be a good idea, the SAPCC Board got input and signed the Streets MN proposal; it is one of the approaches; Board wanted all committee input, Michael drafted one, edits from Pat are minor.
- This is an opportunity to help MnDOT rethink what it is doing, want a letter to come from all four committees, help achieve goals we think are important.
- Patricia and Kerry both thought the letter was excellent.
- Kerry shared that there is a place to sign up at the MnDOT website to be notified about upcoming meetings about “Rethinking I-94.” Supposed to be one in June, but none has been scheduled.

100 Tree Initiative - Rennie, others?

- *Michael:* has not heard from Ben Shardlow, no one else had either.

Google Drive for our documents? - Kerry

- Proposal to use a shared Google drive where we can post meeting minutes, important documents, previous successful grant applications, etc. Concern that there is so much history and knowledge that some of the EC members have, would be nice to be able to find references to past and recurring projects, like Kasota Pond Clean-up spreadsheet and info document.
- *Patricia:* Does SAPCC have a Google Drive that they use? Would be best for them to be “owners” of the documents.
- *Karlyn:* Warned about difficulty editing minutes in Google – she uses it on Mac and PC, has experience with it editing books, finds it nightmarish, hard to keep things straight, send attachments, etc.
- *Ryan:* A shared Google Drive could be a place to record the volunteer hours, load into a spreadsheet, fill it out, saved in one central location.
- *Patricia:* Google Drive could be used as place to store documents, could be PDFs or word docs.
- *General Discussion:* Problematic for those who are not familiar with using Google Drive and Google Documents; should not have to adopt a new system, so best if whoever is editing they decide the system they want to use; Google Drive could be an archive space, a place to save finished documents.
- Kerry will reach out to Jessica to find out if there is a SAPCC Google folder that might be used for this purpose.

Approval of May 25 minutes: Karlyn made additions and edits. There was a motion by Patricia to accept the minutes as amended; Kerry seconded; committee approved unanimously.

Other Business:

Saint Paul Commissioner to the Mississippi Watershed Management Organization – Karlyn

- Still no movement from the City's mayor's office with regard to the person who is assigned to represent Saint Paul; as part of the commissioner structure we have the opportunity to select someone to have a seat on the MWMO; Commissioners represent Minneapolis and surrounding cities along the River; our seat has been vacant for years, we submitted a nomination months ago and we have not heard anything about it; Karlyn served in this capacity for 10 years and she recalls that the appointment took 6 months to become official; Saint Paul only has a sliver in that watershed but it is in St. Anthony Park so the Saint Paul commissioner must come from that sliver; helps decide how to spend their very large budget; strategically this is very important.
- *Michael*: The person we have nominated is Mike Lukes, lives in south Saint Anthony Park, part of Transition Town group, a hydrologist by training.
- *Patricia*: The note about this appointment should also go to Noel, the Mayor's Community Engagement point person, copy him on it.
- Michael will resend the note.

Next meeting – TBD (Michael cannot attend; Kerry and Karlyn cannot attend); Michael to send out Doodle poll to find an alternate date that works for most. Might be in person. Committee suggestions:

- Mim's indoors or out. They encourage use of the rooms for community meetings.
- Bang Brewery (not open on Wednesday)
- Urban Growler, use room or hayloft

Meeting adjourned at 9:02 p.m.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Kerry Morgan.

*Chat info added by Patricia:

Capitol Region Watershed District manages the training and deployment of a cohort of Master Water Stewards each year. There are trained Water Stewards and experienced Water Stewards. To get the advice of one of them, contact the CRWD staff person who runs the program,

Lindsay Schwantes

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Pronouns: she, her, hers