

DRAFT
SAPCC Environment Committee
Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, February 22, 2023
Online via Zoom

Attendees: Michael Russelle (co-chair), Kerry Morgan (co-chair), Val Cervenka, Karlyn Eckman, Manu Juneman, Joy Gerdes, Lisa Habek, Ryan Murphy, Corey Butler

Visitors: Kelsey Boeff, Alex Bajcz, Catherine Reid Day, Mike Lukes, Pat Thompson (chair of the Transportation Committee)

Regrets: Patricia Ohmans

Called to order on 6:33 p.m.

Land acknowledgement — no one volunteered so skipped

Introduction of new visitors:

Kelsey Boeff, environmental scientist, Water Resources Specialist at Three Rivers Park District
Catherine Reid Day, community development consultant, co-founder of the Creative Enterprise Zone (CEZ)

January minutes: Kerry added information about Joy Gerdes' willingness to head Westgate Commons Park celebration organizing and act as liaison between Environment and Equity Committees (she is on both); with these additions the minutes were approved.

Environment Google folder contains recent and historical sources of information. If you know of things that should be in the folder, let Kerry or Michael know.

Old Business

Kasota Ponds – Michael

- This is a project (at the intersection of 280 and Kasota Ave.) that the EC has worked on for decades, each year we remove 1-2 tons of litter in an annual clean up event, city picks up the material; this is the only part of SAP that is in the Mississippi Watershed Management Organization (MWMO), the rest is in the Capitol Region Watershed District (CRWD)

Basking logs — Karlyn

- Most of trees are on the south end of the West pond; they were cut down last year
- Napa is just a tenant, so no need to get permission, but should ask them to open gates
- Karlyn will be gone April 4-19
- Mike: will the logs be floatable?
- Karlyn: we could use cottonwoods, 40 ft tall, they would float well; there are also a couple of boxelders; easy access to shore at the south end of the West pond
- Need concrete blocks and a way of securing the trees to the concrete blocks; can use heavy nylon rope

- Michael: dragged them across the ice in previous years, concrete block serves as an anchor; West pond is much deeper than others, has a sandy bottom, with less vegetation
- Mike: Could the MWMO Green Team do it?
- Alex: he volunteered to help; he knows how to use chain saw
- Karlyn: she has chaps to lend
- Michael: need to have a long enough rope, need to be prepared for different depths; it is heavy work to drag them across
- **Date: Saturday, March 25, time TBD**
- Kerry will work with Jessica to reach out to the Farmhouse Fraternity
- Safety equipment—life vests and ice picks—are necessary out on the ice: Karlyn has one life vest; Kerry has 4 to lend; we can make ice picks for volunteers to use out of long nails

Potential MWMO grant (due March 10)— Michael

- Ponds are suffering from run-off; high chloride threatens aquatic species; we want to improve the water quality
- Need to continue to remove buckthorn, increase pollinator habitat, provide turtle nesting area, remove chloride, perhaps harvest and remove plants from the site; East pond does have a spring, but the chloride is very high
- Try and get together with Emmy Baskerville from MWMP tomorrow at 2 p.m. Zoom call to talk about ideas; need to meet with her about what type of expertise MWMO can offer in terms of staff time
 - Karlyn, Kerry, Michael are available to meet
- Mike: SNAs – Scientific Natural Areas – educational activities! Try to make it a natural area? Is that achievable?
- Karlyn: years ago she looked into it, but was told it was too small of an area; DNR was not interested at the time; would need to look at Sarita Wetland and other connecting waterbodies; we do not have a good sense of subsurface water flows, Bridal Veil Creek Subwatershed Study done many years ago is best resource of the area (see study in the Environment Google folder)
- Michael: Land is owned by City of St. Paul, MNDOT, Minnesota Commercial Railway

Cleanup **April 15**— Kerry & Joy (****The date has been changed to 4/29 to ensure Margot Munson is available***)

- 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., meet at Napa parking lot, set up near Napa sign
- Rain date is Sunday, April 16
- Would love to have as many SAPCC committee members participate as possible
- This is a family friendly event; we provide gloves and vests and snacks!
- In addition to picking up trash there is an educational component, as Margot Munson, entomologist, takes water samples some days before and shares a host of invertebrates to look at; great for kids
- We have updated the Tasks List and Planning document and want to touch base about reaching out to Margot, local businesses along Kasota Ave. and Hunting Valley Road
- Would like to take as much off of Jessica's plate as possible
- Will look into whether or not we can get high schools—Jennings, Avalon—to help out

- Cannot use CRWD grant to get Sign-Up Genius subscription, but a donation has been made so Jessica now has a year's subscription
- Would like to use it to get volunteers to participate in monthly maintenance events, perhaps starting March

Capitol Region Watershed District (CRWD) grant

- Kerry working with Rachel Funke, the CRWD maintenance coordinator, to reach out to excavating companies to get project proposals; hope to have more info next month

Chimney Swift Tower — Karlyn

- Signage
 - Karlyn has not heard back from Kathryn about ordering information signs, need to do it next 6-8 weeks; the money is available as it is part of a grant that was received last year; spent money on materials but volunteers have built and installed it
- Need to set up dates for walking tours
- Also wondering where are the binoculars?
 - Michael: the binoculars will likely be kept in the SAPCC offices in the CEZ building on University Ave
- Joy: She is working with Jessica to apply for funding through the Good Neighbor Fund (due the end of March) for funding for next year if we want another site
- Karlyn: Bill Delanis was the one with the good woodworking skills who built this tower, but he never got back to Karlyn about doing a second one; Starke Mueller, the vet, has a short chimney on his garage that he is working on turning into another site

Robbins/Raymond pollinator garden — Kerry & Pat Thompson

- Pat shared a planting design that she made; has a plan for procuring the plants, just looking for local place to get a Hackberry if there are any leads
- Funding of roughly \$4500 available thanks to a Good Neighbor Grant that former EC and board member Bill Anderson applied for
- Need assistance felling two-three dead trees on the site – to do in early April perhaps? No need to remove them, let them fall down slope (SAPCC owns that sloped land adjacent to the railroad tracks)
- Will have some maintenance help available from the volunteers at the SAP Community Garden, which is very close by
- Might need to do some solarization to kill off the weeds in the area before planting

Air Quality Letter — Manu & Lisa

- Letter outlines concerns about air quality due to idling trucks in S. St. Anthony Park; it will be sent to City Council rep Mitra Jalal; it has been edited, but needs to be shared with the Executive Committee (meets week of Feb. 27)
 - **Copy of letter is available in Environment Google folder under “Letters, Op-ed, Park Bugle Writing”**
- Any formal letters that a committee writes up needs to get approval from the board
- Pat: From her position as Transportation Committee chair, thinks they should strengthen part in the letter about having the city ban parking, it affects us on a daily basis; ticketing of semis on Hampden has been ineffectual, they never moved; these trucks are too big to be hauled away

- Manu: need the city to fix the problem long term; she is trying to get other people in her building to complain, write letter; can she post the one we are writing?
- Michael: fine to share the letter; best to use other wording
- Kelsey shared in the Zoom chat that a photo of the letter could be made and sent, so people could not just copy and paste it verbatim.
- Catherine shared in the Zoom chat that she and Jill Pavlak (co-owner of Urban Growler) brought up this issue to the Mayor's [Business Review Council](#) (BRC). This letter could be shared with the BRC as well.
- Mike: could it be sent as an op ed?
- Pat: might be a different strategy
- Manu: she attended the Great Northern Climate Solutions Series at the American Swedish Museum, which was excellent; there was mention about the Cleveland Tree protests; made contact with Sven Sundgaard (meteorologist); asked him to do more about the environment; met [Heidi Roop](#)—wrote climate handbook, spoke with someone affiliated with Green Minneapolis

Climate Corps — Michael

- Creative Enterprise Zone (CEZ) reps Angela Casselton and Ben Shadlow have applied for a Climate Corps volunteer
 - SAPCC would help with activities, tree inventory, mapping, etc.; Ryan provided good ideas
 - We would have access to the person in the winter season, CEZ would use them in the fall
- Also, SAPCC applying to CURA to get an intern, looking for someone with GIS skills

Westgate Commons celebration — Joy & Michael

- Joy is working as the liaison with the Equity Committee; working with Jessica W. on the organization of the celebration
- Michael: SAPCC's work on this project started with the Land Use Committee, then Transportation Committee got involved with the Wabash Trail, then fell into EC's hands
- Joy: She is contacting people who might want to be involved in the celebration; if you know of someone, please let her know.
- Catherine Reid Day: contact Sunrise Bank, they might be interested in sponsoring
- Michael: Rennie Gaither, was member of the committee, he lives in Berry St. apartments; he and his wife Caroline might be willing to assist
- Michael: avoid first weekend of June as that is the SAP arts festival; would be great to have music, art activities, and possibly food trucks
- Catherine added in the Zoom chat that from her experience with the CEZ Chroma zone mural events that food trucks need to have a minimum or guarantee
- Joy: No dedicated funding yet
- Michael: Good Neighbor Fund likes to host permanent things; has historical significance, the Red River Oxcart Trail, railroads went through there, not a specific significance for Dakota people; lots of first generation immigrants
- Joy: What planning has already been done?
- Michael: Members of the EC committee met with Dakota people, suggested a name to St. Paul Parks, then thought the name had too much significance to be assigned for the park; Betty Wheeler put together a list of Native American artists who could be involved in

doing some public artwork, St. Paul parks did not previously have such a list, but they did not have any money, they offered no feedback, no response

- Pat added in the chat that Kristin Anderson (SAP resident and Augsburg University art history professor) knows the most about the history of the area

Cleveland Avenue Trees — Michael

- ½ is done, finishing northern part from Buford to Larpenteur in 2023
- Betty Wheeler and Margot Munson are working on getting negotiations on tree removal and effects on the endangered Rusty Patch bumble bee
- Plan is going ahead as planned

New business

City-wide Cleanup **April 22** — Kerry

- need a volunteer to lead getting the word out and connect with Angela Casselton (exec director of Creative Enterprise Zone)—anyone willing??

Let's Talk Environment — Kerry & Catherine Reid Day

- Group of St. Paul District Council members working on environmental initiatives got together on Feb. 9 at Sun Ray Library and via Zoom; organized by Bobbie Scott of [Southeast Community Organization](#) (SECO/District 1)
- Shared introductions, what projects our districts were working on, looking to make connections and share resources
- Catherine shared suggestion that we try facilitating an upcoming meeting with [Open Space Technology](#)

Homegrown Park and Buckthorn Tagging – Catherine Reid Day

- [Homegrown National Park](#) is a nation-wide initiative that aims to rewild landscapes, create greater biodiversity by doing what national parks cannot achieve
 - Website provides tools and resources for individuals to plant native trees, shrubs, plants and remove invasive species
 - Created by best-selling author Doug Tallamy
 - Individuals put themselves on the map; self-directed; they can see how their stewardship fits into the larger whole
 - MN is already a leading state, have programs like Lawns to Legumes that stand out
 - Would like to see St. Paul commit to this call to action and has written a letter that she wants to submit as an Op-Ed to newspapers like MinnPost and Pioneer Press; would like to see if others want to sign on
- Buckthorn tagging initiative is effort to help neighbors recognize buckthorn and learn how to try and eliminate/manage it
 - Pat Thompson and Catherine have created a mock-up of the tag, which they shared
 - Do we want to join in and tag hedges in our neighborhood? Builds community awareness of the problem

Next meeting — March 22, 6:30 p.m., Location TBD

Adjourned at 8:33 p.m.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Kerry Morgan