

Ecological Advocacy Committee (EAC) Meeting 5-11-2020

Location: Tele-meeting (Zoom)

Committee Members Present:

Steve Sass
Andrew Tucker
Alicia Czarnecki
Andy Schnabel
Ally Pudlo
Lindsay Chadderton
John DiTillo

Others Present:

Garry Harrington – VPA Rum Village Park Supervisor
Hannah Teshka – VPA Naturalist
Matthew Moyers – VPA Partnerships, Community and Standards Coordinator
Therese Dorau – City of South Bend Office of Sustainability
Becca Plantz – City of South Bend, Public Works-Project Engineer

Call to order – Steve Sass at 8:32 am.

Vote to approve the minutes from the March 30, 2020 EAC meeting.

Motion by Andy Schnabel seconded by Alicia Czarnecki.

Discussion:

Old Business –

Wildflower mowing in parks – Garry Harrington

- Fredrickson Park was mowed in early fall 2019. Mowing should not take place until early spring.
- Rum Village Park's wildflower hillside and triangle prairie area was mowed in early March of 2020.
- Veteran's Park was also mowed in September or October of 2019. The strip of wildflowers that was mowed might not be city owned but it is maintained by VPA.
- EAC would like to know if Facilities and Grounds (F&G) has park specific management plans.
- EAC is requesting that someone from F&Gs is present at all EAC Meetings.
- Land Policies sub-committee will be drafting a memo to the F&G division about best practices for mowing a prairie. This will include how to mow a prairie and when to mow. This will be sent to F&G and hopes to pass along the information to other departments like Public Works.

New Business –

Discussion of Landscaping Standards – Alicia Czarnecki

- Becca Plantz from the City of South Bend's Public Works Department joined the meeting to receive feedback on the Landscaping Standards draft produced by Lawson Fisher.
- This is a new document that refers to other standards within the city including the Forestry website, etc.
- EAC Comments:
 - There are a few broken links.

- It is great to link to other documents but most of those documents need updated as well including the Chapter 19 - Trees and Vegetation of the Municipal Code and the Street Tree Master Planting List.
- The document is missing a section on how decisions are made to protect ecological sensitive areas. It is a lot easier to protect what is already there than to restore the damage. (Add a protection over restoration section.)
- Add section on invasive species management including not planting any invasive species.
- Suggestion to making right of ways act more like rain gardens.
- Suggestion to do an initial inspection of the site. It might have a value that is not been seen.
- Timeline for a finished document is the end of June 2020. EAC asked for an update at the June 22nd EAC meeting.

Discussion of EAC Sub-committees – Steve Sass

- There is overlap in the Natural Resource Management Plan's (NRMP) Topic of Concern's (TOC).
- Steve suggests that we write one strong strategy for those that overlap.
- Steve started breaking his TOC into Threats versus Strategies. His business partner, Amanda, has been assisting with the Wildlife Management sub-committee.
- It was suggested to find the ecological values (what we are trying to protect, enhance or restore).
- Once the strategies are done for the TOC's, we can start working on the action steps (or Best Management Practices).
- Timeline: Finished document will need to be completed by the September 14th EAC meeting.

Elizabeth Simeri-Sustainability student at IUSB – Garry Harrington and Steve Sass

- Elizabeth is a sustainability graduate student at IUSB.
- She has rough ideas of a project on educating people on how to create wildlife gardens in their own backyard. She has suggested doing a Lunch n Learn at Rum Village Nature Center or Howard Park.
- EAC is requesting Elizabeth to come up with a formal proposal to submit to the EAC.

Planting of pollinators in city parks – Garry Harrington

- Garry Harrington met with Amy Roush, John Martinez, and Andi Force (VPA employees) regarding planting some pollinator gardens at Rum Village, Pulaski and other VPA parks.
- EAC suggestions/comments:
 - Need a plan to maintain the pollinator gardens.
 - EAC would like to review the plant list.

VPA and Updates – Patrick Sherman and Matthew Moyers

- Due the current pandemic, the work been done at VPA parks is moving slowly.
- All facilities are set to open on June 14th except O'Brien Fitness Center which will open on May 24th.
- Playgrounds will remain closed until May 24th.
- Work has continued at Pinhook and set is to be completed by the end of July.

Miscellaneous –

- 35th Street Wetland:
 - Notre Dame students gave their final presentations.
 - Alicia has requested copies to share with the EAC.

Action Step for the EAC:

1. Land Policies sub-committee will draft a letter to the Facilities and Grounds Division of VPA explaining best practices for mowing prairies in ecological sensitive properties.
2. Continued work on Topic of Concerns in sub-committees.

Next meeting is June 22, 2020 at 8:30 am. Garry Harrington will decide where the meeting will be held as we get closer to the meeting date.

Motion to Adjourn by at 10:00 am by Steve Sass.

Minutes Approved 6/22/2020

APPROVED