

Ecological Advocacy Committee (EAC) Meeting 2-17-2020

Location: Rum Village Nature Center

Committee Members Present:

Steve Sass
Andrew Tucker
Alicia Czarnecki
Jo Borrer
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
Patrick Sherman – VPA Facilities & Grounds (F&G) Project Manager

Call to order – Steve Sass at 8:36 am.

Vote to approve the minutes from the January 4, 2020 EAC meeting provided that VPA action steps are added into record.

Motion by Jo Borrer seconded by Ally Pudlo.

Discussion:

Old Business – Tree Ordinance and 35th Street Wetland Updates – Steve Sass

Tree Ordinance Update:

- Updates to the Tree Ordinance by the EAC, which was started in early 2019, was passed through legal.
- The Ordinance will be sponsored by Sharon McBride, the chair of PARC Committee (Parks, Recreation, Cultural Arts & Entertainment), a standing committee for the South Bend Common Council.
- The EAC (Steve Sass & Matthew Moyers) will address the PARC Committee at an upcoming meeting.
- The EAC will assist in public outreach, education, and meetings with local nurseries.
- The Indiana DNR has already sent the nurseries across the state a list of 44 species that are not permitted to sell by State Law. The South Bend Ordinance will add another 22 species to the DNR's existing list.
- The South Bend Ordinance will limit the sale and planting of the species within city limits.
- Expect to have conversations with the PARC Committee on how to enforce the new changes to the ordinance and how to educate the nurseries and community about the new changes.
- Potential Next Steps in the Process:
 1. This will be presented at the PARC Committee meeting on Monday, February 24, 2020.

2. It will then be heard at the Public Health and Safety Committee meeting.
3. Start to work on the implementations and education component of the Ordinance.
4. The Ordinance will go through 3 readings at the Common Council meetings with a chance for public comment.
5. Estimated implementation is beginning of 2021.

35th Street Wetland:

- The 35th Street Wetland is a 5-acre city owned drainage basin.
- A group of Notre Dame senior engineering students are working on a site plan for the potential park property and reporting project results to Alicia Czarnecki.
- Steve Sass met with the students in January for a winter site visit (noticed a lot of trash and invasive species).
- It was proposed to make this site a “Back the Bend” project/site which is tentatively scheduled for April 25th from 10 am – 3 pm with a community picnic to follow at the Robinson Learning Center for all those who volunteer. This volunteer initiative is open to the whole community not just Notre Dame.
- The group of students working at the 35th Street Wetland will be a part of the “Back the Bend” project at the site helping to remove trash and invasive species. Volunteers are not permitted to use herbicides on park property but Andi Force (VPA’s horticulturalist) could potential help apply the right herbicides.

Natural Resource Management Plan/Topics of Concern Sub-committees – Steve Sass and Garry Harrington

- Updating the NRMP’s Topics of Concern will be the primary focus for the 2020 calendar year.
- VPA owns about 1,300 acres of property in addition to maintaining another 400 acres.
- The NRMP states that VPA will inventory, monitor and create Resource Management Plans for each ecological sensitive property. Currently, there are 16 sensitive properties named in the NRMP out of the 63 VPA properties.
- Garry Harrington will be working on the specific park management plans.
- Additions to the 2020 NRMP were made official by the Board of Park Commissioners at the January Park Board Meeting. This included 2 sub-topics listed under the Topics of Concern and the addition of one sensitive property – Fredrickson Park.
- The goal of 2020 NRMP is to create a list (1-2 pages) of implementation strategies, reasons for the strategies, and Best Management Practices (BMPs) that could be adaptable here in South Bend.
- Estimated Timeline:
 - February EAC Meeting – form sub-committees for each of the 6 Topics of Concern
 - August EAC Meeting – report back to the full EAC the drafts of the implementation strategies (1-2 pages)
 - August - October – meet with different department heads (VPA Facilities & Grounds, etc.) to present the draft strategies.
 - November Park Board Meeting – present the 2021 edits to the NRMP
- The goal of the 2021 NRMP will be taking the Topics of Concerns implementation strategies and expanding them into actionable steps.
- Note: do not add any sub-topics to the current Topics of Concern. Note these changes to be made in 2021.

- Resources: use experts from different fields to advise on the implementation strategies. Note each resource that is used.
- The sub-committees for each Topic of Concern will consist of EAC members only. Each sub-committee will have a lead who will periodically report back to the EAC during meetings.

NRMP Topics of Concern Sub-committee Selections:

Aquatic Resource Management:

Andrew Tucker
Lindsay Chadderton
Alicia Czarnecki
Andy Schnabel
Steve Sass

Management of Trees:

Andy Schnabel
Lindsay Chadderton
Steve Sass

Education:

Ally Pudlo
Jo Borrer
John DiTillo
Steve Sass
Garry Harrington

Vegetation Management:

Ally Pudlo
Lindsay Chadderton
Andy Schnabel
Steve Sass

Land Polices:

Alicia Czarnecki
Lindsay Chadderton
John DiTillo
Steve Sass

Wildlife Management:

Jo Borrer
Ally Pudlo
Andrew Tucker
Lindsay Chadderton
Steve Sass

Motion by Alicia Czarnecki to create a sub-committee for the 35th Street Wetland project.

Seconded by Andrew Tucker. Motion passed with 8 - I's 0 - opposed.

Sub-committee Members:

Andrew Tucker (lead)
Alicia Czarnecki
Steve Sass
Garry Harrington

VPA and City Updates – VPA & Facilities and Grounds Staff

- A City Ordinance is being proposed banning the release of lighter than air balloons which has been tabled until the March 23rd Common Council meeting.
- Statement: The Ecological Advocacy Committee supports the efforts to limit the free release of lighter than air balloons in the City of South Bend. The negative impacts to wildlife and the natural environment when these balloons return as litter to the ground are significant.
- Motion to draft a letter of support from the EAC by Andy Schnabel and seconded by Lindsay Chadderton.

Motion passed with 8 - I's 0 - opposed.

- VPA Facilities & Grounds Updates – Patrick Sherman:

- Construction is set to begin on the Pinhook Trail.
- Riverwalk (upper trail from Sample Street to Howard Park) bid was awarded.
- Leeper phase 2 (creating the river overlook) is underway.
- Seitz phase 1 is going out to bid for the Riverwalk.
- Patrick Sherman will be seeking help from the EAC for the creation of interpretative signage for Leeper Park, Pinhook Park, and the Riverwalk in a few locations.
- The Boys Scouts of America will be doing a potential STEM project at Fredrickson Park. This could be an excellent spot for a park species inventory (plants, insects, wildlife). The Boy Scouts will have a project vision meeting on March 13th from 9 am – 12 pm at the LaSalle Council.

Reports of EAC Sub-committees – Mud Lake Update – Andrew Tucker

- Currently, the plan is to keep the lines of communication open with Tom Swinford from Indiana Division of Nature Preserves. Matthew Moyers will continue this work and will report back to the EAC and VPA periodically.
- Also, keep in contact with Mark Blassage and Chris Cobb (who presented the original proposal to preserve Mud Lake to the EAC at the September 2019 EAC meeting).

Action Step for the EAC:

1. Draft a letter of recommendation for the proposed ban on releasing lighter than air balloons.
2. NRMP plan sub-committees will determine leads for each sub-committee.

Next meeting is March 30, 2020 at 8:30 am at Rum Village Nature Center.

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

Minutes Approved 3/30/2020

APPROVED