

## **Minutes of the Ecological Advocacy Committee (EAC) Meeting on October 25, 2021**

### **Committee Members Present:**

Emily Alderton  
Lindsay Chadderton  
Allison Pudlo  
Charlene Allison Rountree  
Steve Sass  
Andy Schnabel  
Andrew Tucker

### **Others Present:**

Garry Harrington – VPA, Rum Village Park Property Manager  
John Martinez - VPA, Director of Facilities & Grounds  
Matthew Moyers - VPA, Partnerships, Community and Standards Coordinator  
Hannah Teshka – VPA, Pinhook Center Manager

### **I. Call to order – Steve Sass 8:33 am**

### **II. Approval of minutes**

The minutes from the September 13, 2021, EAC meeting were approved with minor corrections. Minutes will be submitted to VPA secretary and then will appear on the city's website as official minutes.

### **III. Old Business - River Windows**

Summary of issue: VPA has embarked on the River Windows project along Riverside Blvd in past 1-2 months. EAC has concerns about the extent of vegetation clearing, how decisions are made about what plants to remove and what stays, the plans for re-vegetation of the areas, and communication between Grounds/Forestry Depts and EAC.

Discussion: Dissatisfaction was expressed by EAC at the extent of the clearing, and questions were raised about the purpose or need for the clearing, whether VPA was following best management practices (some of which are described in the 2020 NRMP) and what, if any, advisory role EAC would have in the process. The origins of the project apparently go back as far as the Kernan administration, but this has expanded into a larger project that includes an extensive trail network, some of which is along the St. Joseph River. Standards for maintenance of the trail network are evolving and may require some EAC input. Several EAC members voiced support for greater communication from VPA about long-term and short-term plans and budgeting for the project. Matt Moyers explained that long-term plans include 5-yr thinking and budgeting, and that annual budgeting priorities and funding plans are typically completed in October/November for the following year. It was suggested that those annual plans be shared with EAC at the beginning of each year (January meeting), which would give EAC time to consider what types of advice it might be able to provide before the projects begin. John Martinez indicated that he would produce three pieces of information for EAC: 1. Updated

River Trail Standards. 2. Forestry Schedule by Year. 3. 2022 Project Details with 5-year Projection.

**IV. New Business - Re-Establishment Ordinance for the EAC & New Member and Chair Guidelines for the 2022 Cohort**

Ordinance re-establishes EAC for the next 5 years. Two changes to membership: i) two-year cycle for membership (goal is to preserve some institutional knowledge; allows staggering of membership); ii) chair will be limited to two 2-year cycles.

As mentioned in September minutes, EAC will also expand its role going forward as a citizen's tree board. EAC is unsure at present about what this expanded responsibility will entail. EAC considers it a good idea to work on outlining responsibilities of the tree board and then perhaps try to amend the re-establishment ordinance.

It was also suggested that EAC might want to better define the role that Garry Harrington plays as liaison between VPA and EAC. Alternatively, this role could be more clearly defined in the re-establishment ordinance for EAC.

Membership applications are due at the end of October/mid-November; Garry Harrington and VPA are reaching out to a more diverse community to get a more diverse applicant pool.

**V. VPA and City Updates** - No additional updates.

**VI. Miscellaneous - Goose Management and Invasive Plant Species Brochures** - Discussion about Garry Harrington and Charlene Rountree working together on creating invasive species brochures and how the information would be disseminated to the retailers.

Next EAC Meeting: December 6

**Meeting adjourned at 10:07 am**

Minutes submitted by Andy Schnabel, EAC Secretary 2021

**APPROVED**

Minutes Approved 12/6/2021