

## Minutes of the Ecological Advocacy Committee (EAC) Meeting on August 22, 2022

### Committee Members Present:

Charlene Rountree  
Steve Sass  
Andy Schnabel  
Lindsay Chadderton  
Allison Pudlo  
Amy Gillan

### Others Present:

Garry Harrington — VPA, Rum Village Park Property Manager  
Brent Thompson — City Forester, VPA  
Hannah Teshka — VPA, Pinhook Center Manager  
Patrick Sherman — Project Engineer, VPA

### I. Call to Order - Steve Sass 8:33 am

### II. Approval of Minutes

Charlene Rountree moved to approve the minutes of the June 27th, 2022 meeting. Allison Pudlo seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

### III. Old Business

#### A. Meow Mission Update

Garry Harrington reminded the committee that there has been an ongoing issue with homeless cats cared for by The Meow Mission, a Mishawaka-based feline advocacy organization, at 35<sup>th</sup> Street Wetlands. Garry spoke with Jodie Aker from The Meow Mission who explained that due to the Humane Society's high fees, residents were instead dumping unwanted cats at the 35<sup>th</sup> Street location.

Garry tried to contact Lindsay Cuellar, at the South Bend Animal Resource Center (SBARC) to discuss best practices for reducing the homeless cat population at the 35<sup>th</sup> Street Wetlands. He requested that SBARC speak with The Meow Mission because their "trap, neuter, release" program, coupled with their prominent cat houses, are apparently encouraging residents to drop-off unwanted animals.

Steve Sass reminded the committee that The Meow Mission is also maintaining homeless cat communities at Riverside Park. However, when asked, Garry stated that he did not mention Riverside Park to The Meow Mission.

#### B. Urban Tree Project

Although Amy Roush and Matt Moyers were on the agenda to speak, neither were present, so there were no updates.

#### C. Tree Board policies update

Andy Schnabel provided updates. The Tree Board Subcommittee studied sample ordinances from other Indiana cities for reference. Andy explained that some Indiana cities ask very little from their tree boards while other city's legal descriptions would virtually require full-time employment. Andy explained that his belief is that somewhere in the middle of the two would be the best course for South Bend.

Steve Sass and Charlene Rountree reminded the EAC that the committee had previously resolved to defer to the city's legal team for guidance, but Andy pressed for immediate resolution. The discussion centered around whether the EAC would be afforded oversight to the city's forestry operations or be strictly advisory/supportive. Steve reminded that committee that the matter of revising Chapter 19 came about because the EAC is not always included in forestry discussions. After some discussion, the committee agreed in principle to use the word "collaborate" to describe the Tree Board's role in forestry operations. However, given the absence of several EAC members, and the suddenness of the changes, the committee resolved to ask the subcommittee to revise and share the draft prior to the EAC's September meeting.

#### **IV. New Business**

##### **A. Green Roof Installation at MLK Center**

Patrick Sherman explained that a large \$16 to \$18 million dollar project is being done to build the new MLK Dream Center. Sustainability is a major component to the project including the placement of a Green Roof. They are also considering ecological concepts in the design and planning development of the entire park area as part of this center. There is also an environmental design to the interior as well as solar panel options.

The committee asked many questions about the building and site design and provided suggestions on how to make the property more ecologically friendly. Suggestions included utilizing the retention pond as an educational tool, reducing the amount of lawn, insisting on native plants throughout the property, providing bird feeding stations with indoor viewing windows, and outfitting the building with "bird-friendly" glass to minimize collisions.

##### **B. Aquatic Plant Inventory at Pinhook Park**

Hannah Teshka gave a brief overview. The Indiana DNR is conducting ecological surveys at Pinhook Park. Once complete, they will share their full evaluation. Currently, the DNR has provided a water depth chart and an aquatic plant species list of the lagoon.

#### **V. VPA and City Updates**

Brent Thompson had nothing additional to add. Patrick Sherman reported having a positive meeting with Evelyn Bauman and her team at the South Bend Office of Sustainability to address future collaborations. Patrick also reported that due to unexpected obstacles, the completion of Seitz Park has been delayed until June of 2023.

#### **VI. Miscellaneous**

The committee discussed two existential crises: the climate crisis and the biodiversity crisis. Steve recounted the incident he witnessed at Howard Park with park employees spraying insecticide on a species of bumblebee known to be in population decline. Steve has informed the park board of this incident.

Charlene Rountree provided an account of her interactions with the Urban Tree Canopy internship program, and shared with the EAC pictures and a summary of what she accomplished with them.

Next meeting: September 12th, 2022 at 8:30am still by Teams.

Action items for follow-up:

- Garry Harrington will follow-up with The Meow Mission in coordination with SBARC on the feral cat population growth situation.
- Patrick Sherman to contact the Dream Center designers to inquire about the option of using bird-friendly glass.
- Andy Schnabel to provide a revised draft of Chapter 19 updates to Google Drive before the September EAC meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 9:45am.

Minutes approved 9/12/2022

**APPROVED**