

Ecological Advocacy Committee Meeting 1-6-2020

Location: Rum Village Nature Center

Committee Members Present:

Steve Sass
Andrew Tucker
Alicia Czarnecki
Josephine Borrer
Andrew Schnabel
Allison Pudlo

Others Present:

Garry Harrington – VPA Rum Village Park Supervisor
Hannah Teshka – VPA Naturalist
Matthew Moyers – VPA Partnerships, Community and Standards Coordinator
Brent Thompson – VPA Forester
Jonathan Jones – VPA Recreation Director
Therese Dorau – City of South Bend Office of Sustainability

Call to order – Steve Sass at 8:34 am.

Vote to approve the minutes from the September 9, 2019 EAC meeting and November 4, 2019 EAC meeting provided that the following change is made to the November 4, 2019 EAC Meeting Minutes: “The EAC is tasked with providing suggestions of native plants/ground cover for bank stabilization” under the section Riverwalk from Sample Street to Howard Park.

Motion by Steve Sass seconded by Alicia Czarnecki.

***Meeting minutes will need to be reviewed and edited one week prior to the meeting.**

Discussion:

Welcome to New Committee Members – Introductions for Old and New Members – Steve Sass and Garry Harrington

Old Members:

Steve Sass - charter member of the EAC since 2017
Andrew Tucker - 3rd year serving on the EAC
Alicia Czarnecki - charter member of the EAC since 2017

New Members -

Jo Borrer - Retired, Indiana Master Gardener
Allison Pudlo - Barista, Former Naturalist at Potato Creek State Park, Indiana Master Naturalist
Andrew Schnabel - Professor of Biology at IUSB

Election of Committee Chair –

Steve Sass was nominated by Alicia Czarnecki seconded by Andrew Tucker.

6 - I's 0 - opposed

Brief Orientation – For All Members – Steve Sass, Matthew Moyers and Garry Harrington

Steve Sass:

History of the Ecological Advocacy Committee – Steve Sass:

2015 – the concept of the EAC started around this time due to the potential sale of Elbel Park and Golf Course after the Board of Park Commissioners voted to approve the sale.

- Another function of the EAC is the Citizens Tree Board working the City Forester.

Park Board Resolution 004-2016 establishing the EAC was adopted in the fall of 2016.

- Key Takeaways (taken from Steve Sass’s EAC Orientation PowerPoint) –
 - EAC serves as a subcommittee to the Board of Park Commissioners:
 - “The Ecological Advocacy Committee shall be and hereby is charged with the responsibility for advising the Park Board with respect to issues involving or impacting the perpetuation of a healthy ecological system within the parks system in the City of South Bend, including, but not limited to, advising the Park Board on the following matters:
 - Identification of significant natural resources with the parks system and the completion of an overarching resource management plan for the parks system.
 - Impacts that park development has on the natural environment.
 - Educational program.
 - Improvement of plant diversity, population and health within the City of South Bend.
 - Such other related matters as the Park Board deems appropriate.”
- Additional Takeaways (taken from Steve Sass’s EAC Orientation PowerPoint) –
 - EAC members are appointed to any number of one-year terms.
 - EAC is required to meet a minimum of six times per year.
 - A quorum consists of a majority of EAC members.
 - EAC is required to appoint a chair at the first meeting of the calendar year. The chair serves a one-year term, and may be reappointed to any number of one-year terms.
 - The EAC is required to report formally (written or otherwise) to the Board of Park Commissioners and to the PARC Committee of the South Bend Common Council.
 - Unless renewed, the EAC will expire on 12/31/2021.
 - Being an officially created public entity, the EAC is required to comply with Indiana code 5-14-1.5 (otherwise known as the “open door law”)

2017 - Natural Resource Management Plan (NRMP)

- EAC served an advisory role.
- Sub-Committees were formed to advise on the Topics of Concern Section in the NRMP.
- VPA has 56 named park properties but serves as property managers to several other green spaces within the city.
- EAC helped to identify which park properties would be considered ecologically sensitive properties (see NRMP for a list of the 16 properties).
- Garry Harrington is currently working on management plans for each ecologically sensitive property.

2018 - Projects

- Urban Forestry
 - Reviewed the city-wide tree selection and planting policy
 - Presented a plan to the Common Council’s PARC Committee about updating two key city ordinances
- 35th Street Wetlands
 - This project was introduced to the Park Board in December 2017 by Andrew Tucker.
 - The property is located near Logan and 36th Street.
 - 35th Street Wetland is owned by the City of South Bend and acts as a drainage basin.

- o Part of the My South Bend Parks and Trails initiative is new park acquisition - to have a park within a 10-minute walk of every resident within the city.
- o This is a property that was identified as a potential park property acquisition.
- o Currently, there is a group of Notre Dame senior engineering students working on a site plan for the potential park property including delineating what is draining into this property and reporting project results to Alicia Czarnecki (project "client").
- Leeper Park
 - o Voted to remove the Leeper Park Duck Pond.
- Governor Joe Kernan Park
 - o EAC advised on bank stabilization after park visit.

2019

- Leeper Park
 - o Spoke with the Historical Preservation Commission in favor of the duck pond removal which resulted in the removal of 42 goldfish and 7 non-flighted ducks (there was a no-kill policy for these animals).
 - o Advised on the plantings within the park during the design phase.
- Pinhook Park
 - o Alicia Czarnecki is the Project Manager for this park upgrade.
 - o EAC was able to make suggestions/changes to the park design during the design phases.
 - o Park design upgrades include:
 - A trail along the outer part of the park connecting it to the River Walk
 - Upgrades to the building (restrooms and event space)
 - Upgrading the boat launch
- Coal Line Trail
 - o Rail to Trail update will be starting soon
 - o EAC conducted a walking site survey
- Elbel Park and Golf Course
 - o A citizens group presented a proposal suggesting State Dedicated Nature Preserve status for Elbel Park and Golf Course.
 - o EAC sent a formal recommendation to Aaron Perri after hearing and reviewing the proposal.
 - o Matthew Moyers recommends that the EAC continue to have a sub-committee pursue other options for preserving Mud Lake and Elbel Park.
- 35th Street Wetlands
 - o Notre Dame Civil Engineering students working on this project just presented 10-20% phase site plans.
 - o Next semester, they will continue to work through the site plans.
 - o Their projects will provide 4 different Site Plans for VPA to consider for park ideas.
- Forestry
 - o Worked with the City Forester to recommend changes to the City Ordinances on Trees and Vegetation.

Action Step for the EAC:

1. Review the Natural Resource Management Plan.

Action Steps for VPA:

1. Matthew Moyers to draft a letter for EAC endorsement that will go to PARC committee requesting an update on the status of the tree ordinances drafted and submitted by EAC to PARC in 2019.
2. Matthew Moyers to include “bank stabilization” and “responsible lighting” in the updated NRMP and submit to the park board for approval.

Next meeting is February 17, 2020 at 8:30 am at Rum Village Nature Center.

Motion to Adjourn by at 10:14 am by Steve Sass.

Minutes approved 2/17/2020

APPROVED