

## Minutes of the Ecological Advocacy Committee (EAC) Meeting on December 6, 2021

### Committee Members Present:

Charlene Allison Rountree  
Lindsay Chadderton  
Allison Pudlo  
Steve Sass  
Andy Schnabel  
John DiTillo  
Andrew Tucker

### Others Present:

Garry Harrington – VPA, Rum Village Park Property Manager  
Brent Thompson - City Forester, VPA  
Matthew Moyers - VPA, Partnerships, Community and Standards Coordinator  
Hannah Teshka – VPA, Pinhook Center Manager

### I. Call to Order - Steve Sass 8:34

### II. Approval of Minutes

The minutes from the October 25, 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.

[https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1Xa\\_BdrKUaS5Z8Bo9F-kbzDUPZ82Uj5AJ](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1Xa_BdrKUaS5Z8Bo9F-kbzDUPZ82Uj5AJ)

### III. Old Business

#### A. Continued discussion of River Windows project

An extensive discussion centered around two areas:

##### 1) Plant removal, herbicide use, and revegetation along Riverside trail

EAC members asked about the process of woody plant removal along Riverside and use of herbicides during the process. Brent Thompson reported: The forestry crew used Tordon on tree stumps, but that no herbicides were used on smaller brush that was mowed. Plans for next year are not to remove any of the stumps or previously mowed shrubs due to concerns about erosion, but instead to use foliar herbicides in spring 2022 as invasives resprout (especially honeysuckle). When herbicides are applied, flagging or other signage should be used.

Questions were also raised about plans for revegetation. It was unclear how far along those plans were, and so EAC hopes to communicate early in 2022 with Andy Force about those plans. Andrew Tucker noted that EAC's shared GoogleDrive site includes a native plantings guidance folder, which has a river guidelines document from Chicago with information directly relevant to this discussion (eg, BMPs about how to treat banks):

[https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1Xa\\_BdrKUaS5Z8Bo9F-kbzDUPZ82Uj5AJ](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1Xa_BdrKUaS5Z8Bo9F-kbzDUPZ82Uj5AJ)

##### 2) Next steps in project and possible EAC consultation

The next work will be between Pier Park and Plaza Park, as well as some areas south of the footbridge. EAC questioned the need and scope of this project and noted the difficulty in working on the steep hillside. It was suggested that the goal, as set by Aaron Perri, is to be able to see more of Howard Park from vantage points across the river. It was also suggested that John Martinez, Garry Harrington, Matt Moyers, Brent Thompson, and perhaps some EAC members visit the area to review the sites that might be affected. EAC could then offer input on the proposed work early in 2022, as work will not actually take place until late summer/early fall 2022.

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

Summary of some relevant projects that will be ongoing in 2022 (Garry Harrington summary of information from Patrick Sherman, City of South Bend Project Manager):

- A. 35th Street Wetlands: VPA is working to “right-size” project for available budget. It was noted that VPA has hired an architect for the design phase; questions were raised about possible consultation with EAC during this process (eg, offer positive input about ideas such as invasive species removal or developing an area that would allow wetland to hold water all year round). Matt Moyers suggested that EAC contact Patrick Sherman about offering input and asking to be consulted as the plans develop.
- B. Coal Line trail: Currently in Phase 2 with bids possibly going out in 2022. The project is under control of the Department of Community Investment, but the property would eventually be maintained by VPA. Steve Sass noted that some of the work has already started. Past observations by EAC (2019) determined that the area has no particularly ecologically sensitive or high-quality areas. It was suggested that EAC meet with DCI and its consultants about any future plantings to be sure that if plantings occur, they would be natives. Matt Moyers will check with DCI about this about plantings and maintenance hand-off. No set date yet for completion of the project.
- C. Solar panels installed in Howard Park: Will be up and running soon to help meet goal of LEED gold certification for Howard Park in February.
- D. Seitz Park and transmission line project - Transmission line (underground lines carrying power from Seitz Park to Notre Dame) is nearly completed. Some remediation still to be done as a result of tree removal. Project should be generating power by summer 2022. Question was raised about EAC input for final landscaping plans. Brent Thompson suggested that there will be new trees put in.
- E. Soil remediation project in LaSalle Park - In the hands of EPA, due to arsenic in the soil from coal ash dumping by Bendix Corporation.

#### **V. VPA and City Updates from Matthew Moyers**

- A. Update on Wildlife Management Plan - VPA staff is reviewing the document to turn into an implementation plan, using the Wildlife Management Plan as a “white paper” reference guide. Once completed, VPA will take it to other communities for discussion. Matt Moyers is working on this for late winter/early spring 2022.

- B. New membership - EAC have six continuing members and one new member for 2022 for a total of seven. The student position is still open. There is room for “of council” members, who would have non-voting, consultation roles. Matt Moyers would also like to bring in the Office of Sustainability as well. New memberships are a two-year commitment. For 2022, one of first orders of business will be to choose a chair and a secretary. Volunteers are welcome.
- C. Defining EAC’s role as a citizen’s tree board - Need a long-term vision for the tree board. EAC may want to consider working on an amendment to Chapter 19 of the municipal code, which currently makes no mention of a tree board, so perhaps that should be amended to better define tree board’s role. This would be a 2022 project - perhaps get Common Council on board by summer/fall 2022.

**VI. Miscellaneous**

- A. John DiTillo & Garry Harrington reported an observation of a VPA maintenance worker blowing leaves into the river instead of away from the river (just south of pedestrian bridge). The concern was about nutrient loading in the river, where leaves should be left to decompose and benefit the soil in that wooded area. Garry Harrington spoke with Paul Moreland (VPA Manager of Operations) about this and was told that VPA policy is not to blow leaves into river, so this should not be a regular practice.
- B. Invasive Plant Removal at Rum Village - Ten or more autumn olive trees and a burning bush near the Nature Center have been removed. Andy Force recommended replacement by Black haw viburnum (*Viburnum prunifolium*) and several of those plants have now been installed.

Next meeting: January 10, 8:30 am still by Zoom.

Possible agenda item: developing an invasive species brochure.

Meeting adjourned at 10:00 am

**APPROVED**

Minutes Approved 1/10/2022