

Minutes of the Ecological Advocacy Committee (EAC) Meeting on January 10, 2022

Committee Members Present:

Charlene Rountree
Allison Pudlo
Steve Sass
Andy Schnabel
Andrew Tucker
Amy Gillan

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
Evelyn Bauman – Director, Office of Sustainability

I. Call to Order - Steve Sass 8:33

II. Approval of Minutes

Charlene moved to approve the minutes of the December 6, 2021 meeting. Ally seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

III. New Business

A. Welcome New Members and EAC Introductions

Garry and Matt welcomed Amy as the newest member of the EAC and Evie Baughman as our newest of-counsel member. Introductory roundtable from all present.

B. Nominations and Voting for EAC Positions

1. Nominations and Voting for Chair – Matt briefly explained the position, the new rules regarding its 2 year cycle, its term limits , and briefly summarized who is able to vote for this position. Andrew Tucker nominated Steve Sass for the 2022-2024 Chair with reaffirmation in 2023.

2. Andy Schnabel indicated that he is not willing to continue as Secretary for 2022. Steve Sass nominated Charlene Rountree who accepted the nomination.

3. Andrew Tucker moved to close the nomination to confirm the slate of candidates of Steve Sass for 2022-2023 Chair and Charlene Rountree as 2022 Secretary. Ally Pudlo seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

Andy Schnabel pointed out that there is no current documentation detailing the role and responsibilities of the Chair position. As this position becomes more detailed, this should be a project to be completed this year in the EAC for both Chair and Secretary positions.

a. EAC discussed the need for meetings to be recorded because it helps facilitate more accurate minutes. Garry and Matt agreed to look into options for a Zoom or similar subscription for the EAC.

IV. Old Business

Garry presented updates on several upcoming park-related projects.

- A. Updates on Seitz Park, Plaza Park, Coal Line Trail and 35th Street Wetland.
 - a. Seitz Park – discussion on planting native plants. Andy and Steve pointed out that the proposed planting list provided by VPA contains mostly exotic plants and doesn't support the guiding principles of the 2021 Natural Resources management Plan. Requests and communication made to manager Patrick regarding such. Seitz Park is currently scheduled for construction completion in the summer of 2022. Garry followed up on EAC recommendations for the Park Department.
 - b. Plaza Park – the committee continued to voice concern over the planned vegetation cutting/removal associated with the “River Windows” project. Previously, EAC and VPA and city staff resolved to visit the property to assess the risks, but Garry reported that due to changes in city engineering staff that the visitation has been indefinitely delayed.
 - c. Coal Line Trail – Is an abandoned railway spur that is being converted into a trail by the Department of Community Investment for eventual turn-over to VPA. The EAC discussed the physical width/boundaries of the trail and whether or not there would be opportunities for committee involvement with landscape design.
 - d. 35th Street Wetland – VPA has hired a consultant to create conceptual designs for the property. The EAC's 35th Street Wetland subcommittee hopes to be actively involved in the park's design process.

B. Wildlife Coexistence Plan

Matt reported that VPA staff is still reviewing the draft plan.

V. VPA and City Updates Brent Thompson reported that two trees have been added to Pinhook's trail, but there is no funding for others. VPA will be hosting Arbor Day at Pinhook Park on April 30, 2022.

VI. EAC as Tree Advisory Board

- a. The committee continued to discuss the means for assuming a stronger role as a “tree board.” Matt reiterated his desire to work toward amending Chapter 19 of municipal code. Andy Schnabel suggested forming an EAC subcommittee to focus on the topic of tree boards.

VII. Miscellaneous

- A. After some deliberation Charlene Rountree moved to form two ad hoc subcommittees: Tree Board and Invasive Plant Brochure. Andy Schnabel

seconded, and the motion passed unanimously. The subcommittee will consist of the following members: Tree Board —Amy Gillan and Andy Schnabel co-leads, Evie Baughman, Garry Harrington, Mathew Moyers, Steve Sass, and Brent Thompson as resources. Invasive Plant Brochure — Charlene Rountree as lead, Amy Gillan and Ally Pudlo as members.

- B. The Invasive Plant Brochure will create a brochure to distribute to stores in South Bend that sell plants advising them to look over their inventory for prohibited, invasive species.

Next meeting: February 14, 2022 at 8:30am still by Zoom.

Action items for follow-up:

- Steve and Charlene to write up descriptions of the roles of the Chair and Secretary respectively.
- Garry and Matt to look into solutions for recording meetings.
- Garry continues to attempt to create scheduled on-site visits to Plaza Park.
- Garry to follow-up with VPA staff on Seitz Park planting list.

Meeting adjourned at 10:18am.

Minutes submitted by Charlene Rountree

APPROVED

Minutes approved 2/14/2022