

Minutes of the Ecological Advocacy Committee (EAC) Meeting on December 5th, 2022

Committee Members Present:

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

Others Present:

Garry Harrington — VPA, Rum Village Park Property Manager
Matthew Moyers – VPA, Partnerships, Community and Standards Coordinator
Brent Thompson — City Forester, VPA
John Martinez – VPA, Director of Facilities and Grounds

I. Call to Order - Steve Sass 8:31 am

II. Approval of Minutes

Amy Gillan moved to approve the minutes of the October 24, 2022 meeting. Andrew Schnabel seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

III. Old Business

A. SR933 Bridge Improvements

John Martinez shared with the EAC diagrams that depicted the upcoming SR933 state construction projects that will be taking place over the course of the next two years. The reconstruction of the bridge will impact Leeper Park and The Rose Garden. John explained how approximately 14 trees may be impacted in Leeper Park, possibly removed because of this project, and this is of concern that is being brought up with the contractors involved due to soil erosion and compaction concerns. Since The Rose Garden will be impacted, too, and so Larry Clifford will be communicated with as well.

Steve Sass, Andrew Tucker, and Andrew Schnabel brought up concerns about making sure any effects to wildlife and destabilizing habitat and ecology should be considered. Andrew Tucker provided a plant guide for John Martinez as an initial resource. It is good these construction projects are being brought up to EAC attention, however.

B. Memorial Park Plantings Update

Garry Harrington suggested Andy Schnabel update our group on the wildflower gardens being started across from Memorial Park. One of the two has been planted prior to cold weather setting in. They did receive some suggestions and help from VPA on this project on both supplies and tools to create these small gardens. The IUSB students are having a good time with the development of these.

Andy Schnabel with the help of John Martinez and Google maps provided a view of where these gardens will be located at near IUSB. Matt Moyers did wish to remind that

ownership of these lands has been a difficult point to clarify in the past. It is good to ensure that these wildflower gardens are in the correct jurisdictions.

C. Various Park Updates

Garry Harrington wanted to let us know from the VPA that as of November 18th Seitz Park and the river walk project is moving along nicely. Expected completion date for this project is late summer of 2023, despite the delays from hydrology installation complications from University of Notre Dame.

The MLK Dream Center will officially break ground November 15th, 2023.

Meow Mission has been reached out to again regarding the increasing feral cat situation, especially at the 35th St. wetland park. They are considering resolving this scenario by trapping and releasing these cats. Animal control may get involved in this. Andrew Tucker provided a thoughtful discussion piece on the approaches towards feral cat difficulties with ecological impacts and cat welfare.

IV. New Business

A. EAC Membership Updates

Matthew Moyers let us know that all applications for EAC committee membership have been submitted, and that for 2023 we will probably continue forward with a 7- or 8-person cohort. No workable student applications were received.

Allison Pudlo had a question regarding the student application process. Matthew Moyers reassured that the student position is available all year round.

B. Recap of 2022 Achievements

Steve Sass, Garry Harrington, and Matthew Moyers recapped some of the achievements of the EAC committee for this year. These included addressing the application of pesticide on park grounds, advising on Chapter 19 with tree plantings, additional plantings at Howard Park and IUSB, 35th Street Wetland trash removal addressment, Cohabitation plan is still under consideration, invasive species ordinance enforcement effort for local and large retailers, and provide guidance that helped with the VPA attaining the National Gold Medal Award.

V. VPA and City Updates

Matthew Moyers wanted to mention the Martin Luther King campus improvement project is still state sponsored and will most likely begin to be worked on early in 2023. Would like EAC guidance and advice on this project's implementation.

VI. Miscellaneous

Garry Harrington wanted to let the EAC know that there is a position open for a part-time naturalist at Rum Village Nature Center in case anyone knows potential interested applicants.

Charlene Rountree suggested Rum Village coordinate with Fernwood Botanical on providing any applicants with full-time opportunities between the two locations, since both have a tendency to offer part-time in each locale.

Next meeting: January 9th, 2023 at 8:30am still by Teams.

Meeting adjourned at 9:18am.

Minutes Approved 1/9/2022

APPROVED