

North Oaks Natural Resources Commission
NRC Meeting Minutes
Virtual Meeting via Teleconference or Electronic Means Only
February 17, 2022 at 7 p.m.

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Hawkins called the meeting of February 27, 2022 to order at 7:00 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL

NRC members participated **by telephone or other electronic means** pursuant to Minn. Stat. § 13D.021.

Present: Chair Andrew Hawkins, Commissioners Shannon Dunn, Paul Ellis, Penny Kianian, Bob Larson, Damien LePoutre, Addison Motta, David White, City Council Liaisons James Hara and Tom Watson, City Forester Mark Rehder, City Administrator Kevin Kress
Others: Bob Mackie, Steve Olinger, Patricia Orud, Kate Winsor

A quorum was declared present.

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

City Administrator Kress said that per the City Council's instructions, the NRC is supposed to select a representative and an alternate to attend the VLAWMO Tech Meetings. He suggested it be added as a new item or in Commissioner Reports.

MOTION by Dunn, seconded by Hawkins, to approve the agenda as amended.

MOTION carried unanimously by roll call vote.

4. CITIZEN COMMENTS

None

5. APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MONTH'S MINUTES

Chair Hawkins had a few minor edits, including changing the year to 2022, adding Commissioner Kianian to the attendees, and one minor grammatical error to be fixed.

MOTION by Dunn, seconded by Larson, to approve the January 20, 2022 meeting minutes as amended.

MOTION carried unanimously by roll call vote.

6. BUSINESS ACTION ITEMS

6a. Discussion and possible action on climate emergency proclamation

- Residents Kate Winsor, Steve Olinger and Laurie Olinger belong to a climate action organization, and they recently wrote an email to the City Council asking them to consider a climate emergency proclamation for the City of North Oaks. Resident Bob Mackie also wrote an email to the City Council at the same time. After discussing the topic at the last City Council meeting, Council asked NRC to review the topic.
- Kate Winsor noted that across Minnesota, there are 16 municipalities that have recently declared a climate emergency, including Bloomington, Duluth, Edina, Maplewood, St. Louis Park, Rochester, etc.
- Winsor explained that a resolution on climate emergency would send a message to lawmakers that the time for action on this issue is now. She noted that this is a global issue that cannot be solved by one city alone, but in adopting a resolution, North Oaks would be joining a growing group of cities that are concerned about this issue, and would make North Oaks a leader to other municipalities. A resolution would put the city on a path to address climate change in every decision that it makes. NOHOA would also need to be a stakeholder and would need to be interwoven into the resolution.
- Winsor explained that the resolution would acknowledge that the climate crisis exists, and it would outline specific and measurable actions that the city could take to reduce greenhouse gases, such as mitigation efforts. It would also include ways of tracking progress. Winsor said she would be happy to assist with drafting the resolution, and she noted that there are a lot of examples from other cities that could be used. There is also an individual in Minnesota who is coordinating the efforts of cities preparing to declare an emergency who could assist.
- Bob Mackie is involved with the Minnesota Chapter of Elders Climate Action and he is highly in favor of a resolution. He added that each city that declares a climate emergency has the ability to designate their own actions on the topic. He said it would be worthwhile to look at other cities' action plans, particularly Edina and St. Louis Park. He thought the idea of a climate action resource hub on the website would be particularly useful for residents.
- Councilor Watson said that the City Council is not interested in telling the NRC what to do or how to do it on this topic, but rather they are interested in the collective thinking of the group and the residents. One thing that he said came through loud and clear from their discussion at the City Council meeting is that North Oaks can be leaders rather than followers on this topic. He believes the City can create a resolution with ideas that make sense for this particular community and are consistent with this movement. He shared some ideas that Winsor already shared with him, including:
 - Make a declaration that climate matters and will be considered when making major decisions in the city, such as development, etc.
 - Look at action items in city green step program
 - Look at installing electric vehicle charging stations at locations such as Village Center, Waverly gardens, etc.
- Watson also encouraged the NRC to look at ways to keep existing hardwood trees. He said it would be necessary to get the North Oaks Company and NOHOA on board with this. He also believed this would be relevant to the development pending in Nord and Red Forest, and in the redevelopment of older parts of North Oaks.

- Commissioner Kianian asked if a resolution would include efforts to retrofit older homes in the city? Winsor said it would be focused on new projects moving forward. Mackie suggested it could help residents who want to take on retrofitting projects such as adding solar power to their homes. It could give them resources for how to do this, where to go, etc. Kianian said that ASC may need to be part of that.
- Chair Hawkins said it would be wise to carefully consider the name of the declaration, noting that some may question the exact verbiage – whether it should be an “emergency” or not? He also suggested that a sub-committee of the NRC could be a good starting point for drafting a resolution. He also thought that the resolution could include opportunities for people to get involved, such as tree planting, cleaning up neighborhoods and other community-action oriented items.
- Councilor Watson suggested that the group not limit the conversation based on current code. For example, current city code has a height restriction for houses, but there may be a way to change that if the height to be added includes solar panels. Chair Hawkins suggested that the conversation not be limited based on current NOHOA restrictions either.
- NOHOA representative Patricia Orud noted that the ASC follows federal regulations on solar and has never turned down a solar project. Sometimes they have asked residents to place equipment differently, but they have always found a way to make it happen.
- Winsor added that she hopes sub-associations would be involved.
- Commissioner Kianian asked if we were to get funding from the state on climate projects, would this mean that North Oaks would need to open up the community to outsiders? Councilor Watson believed there would be ways around this, such as getting NOHOA, the North Oaks Company, or VLAWMO involved to be the official owners or funders of projects. Kianian also suggested a Survey Monkey would be a good next step for getting input from the community and finding people who would be willing to work on it.
- Councilor Watson suggested that the group set up a Zoom meeting sometime in the next couple weeks to brainstorm ideas for the resolution. Chair Hawkins agreed, and added that Winsor, the Olingers and Mackie would be welcome. Mackie added that an individual named Larry Craft helped draft the St. Louis Park resolution and he would try to get him to attend the meeting as well.
- Chair Hawkins suggested March 3rd at 7 p.m. He will work with City Staff to get a Zoom set up. Councilor Watson suggested that if Winsor is willing, perhaps they could have a brief prep call to prepare for the meeting.

MOTION by White, seconded by Larson, to schedule a special meeting to discuss a list of ideas for the climate action plan for further work at the regular March NRC meeting.

MOTION carried unanimously by roll call vote.

6b. Discussion and possible action on pesticide education plan

- Chair Hawkins introduced the Phase II Pesticide Education Plan (included in the packet), in which the focus shifts to herbicides. He believes the plan is well thought-out with specific objectives, goals, measurement, and timelines. They are looking to refer

this plan to Council for consideration. He asked Commissioners for any questions, comments or feedback.

- Commissioner Ellis said he thought the plan looks good, and that it could possibly be a good way to outline the climate plan.
- Commissioner Kianian asked when groups come in to spray herbicides, especially on public lands, does that need to be posted and shared with community? Chair Hawkins said he was not sure, perhaps pesticide/herbicide committee could look into this.

MOTION by Hawkins, seconded by Dunn, to send the draft Phase II Pesticide/Herbicide plan to City Council for review and possible adoption.

MOTION carried unanimously by roll call vote.

6c. Discuss 2022 Natural Resource Commission new meeting schedule

- At the last meeting, it was motioned and approved that the NRC move their meeting to the second Monday of the month at 6 p.m., pending approval of any Commissioners who were not able to attend when it was discussed in February. This would begin in March. There were no objections to this by Commissioners who were not in attendance at the last meeting. Hawkins asked that City Staff send Commissioners a list of these new meeting dates.

6d. Discussion on NRC Chair and Vice-Chair Positions

- Hawkins reviewed the Chair and Vice-Chair responsibilities. There were no volunteers. Hawkins asked that people who are thinking about it reach out to him for further discussion.

6e. Discussion and possible action on internship program

- Commissioners Dunn and Kianian have been working on the position description and had a couple questions – first, they wondered if the program should be just for college students or also High School students. If it includes High School students, there may be some different considerations to apply, different legal requirements, etc. They asked City Administrator Kress if there are different requirements for these different age levels? Kress said not necessarily, unless you are taking the student away from the school. There may be hour restrictions such as not working past 10 p.m. Dunn said it would likely be a self-directed experience, so it would not include late hours.
- Dunn and Kianian also asked whether there any requirements for city employment that should be included, such as a background check, drug screening, etc.? Kress said he could pose to council, but he hasn't seen these requirements be very consistent across other cities lately. If you put the requirement on the job posting, most candidates for whom it would be an issue won't apply. It could be phrased as "the ability to pass a drug test", and then the City could decide later if they want to actually administer a test.
- Commissioner Dunn asked if the the applicant would need to be a resident of North Oaks? If they are going to be doing work in North Oaks, do they need to be escorted by a resident? Chair Hawkins said he did not believe they need to worry about this, as long as one of the Commissioners invites that individual into the community, they are technically allowed to be in the community. We should have structure for how to

address this. NOHOA representative Orud said that the intern must be accompanied by a NOHOA member. Chair Watson pointed out that there are some examples of non-residents doing work unescorted in the community, such as the City Forester, City Staff, deer removal contractors, etc. Orud explained that there is an agreement between the city and NOHOA about city employees or city vendors being able to be in the city. The City and NOHOA would need to expand that to include a non-resident intern. Watson and Hawkins both believed this could be worked out and still comply with NOHOA regulations.

- Commissioner Dunn asked whether the intern could be paid. Commissioner Kianian believes that the NRC will get a better response if the internship is paid. Chair Hawkins said he thinks the NRC can make a recommendation/financial ask of Council to support this. Councilor Watson said he thinks an internship would not be too expensive for the city, and he would be happy to “carry the water” on this issue. City Administrator Kress said most cities pay \$14-20 / hour. Watson asked how many hours might be required. Kress said most cities limit an internship to 67 days. He thought an internship could be anywhere from 10-20 hours / week. Kianian said she wrote the description to be very wide open so that the internship could be various amounts of time, depending on the topic and interest of the student.
- NOHOA representative Orud noted that VLA WMO does a lot of work with schools and college age kids. Dawn Tanner may be able to provide some advice on internship.
- Chair Hawkins said when it comes time to advertising the position, Handshake is a good platform. Most of the colleges in the area participate. Commissioner Kianian said whatever they write up will be shared with City Council first.
- Chair Hawkins summarized the next steps – when the job description is ready, it will be shared with NRC and a motion will be made to share with Council for approval with a recommended dollar amount. Councilor Watson suggested that the idea for the internship program be floated to Council for feedback at the next meeting and then the formal proposal considered at a later meeting

MOTION by Hawkins, seconded by Dunn, to provide an informational packet with some framework for the internship program to the City Council for feedback and consideration at the March 2022 City council Meeting.

MOTION carried unanimously by roll call vote.

7. COMMISSIONER / STAFF REPORTS

a. Tick Task Force Reports

- Chair Hawkins said the Task Force has been on hiatus over the winter. He will propose a meeting in March to reinvigorate the group, see who comes, and work on an education plan for the new tick season. There is usually a garden club event in May that they go to kick off the season.

b. Community Outreach/Education

- Commissioners Motta and Kianian have been working on an article of resources for preparing for spring and connecting with nature. They are highlighting 3 websites and apps that may be of interest to residents.
- If anyone has ideas for news articles going forward, please share with Motta and Kianian.

c. NOHOA Nest

- Chair Hawkins said that NOHOA Nest is meeting on March 2nd remotely at 1 p.m. There will be an announcement on the NOHOA website. NOHOA is also having a town hall on Feb. 28 focused on NOHOA bylaws and other issues.

d. City Forester Report

- City Forester Mark Rehder reported that there is more Emerald Ash Borer out there, and they are doing more markings of diseased trees. There used to be a break in inspections this time of year, but Emerald Ash Borer has filled that gap. They are staying on top of it as much as they can. It is spread throughout the community.
- Feb 1st was the deadline for Oak Wilt. There are a few property owners who still have diseased trees, but they are working to address that before road restrictions come on.
- He is working on an article on young tree training, things land owners can do to make sure trees can withstand ice storms, wind storms, etc. and do the best they can as they age.

e. VLAWMO Tech Report

- NOHOA representative Orud highlighted the VLAWMO grants for individual projects. They are not big grants, but can be very helpful. Most are under \$1,000.
- Orud gave an update on carp removal. The carp got skittish and scared by the equipment on the ice. They spread out throughout the lake. They are now waiting for carp to aggregate in specific spaces so they can net them. The purpose of the carp removal is to improve water quality. There are other fish in Pleasant lake that are contributing to problems, including bullheads. They are going to start a study of bullheads. VLAWMO publishes information sheets and studies on every lake they are involved in. There are at least 8 reports on Pleasant Lake that can be found on the VLAWMO website.
- The invasive species of focus for VLAWMO this year will be yellow iris. They will be doing mapping in Deep Lake and the Deep Lake Channel.
- Commissioner Larson volunteered to be the VLAWMO representative, and Patricia Orud the alternate.

f. City Report

- Councilor Hara said that the City Engineer is working to do the best they can to make the Red Forest Development as thoughtful and tree-preserving as possible. City Councilors are currently looking at city ordinances on trees to clarify them. Councilor Watson added that they are also looking at a CUP condition that requires putting a home on a lot in a way that is naturally suited to the environment. This has been an issue that has come up for several CUPs currently under consideration

8. NEXT REGULAR MEETING:

Monday, March 14, 2022 at 6 p.m.

City Administrator Kress suggested that rather than the Special Meeting on March 3rd to brainstorm for the climate resolution, perhaps they could meet an hour earlier on the regular meeting date to discuss this topic. Chair Hawkins said he would check with Winsor, the

Olingers, and Mackie who were no longer on the Zoom to see if this might be amenable, and will follow-up with City Staff to finalize the meeting date.

MEETING ADJOURNED:

MOTION by Hawkins, seconded by Dunn, to adjourn the meeting at 9:26 p.m.

MOTION carried unanimously by roll call.

Kevin Kress

Kevin Kress, City Administrator

Shannon Dunn

Chair, Shannon Dunn

Date approved: 3.14.2022