



CITY OF NORTH OAKS

Regular Natural Resources Commission Meeting
Thursday, October 21, 2021
7 PM, Community Meeting Room, 100 Village Center Drive
MEETING AGENDA

Remote Access - *Natural Resource Commission members will participate by telephone or other electronic means pursuant to Minn. Stat. §13D.021. Any person wishing to monitor the meeting electronically from a remote location may do so by calling the following Zoom meeting videoconference number: 1-312-626-6799, Webinar ID: 818 5026 2895 or by joining the meeting via the following link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81850262895>. Due to the existing COVID-19 Health Pandemic, no more than five (5) members of the public may be in Council Chambers (Community Room, 100 Village Center Drive, MN) during the meeting. Once room capacity is met, anyone wishing to attend the meeting above the five (5) members of the public who may be present in the room during the meeting will be required to monitor the meeting remotely.*

1. Call to Order

2. Roll Call

3. Approval of Agenda

4. Citizen Comments - *Members of the public are invited to make comments to the Commission during the public comments section. Up to four minutes shall be allowed for each speaker. No action will be taken by the Commission on items raised during the public comment period unless the item appears as an agenda item for action.*

5. Approval of Previous Month's Minutes

- 5a. Approval of Natural Resources Meeting minutes of September 16, 2021
[9.16.21 NRC Meeting Minutes - Draft.pdf](#)

6. Business Action Items

- 6a. Discussion on deer management and aerial studies
- 6b. Discussion on internship opportunities
- 6c. Discussion on infected and diseased trees

7. Commissioner / Staff Reports -

- *Tick Task Force Report*
- *Community Outreach: Winsor Report*
- *NOHOA/ NEST Report*
- *City Forester Report*
- *VLAWMO Tech Report*
- *City Report*

8. Next Meeting: Thursday, November 18, 2021

9. Adjourn

North Oaks Natural Resources Commission
NRC Meeting Minutes
Virtual Meeting via Teleconference or Electronic Means Only
September 16, 2021 at 7 p.m.

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Hawkins called the meeting of September 16, 2021 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, Bob Larson, Damien Lepoutre, David White, Kate Winsor, City Council Liaison James Hara, NOHOA Liaison Patricia Orud

Absent: Penny Kianan, City Administrator Kevin Kress

Staff Present: City Forester Mark Rehder

A quorum was declared present.

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Chair Hawkins added that he will be giving a few updates from VLAWMO during the VLAWMO tech report.

MOTION by Winsor, seconded by White, to approve the agenda as submitted.

MOTION carried unanimously by roll call vote.

4. CITIZEN COMMENTS

None

5. APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MONTH'S MINUTES

MOTION by Dunn, seconded by White, to approve the June 17, 2021

MOTION carried unanimously by roll call vote.

6. BUSINESS ACTION ITEMS

- a. Update on Tick Task Force Survey
 - Commissioners White and Larson met several times over the summer, sometimes with former Tick Task Force Chair Brooke Moore, to discuss items relevant to the

Tick Task Force. One of their main priorities was to get the Tick Task Force Survey up and running.

- Instead of a time-limited survey, they changed the format to a rolling survey so that community members can complete the survey any time they have a tick encounter or experience a tick-borne illness in their household.
- The survey is available via Survey Monkey, and embedded on the City of North Oaks website. Chair Hawkins walked attendees through where to find it and asked that Commissioners act as ambassadors to get the word out about where and how to complete the survey.
- On average, people spend about 1 min, 45 seconds on the survey.
- The hope is that this format will give the Tick Task Force real-time feedback about where problem areas are in the community so they can target outreach in those areas.
- Commissioner Dunn asked if the intent is for anyone to take the survey, even if they haven't had a tick encounter. Chair Hawkins confirmed yes, because this helps calculate the overall incidence of tick-borne illness in the area. Commissioner Lepoutre noted that because of the rolling nature of the survey, it cannot be accurately used for statistical analysis to calculate overall incidence. Chair Hawkins agreed and retracted his earlier statement, stating that perhaps only people who have had a tick incident should report. Commissioner Lepoutre suggested that this data is still valuable because it will allow the Task Force to see if the change in reported incidents over time.
- Chair Hawkins shared some of the response analysis – at the time of the meeting, there were 19 responses. One particularly useful analysis is the location in North Oaks where people are reporting incidents.
- Commissioner White asked where we will share this information. Hawkins said the survey is not structured in the way that it would be useful for MDH, and this data is considered supplementary for the North Oaks community.
- Commissioner White asked if we at least want to let MDH to know that we are doing it, in case it would be helpful to them. Hawkins said he will let Brooke Moore know so she can share with any contacts she has at MDH.
- Chair Hawkins noted that the great thing about the Survey Monkey tool is that it is very easy to add and edit questions, so please let him know if there are any suggestions for edits.
- Commissioner White asked if the Task Force would want to license this for a fee to other municipalities. Chair Hawkins said he thinks the content has already been shared in previous surveys, and since Survey Monkey is an external software, it would not be feasible to do so. Chair Hawkins said he would be happy if the content is freely shared as a benefit to other communities.
- Lepoutre asked whether the survey has a question on whether a person has experienced a tick bite, but not necessarily a tick-borne illness. This may provide some data on how often a tick-bite results in disease, what actions help reduce disease after a tick bite, etc.
- Commissioner White asked if we have any handle on what is going on in the medical community with regard to Lyme disease. Chair Hawkins was not sure, suggested Brooke Moore may be the best person to ask.

- NOHOA liaison Patricia Orud noted that there is a MN Lyme Disease Association and wondered if anyone has been in touch with them. Chair Hawkins said he has not, but he believes previous committee members have. Chair Hawkins said he will reach out, possibly invite them to a future meeting.
- City Forester Mark Rehder suggested that the Task Force consider taking a laptop along to community events so residents can take the survey on site. Chair Hawkins agreed this would be a great idea.

b. Update and Feedback on NOHOA Tree Policy

- City Administrator Kevin Kress sent out the NOHOA Tree Conservation Policy to Commissioners a few months ago. This policy was passed by the NOHOA board in June 2021. Chair Hawkins gave a brief summary. He stated he wanted to make the Commission aware of the new policy, and also to seek feedback on it to provide to NOHOA. He also wondered how the Commission could help educate the community about trees and tree health.
- NOHOA Liaison Patricia Orud gave some background on the policy, noting that NOHOA and the city have a different scope of responsibilities regarding the natural environment. This policy is specifically designed to address NOHOA's responsibilities, which include managing and conserving natural resources. City responsibilities, on the other hand, are more geared toward addressing shade tree diseases per city ordinance.
- NOHOA Liaison Orud explained that the policy is being applied through the Architectural Supervisory Committee (ASC). This committee has to approve any exterior changes to the property, which includes trees. Prior to making any changes, homeowners must take a tree inventory that accounts for all trees on their property and submit a plan for proposed work. If they are planning to remove any trees 6" or larger, the ASC will review their plans to determine if they are appropriate. If homeowners are planning to remove trees, they will be encouraged to replace them, if not on their own property then elsewhere. Plans must also outline how existing trees will be protected during construction processes.
- The policy is designed to get the community to think bigger about tree management than just single trees. Rather, it looks at if and when trees are removed, how does this affect neighbors, wildlife, drainage, etc. The goal of the policy is not to be overly strict, but to encourage thoughtful approaches to tree management.
- NOHOA is already getting feedback from arborists who work in the city on the language in the policy, and they have started to update it to make it as clear as possible. They are very open to modifications, additions, etc.
- Councilor Hara asked if the North Oaks Company is bound to follow the policies in their development. Orud clarified that if the development has been accepted into NOHOA, they do have to follow the policies. If they are not accepted, then they are not bound by the policies. She explained that not all land in the City of North Oaks is covered by NOHOA. The City can put into place city ordinances (within limits), but there has to be a statutory basis within state law which makes it more difficult to put them into place. NOHOA can be more restrictive.
- Councilor Hara noted that by the time NOHOA accepts developments into the association, they are usually largely completed, so it may be a bit late in the process for them to be held to the policy. Orud noted that when the North Oaks Company presents

their development plans to the City, NOHOA comments and provides recommendations. This would be a time at which the City could highlight NOHOA's suggestions.

- Commissioner Winsor asked how the policy affects damaged trees. Orud clarified that if a tree is diseased, damaged or dying, then homeowners are free to remove it without going to the ASC. If it is a tree they just don't like, they must have it reviewed. Rehder confirmed that the forester will review trees to document whether the tree is a candidate for removal and will send this information on to NOHOA.
- Commissioner Lepoutre asked if NOHOA really has the capacity to enforce the policy. Orud said yes, NOHOA has the legal authority to enforce the policy, but it is a complaint-based system and they rely on community reporting.
- Commissioner Lepoutre asked if a tree is dead, why MUST it be removed? Some dead trees are healthy for the ecosystem. Orud clarified that removal of dead trees may depend on the area. If it is a potential hazard, it should likely be removed. But if it is not, for example if it is in the conservation area, it may not be recommended for removal.
- Commissioner Lepoutre also expressed surprise to see improved drainage as a potential alternative to replanting, and wondered why the diameter at breast height (DBH) for heritage trees and significant trees was much smaller for conifers than deciduous trees. Orud explained that drainage improvements are not to drain the property. Rather, because the stormwater system is based on drainage along the roads, changes to topography on a lot may cause undesirable drainage into a wetland. Therefore, the NOHOA engineer would work on a project to determine the most desirable improvement. As for the DBH of conifers – because they grow faster and taller than deciduous trees, the policy is trying to recognize that there is a difference between the two, and to utilize best management practices from the DNR.
- City Forester Rehder added that small diameter tree are often used for screening in between homes in the community, and that even taking out small evergreens can change the dynamic from lot to lot.
- Councilor Hara noted that the challenge on the City side with North Oaks Company developments is that they are initially reviewed on paper, and although the North Oaks Company indicates that they are going to do the best they can to preserve trees, the impact on the natural environment can be hard to conceptualize. There are only two developments left to be reviewed, and at the last City Council meeting, they decided as a group that they would go tour the site in person prior to granting grading permits, etc. to have a better understanding of what actually is and is not going to be removed. They hope to preserve some heritage oaks in the Gate Hill area. Council also hopes to get a joint work session with NOHOA in October to develop a more cohesive thought process between the two bodies.
- Commissioner White asked if drought conditions are creating a forest fire hazard. Orud indicated that there is no concern this year because there is not a lot of fuel on the forest floor and no pathways for fire to spread. With the drought, we will see the effect on trees in 3-5 years. But overall, we are a pretty low risk for fires because we remove things pretty quickly. The biggest concern Orud has is the conservancy area because there is less cleanup over there.
- Orud noted that the new tree policy is on the NOHOA website under the ASC section. Anyone who wants training on the policy can contact her.

7. COMMISSIONER / STAFF REPORTS

7a. Tick Task Force Reports

- None (see update in 6a)

7b. Community Outreach

- Commissioner Winsor put together an article for the North Oaks News about plants that can help repel mosquitos. It did not make it in to the August issue so they will hold until spring.
- World Honeybee day was highlighted in August E-blast.
- City Forester Rehder wrote an article on basic tree care for the last issue of the North Oaks News.
- The Commission hosted an informational table at the Farm Fest event.
- Chair Hawkins appeared in a Nine North informational video on invasive species.
- There will be an article in the next issue of the North Oaks News about the tick survey.
- Orud suggested that maybe they could look into a NOHOA/City Natural Environment day in the neighborhoods.
- Commissioner Winsor asked about a signage campaign. Orud said if time limited, it might be possible. She will bring it to the NOHOA board.

7c. NOHOA Nest

- NOHOA liaison Patricia Orud shared that Buckthorn Day is coming up on September 25 at Mary Hill Park. The person who invented the Buckthorn blaster will be there to demonstrate. There will also be education about invasive species.
- There will be more tree planting in October. NOHOA took down some trees, so per their policy they need to replace them!
- This will be a winter of planning for NEST. They are going to look at projects and decide where they want to go with them.
- Natural Shore technology is doing buckthorn removal in the Deep Lake area on NOHOA property. They are starting to develop a plan for the perimeter of Deep Lake, most of which NOHOA owns. They will also allow residents to pay to remove buckthorn in this area on NOHOA property as well.
- VLAWMO is working with them on invasive species in Deep Lake. They are putting together a proposal to remove yellow iris. They are starting to spread to Pleasant Lake, so they need to be addressed soon.
- Carp to be harvested late fall, early winter.
- They are starting to look at aquatic invasive species of other types. Working with other stakeholders such as the Water Authority, the DNR, etc.
- There is another project going on that NOHOA is not involved with in the Wilkinson Lake area to re-meander some channels that were cut straight a generation ago. Re-meandering will clean up the water in Wilkinson.

7d. City Forester Report:

- City Forester Mark Rehder shared that it has been business as usual, addressing shade tree disease issues. They are finishing up oak wilt marking and notifications. Will start emerald ash borer after that. The oak wilt video is complete, can be found on channel 19. Check it out and let others know!

- They continue to send out letters on delinquent tree removal on diseased trees.
- Working with tree care companies to make them aware of tree preservation policy. He noted that they can be a good vector for educating homeowners.
- Rehder met with Mark Houge at Island Field to look at tree preservation. He was disappointed there wasn't a tree inventory in place, makes it difficult for engineers to decide where swale will go. They did what they could, and he hopes that can be rectified in the future to plan for grading, placement of structures, etc.

7e. VLAWMO Tech Committee Report:

- Commissioner Larson had nothing at this time.
- Chair Hawkins noted that VLAWMO sent out a notice about Blue Green Algae bloom in Pleasant. Hawkins sent the info to NOHOA and City for their e-newsletters.
- Chair Hawkins has been in communication with Dawn Tanner. VLAWMO also has a strong interest in invasive species and the recent videos by the NRC have caught their interest. They may want to collaborate in the future on other outreach efforts, particularly around Japanese Barberry and Common Barberry which were fairly recently listed by the MN Department of Agriculture as an invasive species.
- Commissioner Dunn contacted VLAWMO to get surface water data on the lakes they have been monitoring. She will contact the St. Paul Water authority to get data they collect on Pleasant Lake. She is working on a database of what existing data is out there on surface water bodies in North Oaks.
- Commissioner Lepoutre added that he heard VLAWMO got the grant to work on the re-meandering project for Wilkinson Lake. Councilor Hara said he believes that project is a go for next year, that they have the means and funds to move forward. Orud said at the last VLAWMO Tech meeting they said they are in the contract writing stage, but they still need MN Board of Water and Soil Resources approval so it will be a couple months before they can put out contracts. Not sure if it will start next year or the year after. They have some grants, but there also needs to be some private money and some city money.

7f. City Report – Councilor Hara:

- Councilor Hara shared that there was a Council meeting last Thursday, September 9. Final plan approval on Gate Hill was denied, the reasoning was complicated but has to do with conversion of commercial acres into residential units per the 1999 PDA. He said there is a discrepancy as to how many acres are available for that conversion. The plan was voted down 3-2. The issue that they are struggling with is that developments they have seen as of late are higher density than what has been seen in the past, and they are trying to be careful to follow the 1999 PDA.
- Other items – they are planning a workshop with NOHOA to work on creating a more cohesive unified approach. They hope to strengthen the relationship between the two bodies.

8. NEXT MEETING: Thursday, October 21, 2021 at 7 p.m.

MEETING ADJOURNED:

MOTION by White, seconded by Winsor, to adjourn the meeting at 8:50 p.m.

MOTION carried unanimously by roll call.

Kevin Kress, City Administrator

Chair, Andrew Hawkins

Date approved: _____