

**MINUTES
CITY OF ST. CHARLES
NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION MEETING
RALPH GRATHOFF, CHAIRMAN
DECEMBER 13, 2018**

Members Present: Chairman Ralph Grathoff, Isabella Bernat, Valerie Blaine, Kathy Brens, Heather Goudreau, Lee Haggas, Ray Hauser, Suzi Myers, Loren Nagy, Pam Otto

Members Absent: Chloe Fanning, Caroline Wilfong

Others Present: Chris Adesso, AJ Reineking

Visitors Present: Alek Crawford, Bennett Melone

1. Call to Order & Pledge of Allegiance

The meeting was convened by Chair. Grathoff at 7:01 p.m.

2. Introduction of Visitors, Comments and Concerns

Alek Crawford and Bennett Melone, St. Charles East High School students, introduced themselves to all present. The students were in attendance at the Natural Resources Commission [NRC] meeting as part of a school project entitled *Government for a Day*.

3. Minutes Review and Approval

Motion to approve and place into the public record the minutes of the November 8, 2018 Natural Resources Commission meeting. Motion by Comm. Brens, second by Comm. Myers to approve the minutes. Voice vote: unanimous; nays – none. Motion carried at 7:03 p.m.

4. Old Business

A. Storm Drain Markers

Comm. Goudreau shared a video regarding storm drain marker installation. The NRC discussed attending the next Government Services Committee [GSC] meeting in January to present the storm drain marker proposal. Comm. Goudreau will bring a sample storm drain medallion to the GSC meeting.

B. Urban Forestry Management Plan

Mr. Reineking noted the Urban Forestry Management Plan updates will be presented at the next GSC meeting. Specifically, the updates to the acceptable and unacceptable species lists in the Plan will be presented as they require an ordinance amendment.

C. Monarch Butterflies

Comm. Hauser requested the NRC's support for a monarch butterfly initiative. Information would be posted on the Commission's social media with the objectives of having the monarch recognized as a threatened species [not endangered], providing education on this topic and promoting monarch friendly plantings by residents.

Motion to promote monarch way-stations and habitats via the NRC's social media. Motion by Comm. Brens, second by Comm. Otto to approve the minutes. Voice vote: unanimous; nays – none. Motion carried at 7:15 p.m.

5. New Business

A. Parkway Tree Removal Request

Mr. Reineking conveyed a request to the NRC from a resident at 2905 Pleasant Plains Drive. The request is for the removal of two Bradbury Pear parkway trees; the parkway tree at 2905 Pleasant Plains Drive and the neighbors' Bradbury Pear parkway tree as well. The resident feels the trees are dirty, berries from the trees fall onto the sidewalk causing it to be slippery, and this location is near a bus stop for school children. Mr. Reineking noted the tree was aggressively pruned to alleviate some of these issues. Mr. Reineking cited the intent of the City's Urban Forestry Management Plan which states the City does not remove healthy trees. However, this tree species was recently placed on the Plan's unacceptable species list.

Comm. Brens questioned the cost to the City for tree removal and replacement. Comm. Myers questioned the neighbor's preference regarding the tree. Mr. Reineking explained the City would speak to the neighbor before taking action, if any. Comm. Blaine expressed concern that this may set a precedent if this issue were to come up again. Mr. Reineking explained the City usually attempts to dissuade residents from having healthy parkway trees removed. Mr. Adesso expressed concern that a precedent would be set for the removal of existing healthy trees if they are on the Plan's current unacceptable species list, although the trees were on the acceptable species list when they were planted.

Comm. Nagy explained Bradbury Pear trees were removed from a commercial bank building site due to the berries from the trees. Staff noted any wet tree leaves in the fall could also become slippery. Comm. Nagy questioned if there were any natural areas near these trees as the berries could be carried by birds and the species could become invasive; staff and Commissioners responded in the negative. Comm. Brens questioned if there were criteria in place to justify the removal of a healthy tree; Mr. Adesso responded in the negative. Comm. Brens proposed setting criteria in the future for exceptions to the Plan's removal policy regarding healthy trees. Mr. Adesso explained the City Arborist previously received the removal request from this resident and declined to remove the tree because it is in good condition.

The NRC requested that the City Arborist re-assess the tree and report on its current health after the recent snow storm. The NRC will discuss this issue again at the January 2019 meeting.

B. IPCC Reports

Chair. Grathoff briefly summarized the content of the climate change reports issued by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [IPCC]. The reports were previously provided to the NRC by guest William Koehl as a means to raise awareness and have the Commission consider climate change as a part of its overall activities. Comm. Blaine noted the importance of this issue and how the NRC might promote awareness such as reducing fossil fuel consumption, for example. Comm. Brens stated it would make a greater difference if there was public statement issued regarding this subject. Comm. Nagy added that climate change and environmental impact could be a part of the NRC's overall decision making practices. Additionally, the NRC could offer guidance to the City with regard to its activities such as purchasing, daily operations, etc., taking the City's environmental impact and carbon footprint into consideration.

Comm. Blaine explained solar gates were installed at all forest preserve entrances which resulted in a significant reduction in staff driving. Kane County Forest Preserve District staff no longer needs to drive to each forest preserve entrance to open and close gates every morning and evening as the solar gates open and close on their own. Mr. Reineking noted

City facilities are not as geographically widespread as the Forest Preserve District's, however, Public Works has prioritized anti-idling and has a policy in place. Comm. Goudreau added community involvement and awareness are important. Comm. Otto stated she had been in contact with Trish Burns, Naturalist and Manager of Peck Farm Park in Geneva, who is also an educational partner with the Kane County Forest Preserve District and the Geneva and St. Charles Park Districts. Ms. Burns has additional resources on climate change that the NRC could use for publicity as they are not as technical as the above-referenced IPCC reports. Comm. Myers noted Ms. Burns recently led a program on the science of climate change. The program was very well attended by the general public, with standing room only, which is indicative of the level of public interest and concern regarding this this topic. Comm. Otto noted unfortunately this topic tends to be viewed as political. Comm. Goudreau suggested the NRC could host a climate change event with a speaker.

The high school student guests stated the topic of climate change has been discussed in their biology and in U.S. history classes as a pressing matter. Comm. Blaine explained there is an online site where you can measure your own carbon footprint and how to reduce it, which may be of interest to students and teachers. Student Comm. Bernat noted there is a general awareness of this issue among students, and agreed raising awareness among City workers as to how to reduce their environmental impact would be beneficial.

Mr. Adesso summarized the NRC could consider requesting the City's GSC to issue a resolution in support of climate change awareness and environmental impact reduction, thereby making a public statement for the record.

On behalf of the NRC, Chair. Grahoff thanked Mr. Koehl on the record for providing the climate change information and entered the IPCC reports into the public record. The IPCC reports are attached to and made a part of these minutes.

6. Committee Reports

A. Education Committee

None.

B. Langum Woods Clean-Up Committee

Comm. Otto will coordinate with the NRC's Student Commissioners to get a group of student volunteers together between now and March 2019.

7. Public Services Division Tree Activity Reports November 2018

Motion by Comm. Nagy to approve the Public Services Division Tree Activity Reports and place into the public record, second by Comm. Myers. Voice vote: unanimous; nays – none. Motion carried at 7:55 p.m.

8. Additional Items

A. Commissioners

- Comm. Hauser commented on a honeybee vaccine currently under development.
- Comm. Haggas shared a book written by an arborist entitled *Sprout Lands: Tending the Endless Gift of Trees*.
- Comm. Goudreau received a message on the NRC's Facebook page from a resident requesting information regarding clean-up events, volunteer planting days, a composting workshop, and pumpkin and Christmas tree collections. The Commission may consider hosting some of these suggested events [that have not already been hosted by the NRC].

- Student Comm. Bernat reported there is teacher and student interest in participating in Arbor Day 2019.
- Comm. Otto thanked the Public Works Department staff for the snow and tree clean-up work after the late November snow storm.
- Comm. Brens suggested the NRC consider not meeting during the month of December in the future. Mr. Adesso suggested the NRC could consider this at some point in late 2019 and make a motion with regarding to meeting/not meeting in December.

B. City Staff

None.

C. Visitors

None.

9. Adjournment

Motion by Comm. Myers to adjourn the meeting, second by Comm. Nagy. Voice vote: unanimous; nays – none. Motion carried at 8:05 p.m.