

**MINUTES
CITY OF ST. CHARLES
NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION MEETING
RALPH GRATHOFF, CHAIRMAN
JANUARY 10, 2019**

Members Present: Chairman Ralph Grathoff, Isabella Bernat, Kathy Brens, Chloe Fanning, Heather Goudreau, Lee Haggas, Suzi Myers, Loren Nagy, Pam Otto, Caroline Wilfong

Members Absent: None.

Others Present: Chris Adesso, Jeremy Craft, AJ Reineking

Visitors Present: Jillian Leturno, William Koehl

1. Call to Order & Pledge of Allegiance

The meeting was convened by Chair. Grathoff at 7:00 p.m.

2. Introduction of Visitors, Comments and Concerns

High school student Jillian Leturno introduced herself to all present, and expressed her interest in observing the meeting and possibly joining the Natural Resources Commission [NRC] as a student member. Mr. Koehl returned as a guest of the NRC.

3. Minutes Review and Approval

Motion to approve and place into the public record the minutes of the December 13, 2018 Natural Resources Commission meeting. Motion by Comm. Brens, second by Comm. Nagy to approve the minutes. Voice vote: unanimous; nays – none. Motion carried at 7:02 p.m.

4. Old Business

A. Parkway Tree Removal Request

Mr. Craft reported a risk assessment had been completed for the parkway tree at 2905 Pleasant Plains Drive, and concluded the tree is completely healthy and one of the nicest Pear trees in the City. Mr. Craft recommended no removal for this tree. Student Comm. Bernat suggested perhaps the school bus stop could be moved as the tree cannot be relocated. The NRC briefly discussed the issues brought up at the December 2018 NRC meeting, and concluded a “nuisance” is not the basis to remove a healthy tree. Motion to support the City Arborist’s no-removal recommendation with regard to the parkway tree at 2905 Pleasant Plains Drive. Motion by Comm. Myers, second by Comm. Nagy to support the City’s assessment and recommendation. Voice vote: unanimous; nays – none. Motion carried at 7:08 p.m. Mr. Reineking will inform the resident of the NRC’s decision.

5. New Business

A. Potential High School Student Member

Chair. Grathoff noted Ms. Leturno’s impressive resume which was provided to the NRC and City staff. Ms. Leturno explained she heard about the NRC through Facebook, and expressed her interest in caring for the environment and making a positive impact on the community. Motion to nominate Ms. Leturno as a student member of the NRC. Motion by Comm. Duerr, second by Comm. Brens to nominate Ms. Leturno. Voice vote: unanimous; nays – none. Motion carried at 7:11 p.m. Chair. Grathoff welcomed Ms. Leturno to the Commission.

B. Arbor Day 2019

Comm. Duerr provided the new Student Commissioners a brief background of the City's Arbor Day celebration and Tree City USA designation. Comm. Otto reported that she and Comm. Myers met with students from the Science Honors Society at St. Charles East High School to discuss participation in the City's Arbor Day 2019 celebration [and a Langum Woods work day]. Comm. Otto noted in the past the Commission relied on the interests of students and teachers as to the direction of the Arbor Day program, which previously included artwork, music, skits, etc. In the past student presentations were 10 to 15 minutes in length. Student Comm. Bernat reported she had reached out to the high school drama club and to the high school and middle school music teachers regarding participation. Comm. Brens noted students from St. Charles East High School had participated in the History Museum's Grave Reminders event as historical figures of St. Charles; perhaps the same students could participate, in character, at Arbor Day. Comm. Myers noted a number of the science honors students indicated they play a musical instrument; perhaps they could perform one song at the Arbor Day event. The Commissioners offered to work with students to develop an Arbor Day presentation and/or historical enactment. The Student Commissioners will facilitate meeting[s] with more teachers and student groups regarding Arbor Day participation.

C. Fox Valley Sustainability Network

Mr. Adesso reported the City has been invited to become a member of the Fox Valley Sustainability Network [FVSN]. Mr. Adesso requested feedback from the NRC as to membership in FVSN. Comm. Duerr asked if the City is a member of the Fox River Ecosystem Partnership [FREP]; Mr. Adesso explained the City is not, but is a sponsoring partner of the Fox River Study Group. Mr. Adesso asked the Commissioners to consider this information, and make a decision at a later date.

D. River/Path Clean-Ups

Comm. Goudreau suggested coordinating clean-up events for the Fox River and Prairie Path/Great Western Trail as a way to promote the beauty and care of the river and our area. The events would also be a way to increase community involvement and awareness in NRC-related activities. The organization Friends of the Fox River [FFR] is hosting a summit in Wisconsin in March 2019 and promoting a one day clean-up event in September for all communities along the Fox River. Comm. Goudreau suggested the NRC support and promote this event and consider a separate NRC-hosted event such as "Love Your River." Mr. Adesso noted the City's Wellness Committee sponsors an annual employee lunchtime river clean-up activity. Chair. Grathoff asked Comm. Goudreau to follow up with the NRC after the March FFR summit.

E. America in Bloom

Comm. Otto noted St. Charles is the host city for the national America in Bloom [AIB] symposium in October 2019. AIB Committee members requested pumpkin displays similar to harvest displays at a prior AIB event in Lake Geneva. Community gardens may be used to grow the pumpkins. The pumpkins could also be used for Scarecrow Fest and later recycled during the NRC's pumpkin collection.

F. NRC Commissioners

Chair. Grathoff reported Comm. Blaine had informed him of her resignation from the NRC. Chair. Grathoff recognized Comm. Blaine's service and valuable contributions to the Tree Commission and the NRC. Mr. Adesso noted Comm. Hauser had also resigned, leaving two openings on the NRC for voting members. The City received information from a resident expressing interest in the NRC; the resident may attend the February meeting.

Chair. Grathoff reported he had received an inquiry via the Mayor's Office regarding the NRC and proxy voting; he was not sure of the nature of the inquiry and will follow up to obtain additional information. Comm. Duerr asked how other City Commissions handle proxy voting. Mr. Adesso noted the NRC's role is advisory, while some other City Commissions issue certificates of approval, for example; certain City Commissions have decided to use/not use proxy voting. Chair. Grathoff asked the Commissioners to consider how the NRC will handle proxy voting at the next meeting in February.

6. Committee Reports

A. Education Committee

None.

B. Langum Woods Clean-Up Committee

Comm. Otto provided brief background information on Langum Woods for the Student Commissioners, including the historic Oak trees located there. Comm. Otto explained this ecological area is an Oak-Hickory woodland; these are strong but slow growing trees whose growth is negatively impacted by faster growing species, including non-native and invasive species. Oak trees also host over 500 butterfly and moth species, making the trees valuable for local ecology. The focus of clean-up work days at Langum Woods generally involves the removal of non-native and invasive species to allow sunshine to enter encouraging the health and growth of Oak trees and wildflowers. Work days also include trail chipping and cleaning to promote walking on the paths through the woods. A Saturday morning workday in February is preferred to avoid stepping on new growth. Comm. Otto and the Student Commissioners scheduled a work day on Saturday, February 9th from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. weather depending; an alternate date of Saturday, February 23rd was also scheduled.

7. Public Services Division Tree Activity Reports December 2018

Motion by Comm. Myers to approve the Public Services Division Tree Activity Reports and place into the public record, second by Comm. Otto. Voice vote: unanimous; nays – none. Motion carried at 8:03 p.m.

8. Additional Items

A. Commissioners

Comm. Wilfong thanked the Student Commissioners for their interest in the NRC, and suggested that a high school student could submit a written entry for Arbor Day and present their entry during the event, possibly as a keynote speaker.

Comm. Duerr inquired as to the resolution of the case involving the resident who removed trees from City property on the St. Charles/Wayne border. As this case was some time ago, City staff did not recall specific information, other than the case was adjudicated and involved reforestation.

Comm. Brens will reach out to theater staff at the high school regarding Arbor Day participation.

B. City Staff

None.

C. Visitors

None.

9. Adjournment

Motion by Comm. Myers to adjourn the meeting, second by Comm. Otto. Voice vote: unanimous; nays – none. Motion carried at 8:09 p.m.