

MINUTES

1. CONVENE PARK COMMISSION MEETING

Chair Hirner convened the meeting at 7:02 p.m.

A. Roll Call

Present: Chair Hirner, Commissioners Schmid, Gallivan, and Heinz; City Council Liaison Johnson; Public Works Director Brown, and Parks and Recreation Director Grout;

Absent: None

B. Review Agenda

Gallivan moved to approve the agenda as presented. Heinz seconded the motion. Motion carried 4-0.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. Park Commission Meeting Minutes of August 23, 2022

Heinz moved to approve the minutes of the August 23, 2022 meeting, as written. Gallivan seconded the motion. Motion carried 4-0.

3. MATTERS FROM THE FLOOR

Jeff Dinsmore, 5805 Minnetonka Drive, passed along his appreciation for the fact that the City has involved expertise with Integrated Pest Management in dealing with pest management throughout the City.

4. NEW BUSINESS

A. Pest Management Report – Public Works Director, Larry Brown

Public Works Director Brown explained that this was the first phase of the Integrated Pest Management report and plan. He noted that the City had contracted with the IPM Institute of North America to prepare a guiding document for the City regarding alternatives to chemicals and pesticides. He noted that there are three phases to this document and tonight is just intended to cover the first phase. He introduced Ryan Anderson of IPM to go over the first phase of the Pest Management Report.

Ryan Anderson, IPM Institute of North America, gave an overview of Phase 1 of the Pest Management Report that they have completed for the City. He noted that much of the work has happened through Midwest Grows Green (MGG) whose mission is to educate and empower citizens to take sustainable landscaping action that reduces harmful water run-off into the waterways, protects the health of the most vulnerable citizens, and reduces negative impacts of

pesticides on non-targeted species such as pollinators. He explained that Phase 1 is a sustainable landscaping audit; Phase 2 is the three year sustainable landscape management plan; and Phase 3 is implementation of all the recommendations from the earlier phases. He noted that IPM was brought in to evaluate the City and their adherence to the Bee-Safe policy. He reviewed the clauses from the Bee-Safe policy along with their audit findings. He stated that one thing the City does well is, that they mow no lower than three inches; hired goats to remove buckthorn; have prescribed burns every few years in some areas; and have no recorded use of glyphosate for invasive or noxious weed management. He noted that there are areas where there is room for improvement, such as turf grass being dependent on annual applications of systemic pesticides and annual emerald ash borer control applications. He reviewed the definition of 'systemic pesticides' and noted that the City has been using two products that they consider 'systemic' that are in the red or danger classification from MGG. He reviewed the best practices in the City related to planting flowers that are favorable to bees and other pollinators and gave examples of native plant buffers around Manor Park Pond; rain gardens at Freeman and Badger Parks; restored prairie at Gideon Glen; redevelopment of Minnetonka Country Club in 2016 into walking trails, stormwater ponds, and wetlands. He stated that areas that have room for improvement in this area include, clover patch at Cathcart Park in 2014; a number of areas that MGG would classify as 'Category C' areas which means low priority areas that could be turned into pollinator friendly vegetation. He stated that communication with residents will be important regarding the importance of creating and maintaining pollinator friendly habitats. He noted that the City does have web pages for yard and tree care as well as information on a Bee-Safe city, however, they are very hard to find. He stated that their recommendation is for the City to make them a bit more prominent and increase the resources that the City has for native planting, natural lawn care, and sustainable landscaping. He noted that the City has not conducted an annual Bee-Safe City progress report but there are plans to do that in the future.

Mr. Anderson reviewed the specific recommendations for how the City can adhere to and work on the areas that still have room for improvement. He stated that their first recommendation is to prioritize the City parks and set management schedules based on a park or fields prioritization. He stated that they also want to increase cultural controls and practices and also use data for any fertility needs or weed and pest control. He gave an overview of how the prioritization can occur for the different areas within the parks and reviewed the different category classifications. Class A Fields: Freeman and Badger Parks; Class B Fields: Manor and Cathcart Parks; Class C Fields: Silverwood, Southshore and Gideon Glen Parks. He stated that their recommendation includes increasing cultural practices on all fields, but at the very least, on the Class A fields. He explained that this includes mowing at least once a week at 3 inches, but also the possibility of increasing the frequency in the spring and the fall in order to not take off over 1/3 of the grass blade at a time. He reviewed irrigation, aeration, and overseeding recommendations. He explained the use of data points for product purchasing for fertilization, such as soil testing and for weed control the use of tolerance thresholds. He explained that their overall recommendations were geared towards turf grass management because the City's most used areas for systemic pesticides has been on turf grass. He stated that they have also included recommendations for developing more pollinator friendly landscaping. He stated that for the Bee-Safe zones, they are recommending consideration of native plantings at Silverwood, Southshore, and Gideon Glen. He explained that they took a look at the City's emerald ash borer treatments and noted that their concern is the annual use of the product the City is using can get into the trees and the bark and can harm the 150 species of native moth and butterfly larvae. He stated that the City wants to preserve the ash trees from the emerald ash borer, but the question becomes whether they are effecting the lives of other pollinators by these applications, but noted that this will need further evaluation. He noted that IPM just came out of the Phase 2 report yesterday, however, he cannot share too much

information from it yet, but a few quick take-aways are that the City should invest in the cultural practices, specifically overseeding and fertilization efforts. He explained that when this gets to Phase 3 they will be holding quarterly meetings with staff and will develop some kind of community engagement support.

Commissioner Heinz thanked Mr. Anderson for his presentation and noted that he felt that there was a lot of thought that went into the recommendations.

Chair Hirner asked about the classification of Silverwood Park as a Class C and noted that the large field area is used by many families with smaller children and also has a new playground. He asked if there may be a way to split the recommendations that would apply some Class B principles to the field area and everything else around it as Class C.

Mr. Anderson reviewed some information from Phase 2 of the report related to Cathcart Park and explained that they have split the ballfield area as Class A and the ice rink and tennis courts as Class B and the tree line area as Class C so they can categorize within the parks within different classifications. He explained that most of their assessment is based on the various uses of the areas within the parks which sometimes needs communicate engagement to see how they are really being used.

Chair Hirner asked how they determine the usage of the different areas from a community perspective.

Mr. Anderson stated that they discovered the most effective way to collect this data was found when they worked with a community near Madison, WI where they actually walked through the fields with the community members and through that input came up with the classifications into the various categories. He noted that they found this approach to be very effective but noted that the City could also try to gather the same information through a survey.

Chair Hirner asked Public Works Director Brown what the City's mowing height was on the sports fields compared to the rest of the parks.

Public Works Director Brown stated that all are at 3 inches.

Chair Hirner asked about the emerald ash borer, the City's thoughts on the ash trees, and the danger at this point.

Public Works Director Brown explained that the City had completed a tree inventory of significant trees on the public land. He stated that they are not planning on injecting all the ash trees, but are counting on significant removal over time. He stated that following conversations with Davey Resource Group, they have decided that if there are specific ash trees that are really significant whose loss would create a void for the community, they have decided to try to protect those. He stated that the practice has been injecting 30 trees per year every other year. He noted that as Mr. Anderson mentioned there appears to be new data that shows that injecting every three years may also be effective.

Patricia Houser, 5805 Minnetonka Drive, asked if there has ever been any consideration for not doing any injections of the ash trees. She stated that the report mentioned the potential toxicity to humans, unborn children, bees and ground water. She gave a brief overview of what she has found about the eating needs and habits of baby birds and the decreasing bird population. She

reiterated whether the City has ever considered just letting the trees go. She stated that she feels that if the public knew about the toxicity and potential danger of the pesticides, they would be more willing to let the trees go.

Chair Hirner asked Park and Recreation Director Grout to add this feedback to things for the Park Commission to consider as this moves forward.

Ms. Houser asked about soil half-life of products and what Mr. Anderson meant when he said they want it below 31 days.

Mr. Anderson explained that soil half life is in aerobic conditions with access to oxygen. He stated that all products eventually break down and at 31 days half of the product potency has decreased. He noted that he believes glyphosate has a half-life of above 80 days.

Paula Callies, 20465 Radisson Road, stated that she serves on the City Council and explained that she felt that this was a very good report. She stated that she felt the information was presented very clearly and likes the recommendations for the City related to soil testing and communication with residents. She noted that she agreed with Chair Hirner's questions about Silverwood Park because it is a very heavily used park for its size and she thinks there are areas which could be categorized in a higher classification. She stated that it is a very complex topic and just putting labels that are red, yellow, or green may be a bit too basic. She noted that the word 'danger' may be used on a chemical but it may just be telling you not to drink it. She stated that she thinks the City needs to understand how the chemicals are used and what the warning labels mean because everything isn't 'dangerous' in the same way. She stated that she also did not think the International Standards were the same as the United States standards but noted that she was looking forward to further information on other alternatives because this needs to be realistic and there has to be a balance or it won't work.

Mr. Anderson explained that many people do not understand how pesticide products are approved by the United States EPA. He explained that the EPA does a different study than what the International Association for the Research on Cancer or the World Health Organization would do. He gave the example of glyphosate which is labeled as a probable carcinogen by the International Association for the Research on Cancer, and noted that EPA conducted different studies but noted that their studies do not include inert ingredients.

Ms. Callies stated that she was not saying that there wasn't something to be concerned about, but when you are talking about agricultural applications versus somebody putting it in their yard or in the parks without a huge broadcast agricultural sprayer, she feels that is a significant factor that should be considered.

Mr. Anderson noted that he was not intending to argue for either way but wanted to clarify that the EPA handles their assessments in a different manner than the other organizations.

Commissioner Gallivan stated that when it comes to Class A, he asked if their approach was for the entire park or just the athletic fields.

Mr. Anderson stated that Phase 1 is for the entire park and Phase 2 will be individual fields.

Commissioner Gallivan asked if for Class B if they envision treating the fields the same as they would in Class A parks, but not the grounds.

Mr. Anderson stated that would be correct but explained that what they are really focusing on for the Class A, B, and C is the cultural practices which means they want to avoid, when possible, pesticide application and replace them with cultural practices.

Commissioner Gallivan confirmed that the cultural practices was the mowing, aeration, overseeding, and fertilization.

Chair Hirner asked how much usage there was for the fields during the fall months.

Park and Recreation Director Grout stated that they are used every single day.

Chair Hirner stated that there are discussions now about overseeding and aerating and with the fields being heavily used, he questioned when the City could find the 'sweet spot' to be able to do some of these things without impacting the usage.

Mr. Anderson stated that he feels there are a few options and explained that with the overseeding program, players wear cleats, so they will just cleat it into the soil and it will start germinating. He noted that their assessment saw a lot of Kentucky Blue Grass which spreads laterally. He stated that if the City cannot do the core aeration frequently, they can consider slicing equipment that would basically make the Kentucky Blue Grass tell itself to grow outwards.

Commissioner Gallivan explained that he was having trouble reading the spreadsheet for the different options and pricing.

Mr. Anderson stated that the spreadsheet information is probably best not in a visual form on paper and is better used on-line. He explained that it is also for the Phase 2 report, so he did not develop it and would be better explained by their turf scientist, Alec McClennan.

Commissioner Gallivan stated that he is curious, moving forward, on how the numbers change if just the playing fields were treated as Class A but the others were treated in a different fashion.

Mr. Anderson stated that he thinks it will work out and noted that Alec McClennan has done two different types of estimates with fully organic and also organic based. He reiterated that their main focus is eliminating pesticides.

Chair Hirner asked if the overall goal is to be able to define Shorewood as a 'Bee Friendly' City and if so, whether there was a potential timeline for that accomplishment.

Public Works Director Brown stated that the Phase 1 report has been very comprehensive, but there is a lot of information still forthcoming. He stated that everything he has observed, thus far, is that this takes time to establish. He stated that he would estimate the City would see these efforts start to pay off in about three years.

Mr. Anderson stated that he would agree with the three-year time period and explained that was why they term it a three year sustainable landscape management plan. He stated that it will not be perfect and it will not be weed free which is why there is community engagement for education purposes. He stated that if the City follows all those cultural management practices they will be able to manage very healthy grass and vegetation.

Public Works Director Brown stated that it will ultimately be a cultural shift because having people have a higher tolerance for weeds will take a lot of education, which will take time. He stated that it needs to be made clear that if the City is going to be a pollinator-friendly City, then this will be the trade-off. He stated that it will also come with a higher cost, which will equate to taxes. He stated that overall, he would say the City is on a 3-5 year spectrum for the timeline.

Ms. Houser asked what would happen if the City included the public in getting this information and be able to really see what has been happening and what is being proposed. She stated that she thinks a huge part of this will be education and it is important for people to learn this information.

Chair Hirner noted that this report and this conversation will be available to the public through the meeting minutes.

Public Works Director Brown noted that the report will be available on the City website.

Commissioner Gallivan asked if Mr. Anderson had seen, with other clients, a phased approach in terms of trying it in one area first and overtime transitioning the complete area. He stated that he believes the City should definitely get away from the use of pesticides, but the parks serve a purpose with the ballfields and the City doesn't want people showing up and having to deal with weeds when they are playing the game.

Mr. Anderson stated that he encouraged the Commission to take a look at Elgin, IL and gave a brief overview of what was done in that situation initially with one area and noted that they have just recently put out a press release that they have added another 10 pesticide free zones. He noted that there is another community in Illinois called River Forest Park district where they have done work and are now being brought back to hold a sustainable landscaping workshop to explain what was done.

Public Works Director Brown explained that one of the issues that the City is coming up against is that there is a very active weed inspection program which must meet the statutory requirements for removal and control of, for example, garlic mustard. He asked what approaches IPM has had outside of park land, such as along roadsides.

Mr. Anderson referenced the flywheel from his presentation that was developed by Natural Communities, LLC that outlines how they can limit their glyphosate use in natural areas. He stated that he cannot use the word 'eliminate' because there are strategies to maintain these weeds without glyphosate but if it is used at a very targeted level with a licensed applicator, the risk of exposure is very low. He reviewed information from the flywheel and how to have continual management. He reiterated that they do not want to see the use of glyphosate because it is a probable carcinogen, but if it is the only effective means for some of the harder to get invasive weeds, then they want to make sure that they don't ever establish themselves again, so they do not ever need to use the application of glyphosate again.

Ms. Houser stated that when she and her husband walk through the park they have noticed a lot of volcano-ing. She stated that she has read information from the University of Minnesota that if there is too much mulch around the base of a tree it can kind of end up suffocating it.

Mr. Anderson admitted that trees were not his area of expertise but explained that they do have Green Shield Certified standards for landscaping and volcano mulching is not allowed because it isn't healthy for the trees.

Chair Hirner stated that this Phase 1 report was just the beginning of this process and was for informational purposes so the Commission was not being asked to make a recommendation to the Council yet.

Public Works Director Brown explained that the Phase 2 report will lay out the 'meat and potatoes' of how the City can begin to put these practices to use. He stated that it will also define the costs and will also let them begin to formulate a communication plan. He stated that because there are budget pressures right now, from an implementation standpoint, the City's focus will probably be on the ballfields so they can ease into the costs. He stated that this endeavor will be an extended adventure and the goal is to get it out in bite sized pieces.

Chair Hirner thanked Mr. Anderson for his presentation and noted that he looks forward to seeing him again to discuss the additional phases.

5. OLD BUSINESS

6. STAFF AND LIAISON REPORTS / UPDATES

A. City Council

Council Liaison Johnson reported on the most recent City Council discussion and actions.

B. Staff

1. Reminder that October Park Commission meeting date is October 25, 2022

Park and Recreation Director Grout noted that Movie in the Park ended up getting cancelled due to weather and will just be held again next year.

Public Works Director Brown noted that this is Park and Recreation Director Grout's last Park Commission meeting prior to her retirement.

The Commission expressed their appreciation for everything Park and Recreation Director Grout has done for the Park Commission and the City and noted that she would be greatly missed.

Chair Hirner noted that he has noticed that the Silverwood Park playground has had more cars and people than he has seen in his fifteen years living in the City.

Commissioner Gallivan stated that Silverwood Park looks great but when he was there a few weeks ago there were a few cinder blocks around the swing that were a little bit loose.

7. ADJOURN

Heinz moved to adjourn the Park Commission Meeting of September 13, 2022 at 8:34 p.m. Gallivan seconded the motion. Motion carried 4-0.