



City of Lake Oswego Natural Resources Advisory Board Minutes

August 15, 2007

APPROVED

I. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Chair Sarah Asby called the Natural Resources Advisory Board meeting of August 16, 2007 to order at 6:36 p.m. in the West End Building (SAFECO), 4010 Kruse Way, Lake Oswego, Oregon.

Members present besides Chair Asby were Vice Chair Morgan Holen and William Gaar, Douglas Rich, Stephanie Wagner and Kate Mogentale (student member). Nancy Gronowski and Craig Diamond were excused.

Staff present was Jonna Papaefthimiou, Natural Resources Planner; and Deb Wechselblatt, City AmeriCorps Volunteer.

Guest present was Nancy Murray, Lake Oswego resident.

II. MINUTES

The Minutes of June 20, 2007 and July 18, 2007 were approved by unanimous vote of members present after the July minutes were corrected to clarify that the announcements at the outset referred to natural areas “in West Lynn,” that the suggestion was for Council to “learn about,” not visit, rainwater reuse opportunities and the new construction at PSU, and that the update on the Sustainability Board referred to the “City Council” review of that proposal.

III. PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

IV. ANNOUNCEMENTS

None.

V. REGULAR BUSINESS

Community Forestry Plan

Deb Wechselblatt offered to provide a general update on community forestry efforts and then lead discussion on the plan. She stated that the Community Forestry table at the Lake Oswego Farmer’s Market was well received and that NRAB members Morgan Holen and Doug Rich were a help. She thanked the entire NRAB for their support this year.

Mr. Rich injected that Ms. Wechselblatt had also done excellent work this year.

Ms. Wechselblatt continued to state that the City's first tree canopy estimate was complete and that her intent was to repeat the canopy cover estimate again next year using a different method to check its accuracy. The next step would be to use aerial photos to make historic comparisons.

Ms. Wechselblatt stated that the canopy cover estimates shows 47% canopy cover for the City, with 24% coniferous cover and 23% deciduous cover. She stated this was a relatively high level of cover for an urban or suburban area.

In terms of her transition out of the Community Forestry Coordinator position, Ms. Wechselblatt stated that she has completed a manual for use by her successor, and encouraged that person to attend NRAB meetings and consider NRAB an important contributor to the forestry efforts.

Stephanie Wagner asked if the new member would continue to work with the Community Forestry Working Group, and Ms. Wechselblatt stated that they would.

Ms. Wechselblatt then proceeded to the plan update. She informed the group that she had presented at a City manager's meeting, and that she was seeking comments and reviews from departmental managers, and that this process should continue as the plan develops.

She stated that an important question currently was what form the plan should take, whether it should be an internal working document, a comprehensive plan amendment, or both. Another issue is the prioritization of the steps outlined in the plan. She stated that she lacked the information to accomplish this prioritization.

Mr. Rich asked what information was lacking, and Deb stated that the Open House presented an overwhelming amount of information to prioritize, and that staff and advisory committee members were similarly overwhelmed and had not been able to give her sufficient guidance.

Bill Gaar asked where she was leaning to house the plan, as he would like to see it move forward.

Jonna Papaefthimiou stated that the plan would likely be adopted by the City Council as an independent document, and that it would be referenced in the Comp plan as a way to recognize its importance in meeting the City's natural resource goals.

Mr. Gaar concurred that it was important to find ways to move the plan forward rather than allow it to sit on a shelf.

Kate Mogentale asked if the plan was complete.

Mr. Gaar stated that the plan was not yet adopted, but that in the meantime the tree code did protect trees in the City.

Vice Chair Holen reminded the group that the tree code does not address tree health or stewardship.

Mr. Rich added that the tree code doesn't educate or engage residents on urban forest issues, and that trees are essential to the City's character, but there's a need to form partnerships within the community to advance that position.

Ms. Mogentale asked if the plan would also improve tree health overall?

Mr. Gaar said that it would, and would also enable the City to approach tree protection as a community-wide endeavor, rather than attempting to save EVERY tree one by one.

Mr. Rich also added that the plan would help neighbors take responsibility and see themselves as partners in building community character through tree protection, and recognizing heritage trees. He asked about the results of community surveys on forestry issues.

Ms. Wechselblatt stated that the community were well-informed about the benefits of trees and saw the most important values as storm water management and quality of life and community aesthetics. She said that in terms of where they got information, they valued *Hello LO* very much, and that was how most people found out about the Community Forestry effort. She also said that a surprisingly large number of people read the *LO Down*.

Vice Chair Holen suggested a column in the *LO Review*, *Hello LO*, and the *Oregonian* that addressed common questions about trees in the format of an advice column.

Ms. Wagner contributed that the *Portland Tribune* was always looking for items for their Sustainability efforts and might also run the column.

Mr. Rich said the feedback he's received from his neighbors regarding the City's current tree removal permit system is that it is too lenient and everyone who applies receives a permit.

Ms. Wechselblatt acknowledged that she had also received many comments on the tree-cutting permits.

Vice Chair Holen asked what percentage were denied.

Ms. Papaefthimiou did not know, but said that she expected they were most often denied because their application was incomplete.

Mr. Gaar said most people don't recognize that removed trees are mitigated for.

Mr. Rich added that the tree permit system was difficult to enforce.

Vice Chair Holen noted a lack of communication among neighbors added to the problem.

Chair Asby said that people who own land in Clackamas County are free to cut trees and that the City receives complaints about tree-cutting they cannot control.

There was some general discussion of the process of obtaining a tree-cutting permit.

Mr. Rich suggested that the City offer to prune and maintain heritage trees as an incentive for people to nominate them. He asked what funds were available to provide other incentives to homeowners, and what incentives were available to developers.

Ms. Papaefthimiou suggested the City refund of tree protection inspection fees for developers that have perfect compliance with tree protection measures during construction.

Mr. Rich stated that the inventories needed to be real or the plan was less credible. Vice Chair Holen noted that she writes tree protection plans and that in her experience, trees are removed only for construction or because they are a hazard, and that in much of the Metro area there was an awareness of the value of retaining trees on site.

Mr. Gaar asked if developers commonly seek to completely clear lots.

Vice Chair Holen stated that in her opinion they usually did not, and the City of LO would generally deny applications for excessive tree removal. She stated wanton tree removal was unusual.

There was some general discussion of instances of illegal tree removal.

Ms. Wechselblatt stated that the next steps would be to develop a work plan and move the plan forward to the Council.

Ms. Papaefthimiou stated that the Council was tentatively expected to review the plan in November.

Ms. Wagner suggested that the 3-year work plan with prioritized tasks would be a good next step.

Ms. Wechselblatt agreed but said she needed help from maintenance and other technical experts to set reasonable timelines for implementation.

Ms. Wagner suggested that maintenance staff could set out their own work plan to implement their part of the plan.

Chair Asby pointed out that ivy removal was an essential maintenance element. She suggested that the NRAB undertake some ivy removal together, and publicize their efforts.

Mr. Gaar and Ms. Wagner agreed this was a good plan. Mr. Gaar suggested the NRAB choose a location at the next meeting.

Water Conservation Update

Chair Asby stated that Mr. Gaar had written an excellent letter commenting on the water conservation plan, and presented it to the council at their study session on the plan.

Mr. Gaar said the council read the letter and several council members appreciated the NRAB's efforts to review and offer suggestions. The Council indicated that there would be other opportunities to revisit and revise the plan.

Ms. Wagner said the NRAB should be vigilant to see when the issue is discussed again.

Mr. Gaar agreed and asked for staff assistance to learn of future opportunities to comment.

Ms. Wagner added that the plan was far from inspired and that when the State of Oregon put it up for comment, the NRAB should follow up.

Mr. Gaar said that City Engineer Joel Komarek was receptive to the idea that the plan should create an impetus for code changes, but this issue idea should have been raised earlier.

Ms. Wagner stated that the consultants' presentation to Council on the water conservation plan was poor in terms of financial data, and that their assertions regarding cost were unsupported. She added that this may garner state criticism.

Mr. Gaar added that the Council had acknowledged these shortcomings.

Sustainability Board Update

Mr. Gaar said that they were assembling a list of potential Sustainability Advisory Board members and pushing for a meeting with the acting City manager in advance of the Council study session.

PRAB/NRAB Joint Agenda

Chair Asby suggested that parks funding was an important agenda item, and she would like to see the City of Lake Oswego adopt something like West Linn's new fee system.

Ms. Wagner said the City could find allies for this in other parks and sports advocacy groups.

Mr. Gaar asked if school groups might also support it.

Ms. Wagner stated that while the rental arrangement was somewhat complex, that schools did not generally pay to maintain their own playing fields. She added that she might find someone from West Linn to talk about the funding issue.

Chair Asby added that she could also help find a speaker from West Linn.

Ms. Papaefthimiou informed the group that Parks Director Kim Gilmer felt the PRAB's agenda was too full for a long joint meeting.

Mr. Gaar suggested the chairs should communicate directly to agree on their top priorities for the meeting.

Ms. Papaefthimiou stated that the PRAB was interested in the community forestry plan.

Ms. Wagner pointed out that funding was needed to implement portions of the community forestry plan that call for better maintenance of trees in City parks and natural areas, and in this respect the topics of community forestry and parks funding were connected.

Code Modifications

Morgan stated that there was a need to follow-up on proposed modifications to the NRAB's mission as stated in the City Code.

Ms. Papaefthimiou promised to contact the City Attorney regarding this matter.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business Chair Asby adjourned the meeting at 7:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jonna Papaefthimiou /s/
Jonna Papaefthimiou
Natural Resources Planner