

Park Board Workshop

June 26, 2014

Present: Tom Aguilar-Downing, Emily White, Marge Meconis, Anita Perkins, Laura Duffey, Bruce Hanson
Guests: Mary Ann Newman, Susan Lindoo, Mike Woleski

Workshop was called to order at 7:00 pm.

Anita open the meeting with the question of why we were considering a Natural Resource Management Plan.

Tom replied that when we considered approaching Great River Greening for volunteer assistance, one of their prerequisites is that there be a Natural Resource Management Plan in place, or that they could help develop one. Tom felt further that one would be a good idea to guide Park Board policy suggestions, whether or not Great River Greening was enlisted.

Laura added that such a plan designates the best use of land. Also, since Bailey Park is a School Forest, the Regional Forester, Jim Wilson, has it as one of his responsibilities to help develop a Stewardship Plan. The prioritization of that planning would be driven by the School District. Marge said that she may be able to encourage Superintendent Jacobus to be more active in that regard.

Bruce spoke about the possible riverside park. He pointed out that Cottage Grove had just spent a considerable amount cleaning up their riverside park, and now with the Mississippi running at flood levels, they are going to be faced with yet another clean up. However, since the area that Newport is considering is along the river's backwaters, it should not need nearly the clean up because there will be nowhere near the volume of water and debris flowing over it. In any case, any park that is considered on that site should take regular flooding into account.

The discussion turned to the Community Educational role that should be part of any plan.

Susan suggested that the Community Garden could be used as a focal point for educating about native plants. Bruce said that the new Veterans Memorial at Pioneer Park was in need of a plan for plantings, and he was wide open with the idea of using native plants. Susan will work with him on that.

It was suggested that there could be weather protected bulletin boards at the parks for educational postings.

We talked about using the booth at Pioneer Day for educational purposes. Laura suggested that we have copies of the DNR brochure, "Why Should I Care about Invasives" available for distribution. They also have available a "bouquet" of silk invasives, which are useful for helping folks identifying invasive plants. An actual pulled buckthorn plant will help in that identification process also.

The discussion returned to other aspects of a Natural Resource Management Plan. We discussed elements of the plans from surrounding communities that were in the Board's meeting packet.

Several of them identified Greenways which connected sites within their communities. Laura noted that they identified sensitive critical areas. We noted that some of those areas within Newport's parks would include the remnant prairies, the seep, and waterfalls.

Bruce pointed out that Sherry Buss of TKDA, is a former DNR staffer, is very familiar with Newport and its Comprehensive Plan, and could be a valuable resource. Tom pointed out that there would be a charge for her time and felt that we should see what we can assemble first before checking with the City Administrator as to Sherry's assistance.

Bruce suggested that we may want to use the possible river site as a focus. The recent flooding could have an impact on the timing of that possibility.

We briefly spoke of other things that could be in a Natural Resource Inventory, which could include the Mississippi River Trail, the bike trail, etc.

Susan and Laura may be interested in developing an invasive plant environmental inventory. It was suggested that a periodic inspection of the park for invasives could be instituted.

Laura talked of developing the educational aspects as an outreach marketing plan with talking points.

It was noted that many of the plans in the packet went into much further depth than we would care to go. One example was one plan that identified different soil types in their community. Tom emphasized that we were not developing such a plan for the entire city, but just for park lands. That we may want to narrow that even more by just considering the two major parks (Bailey and Loveland) and the possible river site.

We agreed that we would review the plans once again, and pull out of them the topics that we feel should be in Newport's plan. We set a deadline of getting those suggestions emailed to John Neska by July 10.

With those suggestions compiled, Tom volunteered to scour through existing Newport documents, particularly the Comprehensive Plan, and draw out the pertinent sections that deal with the topics that the board is suggesting.

We decided that the July meeting would also be a workshop to further discuss this topic.

Emily reminded us that we will also need to do some planning for the Pioneer Day booth.

Workshop adjourned at 8:00 pm

Respectfully submitted,

Tom Aguilar-Downing