

1. Call to order – 6:30 p.m.

1a. Roll call

Members present: Chair Shaina Ashare, Vice Chair Tatiana Giraldo, Marisa Bayer, Ryan Griffin, Andrew Willette, Dave Wilsey, Paul Zeigle

Absent: Ramil Goonetilleke, Abigail Oppegaard, Sasha Shahidi, Eric Zweber

Guests: Nancy Rose, resident; Council Member Sue Budd

Staff present: Emily Ziring, sustainability manager; Katelyn Champoux, associate planner; Sean Walther, planning manager/deputy cd director; Michael Bahe, natural resources manager

2. Approval of minutes – March 5, 2024 – The minutes were approved as presented with 3 abstentions.

3. Business.

3a. Final comments on Environmentally Preferred Purchasing Policy (EP3) revisions

Ms. Ziring noted the revisions she made to the document and reviewed those with the commission in detail.

Commissioner Willette asked if there should be an annual review of the state of the market for sustainable products purchased. Ms. Ziring stated that is the goal, but she is not sure they need to get into that much detail for the policy.

Commissioner Willette asked if refurbished products should be included for preferred purchasing. Ms. Ziring stated that would depend on the product type, and some are repurposed within the organization. She added she can look into this further with the city's IT manager.

Ms. Ziring stated the policy will go to the city council in 4 weeks for further review.

3b. Next steps for advisory boards and commissions

The commission discussed the council's decision that all advisory commissions will get work direction from council and the many unknowns remaining for how that will work and what it will mean for staff's role.

Commissioner Griffin added there is a good opportunity now for ESC to lean into challenges identified for boards & commissions right now, as well as brainstorming and putting forward a set of ESC recommendations and tangible actions that would address core issues and bring forward ideas.

Ms. Ziring stated this is good feedback, and she will take this back to the city administration. She stated meeting frequency can be reviewed as well as meeting formality.

Mr. Ziring added the workplan is still in question, especially with council directing the work of the ESC now, and what role will the council have in developing the workplan. She noted continuing the existing 2023 workplan is best and then the commission can discuss it again in June after the May 20 council discussion. She added elections will also need to be addressed in June.

Ms. Ziring also noted there are commissioner terms expiring and administration will reach out to those commission members.

Commissioner Bayer added she liked the idea of crowd sourcing solutions. Ms. Ziring stated if anyone has immediate ideas please forward them to the director of administrative services.

4. Presentation from city staff

Staff members Katelyn Champoux, associate planner; Sean Walther, planning manager/deputy cd director; and Michael Bahe, natural resources manager, introduced themselves and spoke about the proposed amendments to the city's existing heritage tree preservation policy in the zoning code.

Commissioner Willette asked if the replacement tree is a 1-inch tree. Mr. Walther stated the minimum is 1.5 caliper inches for new understory ornamental trees and 2.5 caliper inches for new overstory trees, and clarified that the replacement is based on the size when the new tree is planted, not the diameter at standard height it expected to reach at maturity.

Commissioner Bayer asked if the fee in lieu will be higher for a heritage tree. Ms. Champoux stated it will not be a higher fee, but because of the higher replacement rate, it would effectively cost more.

Commissioner Zeigle asked about how many preservation credits are available. Ms. Champoux stated they would only get credits for heritage trees and not for a significant tree, and it would reduce the replacement requirement up to 50%.

Commissioner Wilsey asked if there are any trees that do not reach a large diameter but might be old and worthy of consideration as a heritage tree. Mr. Bahe stated, yes, that there are smaller stature trees that may not reach the large diameter threshold and staff can consider this at a later date.

Commissioner Griffin asked about replacement trees and if staff have considered the cons of not choosing a smaller diameter threshold (such as 24 inches) for heritage trees.

Mr. Bahe stated staff did discuss this and this is where they landed based on their research.

Commissioner Griffin asked if there is any thought given to leaving dead trees standing to support wildlife. Mr. Bahe stated once these trees get to 30 inches in diameter they do start to have issues, and while staff does take into consideration wildlife habitat, human safety is the number one concern. However, he added this is a valid question, and they do want to preserve these trees.

Commissioner Griffin also asked whether Mr. Bahe knows of any cities in the US that have set a canopy goal and reached it given the problem of EAB, and how they did. Mr. Bahe was not aware of any cities that have set a goal and reached it.

Commissioner Willette asked on the preservation credit, how long into the future do they have to preserve the tree. Mr. Walther stated staff monitors the trees closely during construction and one year post-construction to be sure trees survive; after that time, if there is an approved site plan on file the trees must be planted and maintained in perpetuity. If there are changes, the property must either bring the site into compliance with previously approved plans or meet current codes depending on the circumstances.

Council Member Budd asked if this applies only to commercial property. Mr. Walther stated currently single-family homes and duplexes on existing lots are exempt, and anything larger from triplex to multi-family to commercial properties would fall under the ordinance. He noted also single-family and duplex lots would only be included if a parcel is being subdivided.

Commissioner Zeigle asked if there is a canopy goal in place. Mr. Bahe stated they are still working on this but there will be a midterm goal for 2035 and long term goal for 2045.

Commissioner Giraldo asked if there is a public education program in place. Mr. Bahe stated there will be new information on the website, including symptoms of declining trees by tree species.

Commissioner Bayer asked if a property were sold and demoed and clear cut of trees, would these policies protect that type of impact in the city. Mr. Walther stated no, the ordinance would not apply, but the city does require the owner/contractor to notify neighbors if this is happening through a construction management plan process. He added Edina typically does 100 tear downs in a year, while St. Louis Park only sees 5-10 per year. He added that not all tear downs and major additions result in tree removals.

Commissioner Griffin added he also has concerns about this and noted in his neighborhood a very beautiful large tree was removed for a home construction outside of the footprint of the house. Mr. Walther noted that even if a tree is outside of the footprint of construction, it may be damaged by construction equipment and grading. He asked how the city informs property owners undergoing construction about heritage trees on their property. He added he would like to know the percentage of heritage trees in the city and how many are on single-family lots. Mr. Walther stated that the city

does not have an inventory of private trees, only public trees. The city has done some sampling of private tree information to get a better understanding of the types of tree species that are most prevalent. Mr. Bahe noted that he would speak with the city's aerial photography vendor, NearMap, about the availability of this data.

Commissioner Giraldo asked about contests or incentives for preserving trees by creating relationships with heritage trees through storytelling and personal connections.

Commissioner Wilsey suggested doing a champion tree program. Mr. Bahe talked about a program where volunteers name trees in a park.

Ms. Ziring stated this discussion will go to city council on June 10.

5. Staff updates

Ms. Ziring updated the commission on the following items:

- Submitting final application for a grant to install fast speed garage doors at the municipal service center using EECBG funds from the Department of Energy
- Climate Champions program for industrial and large commercial properties
- APA national conference
- Two applications for Climate Champions for Multifamily in the works
- Second annual Wheelie Fun bike ride – Dakota Park to Aquila Park, May 17, 4-5 p.m.
- First Depave application in the works – an apartment building off Hwy 100 near the Wat Prom temple building

6. Work plan update

6a. Expand our outreach – Events work group update

- Upcoming events were noted

6b. Share our voice – State policy update

Ms. Ziring said the session will come to a close in a few weeks. She stated the commissioners can go to the MyBills link for updates. She added the building performance standards bill was pulled back and will be worked on again next year.

6c. Measure our progress – Staff and volunteer reports – April 2024 report

Ms. Ziring presented the report and noted details.

7. Environmental justice and current events open discussion

Ms. Ziring pointed out a recent article in Vox about failed government policies that led to car bloat and why there are so many larger vehicles on the road today. She noted a lot is profit driven as well as spurred by changes in federal emission standards.

Feedback about removing barriers to commissions participation or commissions in general:

Commissioner Giraldo stated having relaxed meeting rules and allowing more people to attend would help. She added there should be more informal meetings for gathering ideas.

Commissioner Griffin agreed and added he would also like meetings virtual for more community participation. He also liked the idea of meeting off-site rather than at city hall.

Commissioner Wilsey added the sequencing of topics and giving input and engagement might be better done through a public series with sharing and community conversations conducted.

Chair Ashare noted childcare on site would be difficult, but possibly a voucher for a babysitter would be better.

Ms. Rose stated that city code allows the commission to expense costs for reimbursement. Mr. Ziring stated she would have to check on that.

Commissioner Bayer noted having more virtual meetings would be helpful, especially when there are only presentations and no voting.

Ms. Ziring stated open meeting laws are in state statute so difficult to change. She added the city attorney is working on this with city administrative staff.

8. Upcoming/proposed events

- Arbor Day celebration, May 11, 9 a.m. – 12 noon, Birchwood Park
- Wheelie Fun Community Bike Ride, May 17, 4-5 p.m., Dakota Park
- Ecotacular, June 15, 11 a.m. – 3 p.m., Wolfe Park

9. Adjournment - 8:12 p.m.

Emily Ziring, liaison

Shaina Ashare, chair member