



# NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION

## MEETING MINUTES

May 7, 2025 – 6:00 p.m.

Lakeside Conference Room 430, City Hall

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### I. Call to Order

Chair Streitz called the meeting to begin at 6:04 PM.

### II. Roll Call

Commissioners Present: Lori Dando, Pam Foster, Judy Gibbs, John Lindgren, Mike Raichel, Mike Schrage, Nancy Schuldt, Andrew Streitz

Commissioners Absent: Tiffany Sprague

City Staff Present: Jim Filby Williams, Kate Kubiak, Bronwyn Bauer

### III. Approval of the Agenda

Commissioner Foster made a motion to approve the agenda; seconded by Commissioner Dando. Unanimously approved.

### IV. Approval of the April 23, 2025 Special Meeting Minutes

Commissioner Raichel made a motion to approve the minutes; seconded by Commissioner Foster. Unanimously approved.

### V. Old Business

#### A. Tischer Fish Kill Update (City Staff)

No staff update. Secretary Gibbs shared a good news story that she recently witnessed a fisherman catch a fish in the Tischer Creek.

#### B. Advocacy (Chair Streitz)

No update. Commissioner Raichel asked if cold water resources and warm water heat capture could be a future new business item.

#### C. Lester-Amity-Hawk Ridge Designated Natural Area Nomination

##### i. Management Plan Content/Implementation Actions – Commissioners' Recommendations

Kubiak reminded the commissioners of the DNAP area boundaries and showed the actions taken for the Hartley and the St. Louis River Management plans. She encouraged everyone to give recommendations for items to be included in the Lester-Amity-Hawk Ridge management plan that can be shared with the nominating group. Vice Chair Schuldt said that this was a very comprehensive nomination. She also said that there is some money from the South St. Louis Soil and Water Conservation District earmarked to help restore Amity Creek. Chair Streitz would like the nominating group to come back to a future NRC meeting when the management plan is 50% completed to provide an update.

##### ii. Provisional Approval – Motion

Vice Chair Schuldt motioned to accept the Lester-Amity-Hawk Ridge Designated Natural Area nomination as presented at the April 23, 2025 meeting. Commissioner Raichel seconded the motion. Unanimously approved.

### VI. New Business

#### A. Summer Natural Resources Work Plans [Kate Kubiak]

##### i. City



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### ii. Partners

Kubiak gave a presentation showing her work plans for the summer, including a lot of tree planting and invasive species removal – mainly buckthorn and knotweed, but also a newer invasive, White Crack Willow trees, that are invading our streams. Commissioner Raichel mentioned that Schuettes oak would be a good substitute to plant instead. Commissioner Schrage has noticed many dead trees, due to emerald ash borer, near the Munger Trail and Superior Hiking Trail. Secretary Gibbs added that there are also many near Tischer Creek. Commissioner Raichel said that these trees can become dangerous and can fall over unexpectedly. Kubiak also mentioned the work that our partners are doing, including tree planting by Community Action Duluth's Stream Corps, Rajala Woods Foundation, and the Nature Conservancy. Commissioner Lindgren added that the Isaac Walton League is planting trees near Spirit Mountain this Saturday at 80<sup>th</sup> Avenue West near the tributary. He also asked for an update on the Forest Hill project. Filby Williams said that the City is in negotiations with the cemetery board and they are close to a decision. Some of the planning projects Kubiak is working on, most with outside partners, include Keene Creek Small Watershed Plan and 59<sup>th</sup> Ave Green Infrastructure, City-wide NPC mapping, Forestry prescriptions and City-wide forestry plan, Hartley Dam design, Magney plan update, Mud Lake restoration, and Woodland Avenue stormwater basins. Secretary Gibbs asked how we can use this information in the advocacy group. Vice Chair Schuldt said the main discussion should include how do we leverage city funding to the table and what can we do to elevate all the good things happening.

### B. Commission Term Limits

Chair Streitz explained that he would like a letter written by the commission to the mayor about his new two-term limit for all boards and commissions and explain why members are opposed to this change. He also reported that there have been no applications to the NRC since September 2023. Chair Streitz said there is no consistency with how long the terms are on different boards and commissions; he would like to get all the members' thoughts on a draft letter. Filby Williams reported the differences in term lengths in the City's boards and commissions: 19 have 3-year terms; four have 4-year terms; one has a 5-year term; two have a 6-year term. Because this commission was created only eight years ago, the terms are not staggered, so we will potentially lose five members in the next two years. He asked that the commission take a less argumentative tone in the letter, and it may be better received. He also said that he has been asked by previous city administrators if the NRC is really needed. When asked if the letter should also be cc'd to the City Council, he said that may not be a good idea. Commissioner Schrage believes commissions need longer term members who have history on the commission and asked if other boards and commissions are experiencing the same lack of applications. Filby Williams said that this is not a problem unique to our commission, and that the plan is to recruit new members when they are needed. Commissioner Schrage said that although it is the mayor's prerogative to make this change, and understands his concerns, they don't apply to the NRC, which is comprised of very thoughtful members who have good attendance at meetings. Commissioner Raichel has concerns with succession planning and wonders if administration would be open to graduated succession, giving any leeway to the NRC during a recruitment period, and being specific in staggering terms. Commissioner Foster suggested we agree to the new policy if four-year terms and also ask for exceptions. Vice Chair Schuldt suggested we not agree to the policy, instead understand that it is the mayor's prerogative and ask if a different approach would be considered. She also said that she can recruit people if she is not allowed to stay on the commission. Commissioner Dando understands the reasoning, but in this case, our commission's specific knowledge is not readily found in the community, so maybe he could make an exception for the NRC. Chair Streitz acknowledged that



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Commissioners Schrage and Lindgren will be stepping down from the commission when their second terms end this August, but Vice Chair Schuldt would be willing to stay for a third term if allowed, so maybe the mayor would make an exception for her, like he did for a member of the Parks and Recreation Commission. Filby Williams said that the NRC could be proactive, like they were when transitioning from the Urban Forestry Commission to the NRC, when direct mailings were used for recruitment.

### **C. ATV Study Update**

Kubiak found that the study is waiting for legislative approval before any planning happens. Filby Williams will forward the ATV Study memo to all commissioners from last summer that was sent to administration – there has been no change since then.

### **VII. Staff Reports**

Will be provided again at the June meeting.

### **VIII. Announcements**

Commissioner Schrage sent an email to Kubiak about the bear study that the commission learned about at the last meeting – they are looking for landowners who will allow them to trap on their property. Kubiak will make sure this is forwarded to all commissioners. Secretary Gibbs said there will be an artist opening at Hartley on May 16<sup>th</sup> at 4:00 PM, which will showcase paintings of invasives – it will be up all summer.

### **IX. Public Comment**

Margaret West asked if the City will be providing wood chips again this summer and Secretary Gibbs said that they will.

### **X. Adjournment**

Commissioner Schrage made a motion to adjourn; Commissioner Lindgren seconded. Meeting adjourned at 7:50 PM.

Next Meeting – June 4, 2025 at 6:00 PM Conference Room 330, City Hall.