



April 26, 2010

Meeting Minutes of the Birchwood Parks and Natural Resources Committee

Members Present: John Lund, Kathy Malles, Cynthia Tomlinson, Deb Harrod

Guest: Erika Peterson

Also Present: Barb Carson, Council Representative

Meeting called to order at 7:10 p.m.

April 4, 2010 meeting minutes approved with addition.

Our invited guest, Erika Peterson, has a degree in forestry, experience with the U.S. Forest Service and Trees For Tomorrow, and expertise on forest conservation, wetlands, and native plants.

Emerald Ash Borer: Erika stressed the need for Birchwood to have a strategic plan to prepare for the Emerald Ash Borer, reduce its impact, and protect key trees. Preventive measures need to be taken if the EAB is found within 15 mi. of Birchwood, and the state requires that we remove infested trees. Based on the Urban Forest Tree Survey done by her son, Chad, about 15% of our trees are ash, many of which are located along the shoreline and on private property. The estimated cost to remove them if infested could run into \$millions, so the city would need to budget for it. DNR publications outline what communities should be doing. The EAB hotline number is 651-201-6684 (option 4) to have a possible infested tree identified or visit www.mda.state.mn.us.

Tree Advisory Board: Erika recommended that Birchwood make it a priority by forming a tree advisory board for monitoring, educating, and forming a readiness assessment to deal with the EAB and other tree diseases. Barb will recommend to the city council that the tree board be formed. Kathy asked about future Dept. of Agriculture grants, but Erika hasn't heard if more funds will be made available.

Raingardens/Erosion: Erika spoke about overloaded park raingardens and the need to address private property runoff from roofs, gutters, and driveways which contribute to it. She offered to arrange with the Blue Thumb organization for a workshop in Birchwood this fall, giving property owners time to apply for matching funds.

Yard Waste Removal: Erika and the committee discussed providing a yard waste removal option for residents.

Planting Under Power Lines: Erika has been trying to get Xcel Energy to provide help with replanting to better manage vegetation beneath power lines. They haven't been very responsive thus far.

Halls Marsh: Erika and neighbor volunteers have been active in the protection of Halls Marsh and would like to continue efforts to preserve it.

Communication/Directory: A discussion was held on ways to notify residents of EAB information. A directory would be nice if a volunteer would compile it.

Budget: Discussed the Parks Committee 2010 approved budget and expenditures to date. Cynthia noted that a good chunk of the \$1,500 tree inspection and \$4K removal budget has been spent, but the city has a separate diseased tree fund. The warming house expenses (rental/student salaries) were on target. It was unknown how the \$1600 water bill for rink flooding was determined and will be looked into.

Handyman: Barb and Cynthia decided what the new maintenance worker's park duties will be.

Benches/Tables/Canoe Racks: Kathy had prepared a photo catalog to help plan for repair, replacing, or adding as needed. The recommendation is to eventually replace the two benches at the playground area with new benches, take out the rotted bench on the west side of the tennis court, and replace the Ash Easement bench. It was decided to first fix the benches and tables that we could with volunteer help. Recycled plastic lumber is being considered; however the initial cost is high and supports are required every 2'. The concrete bases need treated lumber for the 8' span. There isn't anything in the budget for a new canoe rack, but repairs could be made to what we have now with volunteer help. Residents should notify the city clerk if they cannot find a spot for their canoe/kayak this summer to let it be known how much demand there is for new racks.

Recognition: Deb, along with all on the Parks Committee, commended John for his hard work and knowledgeable advice he gave in gathering information and arranging for the tennis court repairs.

Meeting adjourned at 9:00.

Submitted by:
Kathy Malles