

Macalester Groveland Community Council Environment Committee
Minutes: April 20, 2017

Present: Johanna Anderson, Michelle Berg, Karen Osen, Britta Sherrill, Melanie Peterson-Nafziger, Sheila Sweeney, David Soll, Lea Hall, Craig Skone, Wendell Bell.

Meeting called to order at 7:03 p.m.

City of St. Paul Sustainable To-Go Packaging Ordinance:

Proposed ordinance would require businesses selling food for immediate consumption/take out food to be packaged in recyclable or compostable packaging. The language will be completed in the proposed ordinance during the week of April 24, 2017. Similar ordinances have already passed in Minneapolis, St. Louis Park, and Bloomington is considering a similar ordinance. There is a task force that is collaborating with cities to try to establish consistency at a regional scale. It is likely that hospitals would be exempt. A group is still investigating alternatives for hot liquid cups. If compostable/recyclable containers are more expensive, businesses will have more of an incentive to promote customers bringing reusable containers from home for to-go food. A mandate for compostable containers would be likely to align with the timeframe when the City of St. Paul offers curbside organics pick up services. Michelle posed concerns about whether curbside composting would increase the rat population. Sheila proposed an amendment to the proposal resolution recommending that the resolution be consistent with other regional communities that pursued similar programs. David moved that the Environment Committee send the resolution to the Board to request approval, and Sheila seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Capitol Region Watershed District Grant Planning:

Our first stormwater workshop will take place from 6-8 pm on Friday, April 28 at MacPlymouth Church. Volunteers should be there from 5:30-8:30 pm. Child care will be provided for younger children; games will be available for older children. Dr. Christie Manning would like to have people discuss in facilitated discussion groups and is seeking questions to be submitted ahead of time. Britta will invite questions to be submitted in the next week. Also, slips of paper will be available on the tables for people to pose questions during the event. Britta will buy a party platter. Craig will post info about the event on Next Door. Other volunteers are invited to publicize the event on social media and print out flyers to post in neighborhood venues. Volunteers who organized donations from businesses, please pick those up so they are available for MacGrove Fest at the end of the summer. The second stormwater event will be on June 22 from 6-9 pm with Master Water Steward Dave Pasiuk. The final stormwater event will occur at MacGrove Fest, where prizes for people who attended all three events will be raffled.

Applause for Sheila:

The City of St. Paul awarded Sheila Sweeney with an Exceptional Environmental Steward award. Definitely hard-earned and well-deserved. Congratulations, Sheila!

Other business:

Discussion of communications with public about ongoing organized trash collection negotiations:

Via e-mail Liz shared information regarding a campaign that is dramatically criticizing and sometimes making false claims about the Organized Trash Collection process and negotiations in St. Paul. It's potentially organized by Connelly Cole Group and potentially funded by national trash haulers. So far the group has released a biased poll, is carrying out robo-calling and e-mails, and is posting a stream of negative articles and perspectives on Facebook. The group is working to turn out a large number of people opposed to Organized Trash Collection in St. Paul to upcoming public meetings. The committee discussed whether and how to share factual information in response to the negative publicity campaign. Britta will distribute a letter to be considered and possibly edited for submission to the *Villager*, on Facebook, etc. Everyone is reminded that the MGCC Organized Trash Collection report *Taking Out the Trash* is available on the MGCC website.

Saint Clair and Snelling Development:

Michelle brought up concerns about ground water contamination at the corner of St. Clair and Snelling. She is worried about whether there are currently gas tanks underground, whether there is soil and water contamination by dry cleaning chemicals and whether a full environmental study has been done to consider the implications of brownfield status for the site. She is wondering whether the property owner needs to purchase liability insurance for underground unknowns and whether there are transfer liabilities related to pollution. She is wondering whether a PCE tax requirement could be imparted on residents due to companies polluting the property. Will there be other costs for remediation that someone attempts to pass on to citizens? Michelle spoke with Josh Williams from the City of St. Paul and was directed to the website to find out more information. She found information about variances and presumes that environmental studies are still occurring and that a traffic study will still need to happen. Williams told Michelle that soil will be remediated and a vapor barrier will be installed on the property. The Environment Committee invited Michelle to consider inviting committee members to carry out further research and conversation in a sub group of the Environment Committee.

The meeting adjourned at 8:12 pm.