

Minutes of the

REGULAR MEETING OF THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

Tuesday, September 10, 2019

Committee Members Present:

Peter Lindstrom, Chair; Wendy Wulff, Vice Chair; Kris Fredson; Susan Vento

Committee Members Absent:

Phillip Sterner; Raymond Zeran

CALL TO ORDER

A quorum being present, Committee Chair Lindstrom called the regular meeting of the Council's Environment Committee to order at 4:00 p.m. on Tuesday, September 10, 2019.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES

It was moved by Susan Vento, seconded by Wendy Wulff to approve the agenda. Motion carried.

It was moved by Wendy Wulff, seconded by Susan Vento to approve the minutes of the August 27, 2019, regular meeting of the Environment Committee. Motion carried.

CONSENT BUSINESS

Approval of the Consent Agenda (Items 2019-241 JT, 2019-242 JT, and 2019-243 JT, 2019-244 JT)

It was moved by Susan Vento, seconded by Wendy Wulff to approve the consent agenda business items. Motion carried.

1. 2019-241 JT: City of Crystal 2040 Comprehensive Plan and Comprehensive Sewer Plan, Review File 21974-1

That the Metropolitan Council adopt the Advisory Comments and Review Record attached to the business item and take the following action:

Recommendations of the Environment Committee:

1. Approve the City of Crystal's Comprehensive Sewer Plan.

2. 2019-242 JT: City of Greenwood 2040 Comprehensive Plan and Comprehensive Sewer Plan, Review File 22155-1

That the Metropolitan Council adopt the Advisory Comments and Review Record attached to the business item and take the following action:

Recommendations of the Environment Committee:

1. Approve the City of Greenwood's Comprehensive Sewer Plan.

3. 2019-243 JT: City of Woodland 2040 Comprehensive Plan and Comprehensive Sewer Plan, Review File 22171-1

That the Metropolitan Council adopt the Advisory Comments and Review Record attached to the business item and take the following action:

Recommendations of the Environment Committee:

1. Approve the City of Woodland's Comprehensive Sewer Plan.

4. 2019-244 JT: City of North St. Paul 2040 Comprehensive Plan and Comprehensive Sewer Plan, Review File 22159-1
That the Metropolitan Council adopt the Advisory Comments and Review Record attached to the business item and take the following action:

Recommendations of the Environment Committee:

1. Approve the City of North St. Paul's Comprehensive Sewer Plan.
2. When available, the City is advised to provide to the Council the date the City adopted the final LWMP.

NON-CONSENT BUSINESS

None at this time.

INFORMATION

1. 2018 Water Resources River Report

Erik Herberg, Environmental Scientist and Hong Wang, Principal Environmental Scientist presented a summary of the water resources river report for 2018. The Water Resources group runs a comprehensive river monitoring program. The modern version of this program dates back to 1976. The monitoring sites are located along the major rivers of the metro area, mainly on the Mississippi, Minnesota, and St. Croix. The sites are at specific locations, such as above and below the entrance of major tributaries and treated wastewater effluent. The program tests for a variety of water quality components, including conventional parameters such as nutrients and chloride, as well as field measurements, metals, organic pollutants, and biological samples. This information is used for a variety of purposes, including permit compliance, determination of impaired waters, and support of informed management decisions.

Using data from the river monitoring program, the Water Resources group published a report in June 2018 documenting current conditions and historical changes in the water quality of the Mississippi, Minnesota, and St. Croix rivers in the 7-country metro area over the past 40 years. This information item summarizes the major findings for total phosphorus and nitrate (nutrients), as well as chloride (salt). Total phosphorus and nitrate levels are generally higher in the Minnesota River compared to the other two, and chloride tends to be higher downstream from our large wastewater treatment plants. From 1976 to 2015, concentrations of the major water quality parameters including total phosphorus decreased, but nitrate and chloride have increased at most of the monitoring sites.

Comments and Questions:

Chair Lindstrom inquired as to the reason why the St. Croix River in the metro area is impaired since there are lower concentrations of phosphorus in that river. Lake St. Croix is part of the St. Croix river and it is impaired for nutrients (eutrophication), which includes phosphorus. Acceptable phosphorus levels are site specific and the acceptable level set for Lake St. Croix is lower than the acceptable levels set for the Minnesota and Mississippi rivers within the metro area.

Chair Lindstrom asked if phosphorus stays in the water. Staff confirmed that it does. Phosphorus binds to sediment and settles to the bottom of lakes. It stays in the sediment under aerobic conditions but can be released back into the water when oxygen is depleted.

Committee Member Vento appreciates the presentation. She expressed concern about industrial activities, specifically in the Highland Park area with the bulk of attention on the surface. Waste is buried deep in the property. There are concerns over leaching that needs or may need to be addressed. There appears to be a number of vacant buildings and is wondering if an assessment has been done or will be done to determine if there is leaching. Staff stated that currently the

Council does not have a program to address this issue but the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) or University of Minnesota should have relevant studies and programs. Judy Sventek clarified there is information on Superfund sites and other contaminated sites that the MPCA tracks. We are not tracking this but may be able to track impacts over time to determine if there is any leaching and if we can tie changes in river conditions to sources.

Committee Member Vento commented that the Council partners with many of the agencies. She would like to suggest how we can take what we know and partner with cities and counties to address and make changes in how we live to help contribute to improvements. Staff stated that we have presented the information to many partner agencies, watersheds, at the Water Resources Conference and other events to get the word out about our study and the results.

Committee Member Wulff asked about the studies of emerging chloride issue on the tributaries. Staff stated we are applying a new model to study the chloride trend in major streams in the Metro area to identify potential sources of chloride that contribute to the regional rivers. Fact sheets are in development for each targeted stream that should be available by the end of the year or beginning of next year. Judy Sventek stated that we had completed trends studies for total suspended sediment, total phosphorus and nitrate about 5 years ago for the streams in our stream monitoring program. We are looking to update that now with chloride trends and will be updating the whole study in a few years.

Chair Lindstrom asked what stakeholder response was as a result of the previous report presented. We have presented the information to many stakeholders including Upper Mississippi River Conservation Committee and have had a positive response to our results. In particular, federal agency National Park Services republished a summary of major study findings, and the MPCA has used this information in its work on impaired waters. The MPCA also asked us to update several of our river sites to run trends through 2018 for their update of the state's Nutrient Reduction Strategy, which were completed earlier this year.

Committee Member Wulff stated cities have been addressing salt that is added to the road. Education on smart uses of salt may need to be done for commercial areas and homeowners with water softeners as well as how to apply to driveways.

Committee Member Vento stated she purchases environmentally safe salt.

2. 2018 Water Resources Lake Monitoring Report

Brian Johnson, Senior Environmental Scientist, share information regarding the lake monitoring program and the lake monitoring report. The Metropolitan Council's lake monitoring program (the program) provides water quality data and information which are used to determine regional lake water quality conditions and water quality trends. This information helps local governments target lake management efforts and assess their effectiveness. Monitoring is done by Council staff, by volunteers of the Citizens-Assisted Lake Monitoring Program and professional staff of local partners via the Professional Citizen-Assisted Monitoring Program. The program focuses its monitoring efforts on lake eutrophication (nutrient over-enrichment) and chloride (like road salts). The program communicates its findings annually by issuing lake water quality grades for each lake enrolled in the program. These grades are summarized in a 3-page annual lake water quality summary report. More detailed information for the program and data for individual lakes are documented annually in a larger annual lake report.

Comments and Questions:

Chair Lindstrom asked about the grading on a curve for lakes. If a lake received a lower grade over time does it show an increase over time? Staff stated the grading curve was established in the late 1980's and was based on data from a set of lakes collected prior to that. The same curve is used today by the Metropolitan Council and many of our partners.

Committee Member Vento inquired about the monitoring efforts on Oneka Lake and Lake Phalen as it appears they are not being monitored. Are they being monitored by a different entity? Oneka Lake is sponsored by Rice Lake Watershed district and is in our program. There was not enough data to establish a lake grade. Lake Phalen is monitored by Ramsey County and is not part of our monitoring program. We coordinate closely with the other agencies collecting lake information so that efforts are not duplicated.

Committee Member Vento asked if the same monitoring parameters are being used. Staff stated the monitoring parameters are the same. To clarify, monitoring parameters are similar with respect to nutrients (nitrogen, phosphorus) and chloride between Ramsey County and the Council's program.

Chair Lindstrom asked how many volunteers are involved in the monitoring programs. Staff stated it ranges from about 110 to 130 people a year.

Committee Member Vento asked if there are outreach efforts available to school-aged students who are interested. Staff stated we do have a few students who have participated in our CAMP program. Typically, we engage students at events such as the Children's Water Festival, Pollution Prevention Day, and through others' externship programs (i.e. nature centers).

Committee Member Vento asked if there are opportunities for council members to be involved in the classroom setting. Staff stated outreach activities are available through the Children's Water Festival, Pollution Prevention Day, and externship programs. The Children's Water Festival is at the State Fair Grounds. The Metropolitan Council has approximately 20 staff who demonstrate various aspects of water to children in 4th grade.

Committee Member Fredson asked what happens to the chlorophyll, nitrogen and phosphorus over the winter. Staff stated the chlorophyll concentration decreases (the algal population decreases/dies off), phosphorus settles to the bottom and the water clarity increases. Nitrates and nitrites are typically below detection unless influenced by agriculture or stream/river inputs such as in a reservoir.

3. General Manager Report

Customer rate charges for 2020 were recently sent out to communities. If Council Members receive questions, please contact Ned Smith, 651-602-1162 or Kyle Colvin, 651-602-1151.

The Minnehaha Park Area Regional Sewer Improvement Project is beginning. Those interested in obtaining updates on the project can visit <https://metro council.org/Wastewater-Water/Projects/Sewer-Planning-Construction/Projects/Minnehaha-Park.aspx>. The site provides information about this project as well as project contacts should any questions come up that need to be addressed. Individuals with email addresses can subscribe to newsletter updates by clicking on the "subscribe to our newsletters, or text & email alerts" at the bottom of the project page. From there, a list of available options can be selected and saved in order to receive informational updates about a variety of topics that the Council has available.

ADJOURNMENT

Business completed the meeting adjourned at 5:40 p.m.

Susan Taylor
Recording Secretary