

**Wilderness Park Strategic Planning
and Community Advisory Committee
Ecosystem Subcommittee
Minutes**

**March 22, 2017, 3:00 – 5:00 pm
PPNC Conference Room**

Present: Andy Campbell, Judi Cook, Bob Henrickson, Rosina Paolini, Dan Schlitt, Dan Schulz

Parks and Rec. Staff: Aaron Druery, Nicole Fleck-Tooze, Sara Hartzell, Lynn Johnson, Chris Myers

The meeting was called to order at 3:00.

Review of Maps

Sara Hartzell highlighted the results of the map exercise from the February 22nd meeting. Committee members were asked to indicate which parts of Wilderness Park were their favorite, which areas had room for improvement or they had questions about, and areas of more immediate concern:

- One of the “red” areas was an area of bad road runoff with oil and other pollution. Dan King indicated he called this runoff and pollution to Hazardous Waste.
- The Wilderness South Bridge is a priority for a 2017 RTP grant application.
- The GPTN wants to identify sources of funding or fundraising for a trail from Densmore Park to Jamaica North Trail.
- Burr oak restoration north of Warlick Blvd.
- The fitness trail loop south of Pioneers needs updating.

Discussion of Project Areas Identified by Trails and Facilities Subcommittee

Sara Hartzell briefly summarized the discussion from the March 8th meeting. Items covered included:

- The Yankee Hill Bridge project and the possibility of using gang slats as an economical method of repair
- The Rokeby Road Horse Bridge
- Hwy 77 & Rokeby reroute of bike trail
- The discussion for appropriate signage in Wilderness Park

Potential Opportunities Presented by Upcoming Projects

- **Old Cheney Waste Water Extension**
The Wastewater division is willing to do some sort of mitigation work within the park. Would like to identify an area where we could have some invasives removed and reseed to prairie. They offered to buy new trees, if the volunteers planted them. There is an area south of Old Cheney and 1st Street that is currently overrun with eastern red cedar and Siberian elms that might be a good place to target.

There was also discussion about the parking lot north of Old Cheney and if it should be made visible from the street. The full easement is 100 feet with a 30 foot permanent easement and 70 foot construction easement. May be an opportunity to revegetate with some higher value trees and understory that would provide clear view of the parking lot from the road. May also want to look at the driveway location and see if there might be some better configuration.

- **NRD/WSM Stream Stability Projects**

All trees over 12" have been surveyed to the west of the bridge.

There was also discussion about the Emerald Ash Borer (EAB). With the EAB expected in the Lincoln area any time now, ash trees will need to be removed from Wilderness Park. Andy Campbell said when he was recently in Chicago, he walked a trail where ash trees were tagged with bright paint, and signage educated park users about the EAB, thereby raising awareness.

Concern was expressed for the impending 14th and Old Cheney construction. Would highway designation affect Wilderness Park? If money is spent making these improvements now, will it be a wasted effort five or ten years down the line? And how would closing Old Cheney at 1st Street affect the park?

Discussion then focused on the Wilderness South Bridge. What is the most feasible way to route construction equipment in for replacing it? The service road goes right into burr oak. Possibly work out a deal with the farmer to the north to allow equipment to come through the field on the west. Jamaica Trail is also an option, although it may result in damage to the trail.

- **Sandstone Prairie**

The Sandstone Prairie south of Pioneers Blvd. has potential for conservation for educational purposes, but Rosina Paolini voiced concern about what a delicate ecosystem it is. Sara Hartzell said it could be identified as a protected area. However, management does need to be performed there.

Other

Sara Hartzell laid out a map of the park. From south to north, she highlighted points of discussion regarding ecosystems at Wilderness Park, including:

- The fitness loop which looks "abandoned"
- Animals burrowing next to the old swimming pool wall. Since the trail goes right on top of it, does it need filling?
- The former Epworth Park has beautiful lilies, but the area has a lot of buckthorn as well.
- An area just southeast of there is full of brome. It is not a recent renovation, but Bob Henrickson noted cedars have been creeping into the area.
- The "boneyard" by Aaron Druery's shop has buckthorn and honeysuckle encroaching. They get cut but keep reappearing if the area isn't treated.
- Treating buckthorn led to a lively discussion about how best to utilize volunteers at Wilderness Park. Because of liability, they cannot operate machinery – only tools such as hand saws. They cannot spray chemicals unless they possess a Pesticide Applicator's License. They can, however,

fundraise. Chris Myers raised the point groups of volunteers have energy to work 2-3 hours at a time, and that should be taken into consideration when scheduling larger groups.

- Bob Henrickson noted that north of Saltillo Rd., there are aggressive trees that ought to be taken out to allow for natural re-seeding.
- Overall, the group was satisfied with smaller projects that benefitted the Wilderness Park ecosystem, as opposed to a costly park-wide project.

The meeting adjourned at 5:03.

Next Meeting:

Full Group Meeting – April 19, 3:00 pm (note the change of time from April 5th)