

**MINUTES OF THE NATURAL RESOURCES & PUBLIC PROPERTY COMMITTEE
MEETING HELD FEBRUARY 27, 2020**

A Natural Resources and Public Property Committee meeting was held on Thursday, Feb. 27, 2020 at 7:00P.M. in the City Council office, Room 204.

Committee Members: Councillor Sullivan, Chairperson and Councillors LePage and Bevilacqua. President Barrett also attended.

Attendees: Michael Sexton, Alyssa Sexton, David P. LaBrode, and Betsey Guest-Natale.

- 1) **Doc. #11-S**-Communication from Councillor Sullivan requesting a discussion regarding a property owner's request to lease or purchase City Land (Whittier Rd., Map 440, Bl.2, Lot 1A) abutting their property at 256 Whittier Road.

The Chair reviewed with the members of the Committee and the requestors, Michael & Alyssa Sexton, their request to lease or purchase up to 3 acres of public land that abuts the back of their property. Per usual practice, department heads were required to submit their comments and recommendations as to the request. The two key departments responding in opposition to any lease or purchase were Health & Inspections/Conservation and the Water Department. Both related similar thoughts that the area in question along with a larger swath of land was purchased back in 1998 for public drinking water supply protection as the property is within the watershed protection district of Millvale Reservoir. Millvale Reservoir provides approximately 70+ percent of the city's annual drinking water supply. Water is pumped from Millvale Reservoir to Kenoza Lake. Rob Moore, Environmental Health Technician submitted further comments that he reviewed aerial images showing that a portion of the protected land may be being used for farming purposes. The Sexton's assured the Committee that they have not been using any of the public land, and I affirmed that fact as I had visited the Sexton property before the meeting. Councillor Bevilacqua noted that we seldom if ever go against our Department Head recommendations, and Councillor LePage and I agreed that we could not support pursuing further the sale or lease of the portion of public land in question. The Sexton's agreed that it would not be in their best interests to pursue further and asked to withdraw their petition without prejudice. Councillor Bevilacqua made a motion to that effect, seconded by Councilor LePage and the motion passed 3-0. It was also noted that we would send a letter to the Mayor, City Engineer, and City Solicitor informing them that someone in the area has been farming a larger portion of public land, but not abutting the Sexton property, for further investigation.

The following Committee Study List documents were reviewed for update and/or disposition:

- 1) Doc.#93-L/18-Communication from President Michitson requesting to introduce Dave LaBrode to discuss street tree plantings.

The Chair introduced Dave LaBrode, who had been appointed to the Mayor's new "Tree Committee", for the purpose of determining whether or not the Committee had met yet. It was determined that the Committee had not yet met. While with us in Committee, members asked Dave for his assessment of the results thus far of the recent tree plantings. He believes the trees are being planted more properly, but mentioned that sidewalk replacements continue to occur in

the Highlands neighborhood without replacing or creating any new tree pits. He also expressed concern for the status of older trees and noted that sidewalks throughout the Highlands have been compromised by overgrown trees and roots, including Arlington Street, Park Street, and Webster Street, as well as in other areas of the city, including White Street, Welcome Street, Summer Street, and Ginty Boulevard. Councillor Bevilacqua thanked Dave for his valuable input and for his ongoing advocacy of public trees and park benches. Subject turned back to the status of the "Tree Committee" and as a result of no known action by the Mayor to convene the Tree Committee, Councillor LePage made a motion requesting an update on the status of the work of the "Tree Committee" as well as an update on the status of 2019 tree plantings and anticipated 2020 tree plantings. The motion was seconded by Councillor Bevilacqua, and the motion passed 3-0. As such this item will remain on the committee long term study list.

- 2) Doc. #38-J-Communication from Councillor Macek requesting a discussion about reserve parking spaces at City Hall designated for Registry of Motor Vehicles.

The Chair gave an update to the Committee that he received a response from the Mayor's Chief of Staff, Allison Heartquist, that the matter is under advisement, but also on hold due to anticipated re-construction of the retaining wall in back of City Hall as well as related work planned in that immediate area. As no action will be taken by the Mayor during this time, the item will remain on the committee long term study list.

- 3) Doc.#79F-Communication from Councillor Sullivan requesting to introduce Kathleen Fitts, Gale Park Association, to request the city replace the Gale Park Fountain in fiscal year '20.

The Chair introduced Betsy Natale representing the Gale Park Neighborhood Association to give an update on the status of replacing the Gale Park Fountain. Betsy explained that since they came before us, they obtained three different proposals for replacement fountains, and believe that Specialty Fountain & Waterscape, Inc. based out of Duluth, GA was the best choice. She further explained that the Association has chosen a 22' Diameter Round Fountain having an Iron Caesar Three Tier fountain. She showed member a photo of the Caesar Fountain and members commented favorably on the look. The Chair said it fits with the rest of the Park and the general area. Betsy explained that the cost of the Fountain is \$72,500.00 and projected the ground preparation and base installation/reconstruction will cost approximately \$25,000.00. Discussion turned to how to raise the approximately \$100,000.00 to complete this project. Betsy mentioned soliciting donations from member of the Association as well as the public in general. As for the city's contribution, Councillor Bevilacqua and LePage both suggested that perhaps the City could cover the ground preparation/base installation cost portion of the project, and the rest of the funds would have to be raised by the proponents. Councillor Bevilacqua recommended that a meeting be set up with the Mayor and the Gale Park Neighborhood Association to ascertain the city's level of commitment to the fountain replacement project. Councillor LePage questioned if the City could do the preparation work in house, or if an outside company would need to be brought in. Betsy said Triad Systems does this work and may be familiar with the current fountain at Gale Park.

A motion was made by Councillor Bevilacqua to send a letter to the Mayor asking him to arrange a meeting with the Gale Park Neighborhood Association to further advance the discussion to replace the fountain. The motion was seconded by Councillor LePage, and the item passed 3-0.

The meeting adjourned at 7:42pm upon motion of Councillor Bevilacqua, seconded by Councillor LePage, and passed 3-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Thomas J. Sullivan

Thomas J. Sullivan, Chairperson
Natural Resources and Public Property Committee

May 12, 2020