

Statement of Purpose

The Environmental Policy Board (EPB) will promote environmental awareness and conservation practice by citizens by advising the City Council on policy issues, review of new development proposals, communication and education. Through careful review, the EPB will present multiple perspectives, ideas, and new technologies that promote both discovery and accountability.

Scope

Land Use Application Review

Beginning in 2015, the EPB will have an active role in reviewing various land use applications with respect to natural resources. The EPB's review will occur concurrently with other advisory boards/commissions to ensure compliance with State Statute 15.99 (generally known as the sixty [60] day rule). The EPB will review and provide recommendations regarding landscape plans, tree preservation plans, potential impacts to natural communities/areas as identified in the Natural Resources Inventory and Wetland Functions and Values report, and the potential for implementing Best Management Practices (BMPs).

The EPB will actively review land use applications for Major Plats (four [4] or more lots with public infrastructure improvements), Site Plans (new development only, not for building expansions), Variances in Overlay Districts (Wild and Scenic, Critical Area, Shoreland, and Floodplain), and Comprehensive Plan Amendments. In general, the EPB will not review applications for Conditional or Interim Use Permits, Minor Plats (three [3] or fewer lots), Administrative Subdivisions, Easement Vacations, Home Occupation Permits (unless a request has potential environmental hazards), or Variances (except for the Overlay Districts as noted above). Finally, the EPB will, on occasion, also review Zoning Amendments, dependent on the subject of a proposed/requested amendment.

The EPB's role in land use application review will be conducted for a trial period of one (1) year without amending City Code. At the conclusion of the trial period, the process will be reviewed by the Board (and City Council) for effectiveness and efficiency. If found to add value to the overall land use application review process, an ordinance amendment will be prepared for consideration by City Council.

Comprehensive Plan Review

The City has begun preparations for an update to its Comprehensive Plan and has noted a significant role the EPB will have in this process. This document will lay out the vision for the community through 2040 and sets the foundation for how the community will develop over time. Once adopted, the Comprehensive Plan likely will set in motion certain updates or amendments to the Zoning Ordinance and should any amendment or updates relate to natural resources, the EPB will be directly involved with that process as well.

The EPB will have a role in reviewing various portions of the Comprehensive Plan and will take the lead on the Natural Resources Chapter. While the update is not due until 2018, the EPB will begin a review of the existing Natural Resources Chapter early in 2015 and subsequently establish guiding principles and a framework for updating this Chapter. In 2016 (or early 2017), the EPB will complete a draft update to the Natural Resources Chapter.

Involvement with the Comprehensive Plan update, potential ordinance amendments, and review of land use applications will provide the EPB the opportunity to review existing standards to determine whether they are accomplishing their intended outcome. In essence, the EPB will be involved with establishing the vision and goals for natural resources, drafting standards to accomplish those goals, and applying those standards to proposed projects. This 'full circle' approach should provide the EPB with invaluable insight regarding natural resources standards and identify areas where improvement or amendments are necessary.

It will be the goal of the EPB to regularly (annually) review the relevant chapters of the Comprehensive Plan and the zoning tools in place to determine whether current policies and/or standards are adequate to accomplish the vision of the community.

Education

Ensuring that the residents of Ramsey are well informed on emerging and current issues is critical. Thus, education and community awareness have been identified as a key function of the EPB. The EPB will strive to keep the public informed of new and existing issues as well as what actions the City is taking to address those issues. The intent will not only be to keep the citizenry well informed but also to provide explanation and/or clarification on why certain standards are in place and how they are intended to address a specific issue. This will primarily be accomplished through mediums such as the newsletter and website, but may also include other outlets such as QCTV.

Emerging Issues

Staying informed on emerging issues and 'hot' topics is another critical role for the EPB. As the City's primary advisory board on natural resources, the EPB's role, at least in part, is to stay ahead of emerging issues facing the City by researching and understanding how it may impact the City. Depending on the topic and other factors, this could be accomplished through the use or establishment of a subcommittee comprised of no more than three (3) existing EPB members that would report back to the EPB as a whole during regularly scheduled meetings. Based on the EPB's review and analysis of an issue, the EPB will work to formulate options for consideration by the City Council as to how best to address or mitigate the issue. This could include, but is not necessarily limited to, focused educational pieces, recommendations for Best Management Practices (BMPs), ordinance amendments, and/or comprehensive plan amendments.

Review of Zoning Code

As new technologies and ideas develop, updates to City Code, and more specifically the Zoning & Subdivisions Chapter, may be warranted. The EPB will routinely, or as time permits, review sections of City Code to ensure they are still relevant and will accomplish the stated goals of the Comprehensive Plan relating to natural resources. If, through this review, the EPB identifies opportunities for improvement, outdated or conflicting standards, and/or sections that do not support or will not achieve the goals of the Comprehensive Plan, it will recommend pertinent amendments to the Planning Commission.