

MINUTES
MAYOR'S BEAUTIFICATION COMMITTEE
October 4, 2016
Aging & Disability Resource Center, 300 Adams Street
4:00 PM

Members Present: Paul Hartman, Jim O'Rourke, Lynn Austin, Muriel Austin, and Mike Spencer.

Also Present: Kim Fruin, Kara Fruin, Jaden Fruin, and Joshua Fruin.

Chairman Paul Hartman called the meeting to order at 4:05 PM.

Topics discussed included air quality in Ashwaubenon; the possible addition of a second alderman to the Beautification Committee; current environmental concerns and clean-up along the East River (including fish restoration, water quality, and litter); the property beneath the Ashland Ave viaduct (previously a railroad yard); limited access to Green Bay City public restrooms; and the Green Bay Garden Blitz food initiative.

Lynn Austin brought up the strong air pollution in Ashwaubenon this summer, along Ashland Avenue beginning at Ninth Street and continuing south. The pollution was especially noticeable on hot days. In the Bay Park Square area, on particularly warm, humid days, she said the air smelled putrid. She spoke with someone from the DNR regarding the poor air quality and possible sources of the pollution, and inquired if it could possibly be originating from Sanimax or a similar industrial source.

Paul suggested that another alderman be assigned to the Beautification Committee in addition to Alderman Randy Scannell.

Jim O'Rourke informed the committee that the Izaak Walton League is currently working on a fish restoration project on the East River and shared some of the details.

Regarding the decision at last month's meeting to focus on the condition of the Green Bay area bordering the East River, Lynn Austin took a number of photographs this past month along the East River and the East River trail, including a number of "highlights" as well as projects needing some work. She displayed some of the photos to the committee. She said the river is likely in need of dredging to remove the refuse that has been deposited in the river over the years; the film on top of the water is always very dirty. In places where people had paused to rest and there were no garbage cans, there were accumulations of litter along the bank.

As an additional concern, the East River Park restrooms were locked on a Sunday afternoon. It was pointed out that this defeats the purpose of public restrooms, especially when these restrooms are situated on a well-traveled trail. Lynn said that the park was busy, with children playing on the park equipment. She also mentioned that the Greyhound buses routinely stop at

the Green Bay bus terminal when traveling through Green Bay; however, the terminal is closed at night and passengers have no access to restrooms or any other basic facilities. She pointed out that this does not create a welcoming atmosphere, and may determine whether travelers passing through Green Bay decide to visit again. She suggested that the City hire someone to open and lock up restrooms around the City as necessary, especially sites that are clearly still being used by many people. The City shouldn't spend money building public restrooms in parks if they're unavailable for public use on weekends and when needed. Inaccessible restrooms also raises a concern about sanitation and the prevention of public urination; it's also important to encourage children to wash their hands. Paul Hartman suggested that Lynn should contact the head of the Green Bay Metro and inquire why the restrooms aren't available for bus passengers, as well as contact the Parks Department and find out the closing times of park restrooms.

Mike Spencer asked who owns the area beneath the Ashland viaduct. Possibly Wisconsin Central Ltd? He proposed that the area become a park or a wetlands or prairie, rather than remain untended. However, this will require planning because the area is in a flood zone. Members observed that the City currently has no director of their Planning Department. The City in the past offered the property to Walmart, but the site wasn't what the company was looking for. The property also has some historical aspects, related to the area's waterways. Any long-term plans must take the terrain into consideration to avoid future flooding in rainy years when the water levels rise.

Lynn Austin brought up some of Chicago's lakeshore projects she recently toured. Chicago has created prairies on the lakeshore, which have attracted a variety of animals: snowy owls, many varieties of cranes and other rare birds, foxes, beavers, and coyotes. Many of Chicago's main roads have been made into boulevards, with planting boxes in the medians and pots of flowers hanging from the streetlamps in the downtown. Off-ramps for roads within the city are frequently planted with native prairie plants. Certain inner-city neighborhoods along the Chicago River have established new parks, trails, and small prairies bordering the water; where previously these neighborhoods were viewed as somewhat undesirable places to live, the average property value has increased to \$500k to \$1 million for a very modest property.

Jim O'Rourke advocated committee outreach to other groups in the Green Bay area. He volunteered to contact the Izaak Walton League, and suggested Paul Hartman could deal with the Baird Creek Association, and Lynn Austin with the Green Bay Community Gardens. The earliest scheduled trash pick-up day is spring of next year. However, possibly the committee could start a new fall pick-up in mid-November.

Kim Fruin told the committee about the Green Bay Garden Blitz, an urban garden project and food initiative. Green Bay Garden Blitz is a project of UW Extension and New Leaf Foods. Kim is on the board of Green Bay Garden Blitz and New Leaf, as well as a co-coordinator at Manna for Life. Her daughter Kara teaches children to grow food through Kara Children's Garden. Green Bay Garden Blitz was inspired by the Victory Garden Initiative in Milwaukee, and Kenosha also has a community garden. Kim and her children distribute flowers grown in their

gardens to nursing homes in the Green Bay area. These activities are inter-generational and bring together the community with a positive focus on healthy food and beautiful things.

Green Bay Garden Blitz currently puts in garden boxes (4 ft. x 10 ft.) for homes and businesses, providing healthy food for renters and homeowners. They provide a letter explaining the benefits of garden boxes to landlords. The boxes are movable and can be purchased for \$150; low-income individuals can volunteer in lieu of paying the entire fee (learning how to build and put in boxes, greeting people, or serving food at meals provided for workers and volunteers). It's also possible to sponsor other people's garden boxes. Manna for Life teaches classes about gardening and cooking, and provides mentorship for the first year of gardening. Kim said that UW Extension is targeting "food desert" areas, with a goal that everyone should have access to healthy food.

Kim is also currently looking for garden space on Main Street, bordering the East River. Beautification Committee members suggested two potential properties that are currently for sale on Elizabeth Street.

Lynn Austin agreed about the hunger problem in Green Bay, especially in regards to the elderly. She was recently approached by an elderly man, who offered to trim her hedge in exchange for whatever she was willing to pay him. He worked part time for a local florist in exchange for housing and a small wage but he said he hadn't eaten in two days. Lynn said this should not be occurring in the city. She suggested that it might be appropriate for the City to provide meals in the parks for the elderly, similar to how they provide meals for children during the summer.

The Green Bay community gardens' next events are in spring. The Green Bay Garden Blitz's next event is scheduled for May 5-7. The UW Extension Office's events begin at the start of the growing season.

The meeting concluded at 5:45 PM. Next month's meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, November 1.

Respectfully submitted,

Muriel Austin