

**ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION MEETING**  
Inver Grove Heights City Hall - Council Chambers  
Thursday, January 25, 2007

---

**1. Call to Order**

Meeting called to order at 7:30 PM by Commissioner Marier, acting as Chair.

**2. Roll Call**

Commissioners Present:

Eldon Marier (Acting as Chair), Bob Pohlman, Ted Trenzeluk, Greg Groenjes, Peter Hall, James Huffman and Bob Pollock

Staff Present:

Jennifer Emmerich, Assistant Planner  
Allan Hunting, City Planner

**3. Approval of the Agenda**

Mr. Pollock asked that we add an agenda item to discuss a program involving the mayor. Mr. Pollock moved to approve the agenda and Mr. Hall seconded the motion. Motion to approve carried unanimously.

**4. Approval of Minutes**

Mr. Pollock pointed out that his name was missing on the list of Commissioners present on the November 20, 2006 draft minutes and asked that they be revised. Mr. Pollock moved to approve the minutes with the change. Mr. Huffman seconded the motion. Motion to approve carried unanimously.

**5. Old Business**

Mr. Pollock mentioned that he wanted to endorse the proposed stormwater management plan for stormwater runoff as the plans are very progressive and very good.

Mr. Trenzeluk asked if the ordinance was in an endorsable state or if it was just a draft.

Ms. Emmerich stated that she thought it was going to be brought back to the Environmental Commission on a later date, but wasn't positive on that point.

Mr. Trenzeluk thought it would be premature to endorse the plan right now.

Mr. Pollock commented upon the complexity of the plan and after thinking about it, he thought the plan is quite good.

Mr. Hall commented that when the proposal was presented last month, the negatives were not outlined. He wanted to know what would happen if there was a very large storm event.

Mr. Pollock mentioned that the plan referred to handling a 100 year storm event and that all of the details were outlined. He then asked Ms. Emmerich if the Environmental Commission would be seeing the ordinance again.

Ms. Emmerich commented that it is set to go to City Council in March and that they would not be seeing it again.

Mr. Hall commented that he thought last month's meeting was their chance to look at the ordinance.

Mr. Pollock stated that he was surprised that they were not asked to make a recommendation and asked that they put it back on the agenda for February.

Mr. Trenzeluk stated that they could make a statement to endorse the direction of the current ordinance.

Mr. Pollock thought that maybe the Environmental Commission should do that next month to give staff time for changes before March.

Ms. Emmerich commented that she didn't know of any changes to the ordinance.

Mr. Pollock asked that rather than discussing it now, we could discuss it at the next meeting.

Mr. Marier said they could take a closer look at it and pass on any advice to City Council.

Mr. Pollock directed staff to have that as an agenda item next month as the City Council really looks to them for a recommendation.

## **6. New Business**

### **A. City Council Meeting on March 12, 2007**

Mr. Marier asked about the City Council meeting on March 12, 2007.

Mr. Hunting told the commissioners that the meeting is a work session with City Council, so if there are any items you would like to discuss, they should let staff know.

Mr. Pollock mentioned that the private well monitoring program was the big topic of discussion last year. This year's topic will probably be the tree ordinance and Northwest Plan.

### **B. Discussion of Flint Hills Community Advisory Council**

Mr. Trenzeluk gave a brief synopsis of the Flint Hills Community Advisory Council and said that he had been receiving information about upcoming meetings from them via email and asked if any of the other commissioners would like to be part of the email list. He also asked if anyone would be interested in having the Community Advisory Council come to one of the Environmental Commission meetings and discuss pertinent issues.

Mr. Groenjes thought that would be a great idea for them to come in and speak to the Environmental Commission on a yearly basis.

Mr. Trenzeluk told each of the interested members to give their email address to Ms. Emmerich and she would forward them onto the appropriate Flint Hills representative. He then moved to meet with the group on a yearly basis. Mr. Groenjes seconded the motion. Motion to approve passed 6-0.

### **C. Tree Preservation Ordinance**

Mr. Hunting presented information regarding the Tree Preservation Ordinance. He said that staff would like to get all of the ordinances together and present them to City Council at the same time and that the ordinance in front of them is all of the proposed changes based on the two meetings in 2005.

Mr. Hunting stated that the one of the main changes is to simplify the ordinance. The previous ordinance made it difficult to understand the rates of removal and reforestation. Staff is recommending to removing the Class A category of softwoods and changing all of the replacement rates to 100% replacement. Bill Turblad had previously run some calculations to determine that this would not negatively impact the amount of tree reforestation.

Mr. Hunting stated that the second change was in regards to the amount of money collected to ensure replacement. The proposal is to change the financial assuery from the current \$10,000 to 125% of the actual replacement cost.

Mr. Hunting indicated another point was more of a Planning Commission issue rather than an Environmental Commission issue which relates to the replacement of trees on individual lots. The current ordinance does not address tree replacement on individual platted lots after the initial grading and streets have been installed. Once the lots are platted and sold through individual homeowners there is no control over tree removal. Staff believes no additional regulations are necessary since the largest undeveloped portion of the city is within the Northwest Area which will require all approved plans to show actual removal on individual lots.

Mr. Hunting addressed the issue of including specimen trees and noted that previous discussions from the Environmental Commission suggested preserving woodlands was more important than preserving individual trees. Adding a specimen tree category would further complicate the ordinance by adding additional categories to the reforestation calculations.

Mr. Hunting stated that the last change was removing references to outdated sections of the code and positions that no longer exist.

Mr. Hunting stated that staff is looking for a recommendation from the Commission so we can carry it forward to the City Council work session on February 12, 2007 and the public hearing on the ordinance scheduled in early March.

Mr. Hall commented that he was confused and asked if we were trying to save the old trees or trying to dictate building around old trees.

Mr. Hunting stated that the ordinance doesn't differentiate between old and new growth. One thing to consider is that in the Northwest Area, a natural resource inventory was done which categorized the uplands and woodlands and other natural features into different management levels and all plans are reviewed based on the management levels. There will be much less tree removal in the Northwest Area. It doesn't specifically address old growth trees.

Mr. Hall stated that he sees a problem with both. By saving old growth trees, we can have developmental issues. However they could also go in and clear the land and plant new trees. He was confused if we addressing that issue.

Mr. Hunting stated that the ordinance doesn't prohibit clear cutting a site. In the Northwest Area, however, half of the open space has to be preserved in its natural state. This ordinance would not prohibit them from clearing out another area to make the development work.

Mr. Hall stated that he still didn't have an answer to his question. He gave an example of a situation in Blaine where the land was clear cut. He stated his concerns regarding the lack of control once the landowner buys the lot. He mentioned that there seems to be loopholes in the ordinance.

Mr. Hunting stated that there are always going to be some gaps. In looking at past amendments, Council has not want regulate individual landowners which staff took into consideration.

Mr. Marier commented that we have looked at the tree ordinance four or five times and we are trying to create a set of rules that are understandable; something that developers can work with. We cannot control the individual home owners as they may add or remove trees. He commented that in 2005 we looked at the Lakeville ordinance which addressed preserving specimen trees. He stated that the ordinance worked for them as they were concerned about saving 100-year old oak trees. He also commented that the Northwest Area has an advantage to try and create a better plan. He stated that we should look at improving the overall stock of trees.

Mr. Hall commented on the areas in Eagan where there are no trees and indicated that he didn't want Inver Grove Heights to look that way.

Mr. Pollock agreed that we didn't want Inver Grove Heights to look that way. He then commented on the necessity of saving some of the older trees in the area. He indicated that the specimen trees should remain in the ordinance. He felt it very important that we keep the older trees at all costs. He also mentioned that the ordinance should cover the removal of invasive species.

He went on to provide examples in Inver Grove Heights where large amounts of trees were removed for development. He felt that if an ordinance had been effect, some of that would not have happened. He continued that the ordinance should be enforceable, and therefore serious sanctions should be applied for the removal of the old growth trees.

Mr. Hall commented on the balance of saving the trees and not hampering development.

Mr. Pollock stated that it doesn't help our community to level everything. He also commented on the current trend to cut down hills and fill in valleys to develop these properties. He stated that we are being compared to some of the third or fourth tier suburbs, when Inver Grove Heights is actually a second tier suburb.

Mr. Pollock further stated that any references to TIF [Tax Increment Finance] should be removed from the ordinance as it is no longer allowed.

Mr. Hall mentioned that he works in finance and that the saving/removing of trees is going to come down to the amount of money to be made. He also mentioned that he likes all of the trees that are in Inver Grove Heights and is what sets us apart from other suburbs.

Mr. Pollock commented that Inver Grove Heights is more established and would like to see development move towards how it used to be where the property owner would the house in and around the trees on the lot.

Mr. Hunting commented that most of the Northwest Area is set up to preserve the hills and trees as houses will be clustered together, therefore leaving large open spaces. He also commented that this idea is very progressive and has not been tried at that scale before.

Mr. Pollock commented that was the reason why he wanted to endorse the stormwater plan. He indicated that the plan provides more than stormwater management; it preserves the natural values of the community.

Mr. Pollock also commented that he wants to keep the section of the ordinance that addresses saving 10%.

Mr. Marier asked if he thought it was more important to save the cottonwoods than new oaks.

Mr. Pollock asked what was on the fast growing list.

Mr. Hunting listed the trees and said that Council looked to remove that list because they are fast growing and won't live very long. He mentioned that if the Environmental Commission didn't agree with the simplification, then they should say that.

Mr. Pollock stated that he felt some of the trees on the list were high quality trees and they shouldn't be discounted. He also reiterated his point about removing invasive species and that it should be the developer's responsibility to do so.

Mr. Hunting commented that the ordinance is regarding trees that we are trying to preserve. It is a separate issue to require them to remove noxious trees.

Mr. Pollock stated that the city weed inspector should make sure the laws are enforced and reiterated that the removal of invasive species should be done at the time of development.

Mr. Trenzeluk commented that adding that would make the ordinance more complicated and the object was to make it less complicated.

Mr. Pollock reiterated his four points that he is concerned about. Those being, the removal of invasive species, saving the fast growing trees, specimen trees should be saved at all costs and removing any references to TIF.

Mr. Hunting stated that there are still some Tax Increment Financing districts, so the language had to stay in the ordinance.

Mr. Trenzeluk suggested that someone move to include some of the ideas that were being discussed.

Mr. Huffman moved the four items being discussed by Mr. Pollock.

Mr. Hall stated his concerns about his lack of knowledge regarding this matter and mentioned that it would be a good idea to have a forester educate them.

Mr. Pollock agreed with Mr. Hall and stated that the main concern should be preserving the resources that are left.

Mr. Trenzeluk moved to recommend that there be further consideration for the removal of invasive species, the impact of leaving 10% of softwoods, more research on preserving specimen trees and the removal of TIF.

Mr. Hall seconded the motion.

Mr. Pollock reiterated how important it is to discourage the clear cutting of a site.

Mr. Marier commented that our current ordinance allows for the clear cutting of trees.

Mr. Groenjes commented on the conflicting issues of the stormwater plan and the saving of old growth trees.

Mr. Pollock stated that changing the ordinance would reinforce the stormwater ordinance.

Mr. Groenjes stated that by prohibiting the removal of old growth trees, they are limiting the areas in which a stormwater area can go.

Mr. Pollock indicated that the stormwater areas in the Northwest Area are going to be limited and doesn't feel they will conflict.

Mr. Trenzeluk asked that the motion be read back to the commission.

Ms. Emmerich stated the motion was to recommend that City Council further consider the removal of invasive species, the impact of leaving 10% of softwoods, more research on preserving specimen trees and the removal of TIF.

Motion carried on a 5-1 vote.

Mr. Marier mentioned that Mr. Groenjes thinks all changes to the tree ordinance be kept in line with the stormwater ordinance.

Mr. Pollock stated that the City should spend money on hiring a forester to draft a comprehensive forestry ordinance and that a task force be formed.

### **C. Mayor's Conference regarding Global Warming**

Mr. Marier stated that we were onto the last item in the new business.

Mr. Pollock stated that the Environmental Commission should work with the mayor regarding his recent global warming conference. He further stated that we should push for more public transportation with the community and promote more pedestrian traffic.

Mr. Trenzeluk asked if it was a state or national program.

Mr. Pollock stated that it was both and it would be a good thing to get involved with. He moved to have the mayor enter into a dialog with the Environmental Commission regarding his concerns with global warming and that transportation is a part of it. The motion was passed unanimously.

## **7. Adjournment**

Mr. Pohlman moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:15 p.m. Mr. Trenzeluk seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously (6-0).