

Grand Lakes Green Committee

Meeting Date: November 7, 2021, 4:30-6pm (Rock Pool Park)

Committee Members in Attendance: Leigh Anne Goerland, Julie Bush, Margie Benitez, Jim Herzberg

Committee Members Absent: Teresa Huddleston

## **Meeting Minutes**

### Pocket Prairies

Amy Barta shared her expertise regarding prairies and natural landscaping. Amy stated that a pocket prairie includes bio diversity of plants; it is not a monoculture. When starting a pocket prairie, Amy noted that it is important to prepare the soil before seed is sown or plants are put in. Good soil, a defined area with a border, a tight nit planting, and full sun are all needed for a successful pocket prairie. The first two years of a pocket prairie require more maintenance to keep invasive weeds from taking over. Maintenance needs diminish as the prairie ages.

The committee discussed the location viewed at our last meeting - along 99 adjacent to the lake in Phase 1 North. The location is not high visibility, needs landscaping work, has separation from residents, good sun exposure (though sun exposure will diminish if a sound wall is built), and is distanced from the neighborhood streets (meaning mosquito spray chemicals would not unintentionally impact beneficial insects there). Leigh Anne confirmed that based on her walk through this area, much of the drip irrigation appears damaged and needs repair.

Cathy Whiteside, the Grand Lakes landscaping committee chair, was in attendance for the first twenty minutes of the meeting. She reported that there had not been time at the last landscaping meeting to discuss this topic, but that in general there was support for native plants. Cathy shared that some grasses from the medians are planned to be transplanted into the beds along 99 during an upcoming landscaping refresh.

The following key questions were raised:

1. What would be the objective of a pocket prairie implementation in Grand Lakes? Margie noted that clearly defining our goals would be helpful. Low maintenance, low cost, beneficial insects are all potential goals.
2. Would the aesthetics of a pocket prairie be amenable to the community? Julie and Leigh Anne expressed concern that some implementations they had seen were not visually appealing to them, and they would be apt not to support as such. Margie stated that interpretive signs, such as those at Rick Rice Park, would be helpful.
3. What are some scaled down options for this concept? Amy suggested the committee could start with a much smaller micro-prairie and expand over time or could advocate for native plants instead of a prairie landscape.

4. Who would manage a pocket prairie implementation? Amy discussed issues with the butterfly garden, including a lack of irrigation coverage, overreach of mosquito spraying chemicals, use of turf chemicals to manage the bed borders, and the challenges of replacing plants and keeping them within their shapes. The garden did not transition to the landscaping company post implementation.
5. Who would manage long term maintenance of a pocket prairie? Cathy mentioned that the aqua boxes are managed by a different company than the turf and that specialty companies can be brought in for different types of landscaping.
6. What plants are best suited for a potential prairie or natural landscaping? All committee members agreed that having a professional landscaper provide advice and potential plans would be beneficial.

Takeaways from the discussion were that (1) the committee does not have the resources or expertise to manage and maintain a landscaping project, nor could any member commit to being the lead, and (2) a professional landscaper should provide advice regarding potential plants and a design, implementation, and maintenance plan (complete with cost figures) for any project.

As next steps, Amy Barta will reach out to some of her professional contacts and let us know some recommended native plants that may work well in the area in question. The committee will then discuss again and vote to determine if we want to make any recommendations to the landscaping committee regarding the aforementioned location or whether we would like to table the issue.

#### Attracting Butterflies and Hummingbirds

Amy shared the names of some plants that she thought would go well together in the community garden space. *Action: Leigh Anne to research the suggested plants and put together a plan, in conjunction with that which is noted below regarding the community garden, and circulate to the committee members.*

#### Recycling at the Tennis Courts

The committee did not have time to discuss this topic. *Action: Leigh Anne to poll the committee via email regarding recycling receptacle options.*

#### Community Garden Update

Leigh Anne proposed that the community garden transition away from the reserved beds concept. Reasons given include the recent vandalism of the reserved signs, the time to assign and monitor reserved beds, the inactivity of some reserved bed gardeners, and that in general, interest in the reserved bed concept has been light. The garden rules sign will not need to be changed if the committee votes to recommend this change to the board.

#### **Next Steps:**

Next meeting TBD.  
Meeting adjourned at 6:00pm.