

## **NUISANCE WEED AD HOC COMMITTEE**

**January 17, 2017**

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### Committee Members Present:

Stephan Podrygula, Shaun Sipma, Miranda Schuler, Sandy Horob

### Members Absent

Lauren Tiffany

### Others Present:

City Attorney, City Clerk, Lacey McCarten, Assistant Public Works Director, City Engineer, City Planner, Jill Schramm, Park District, Treasurer, City Finance Director, Derrill Fick

Alderman Podrygula brought the meeting to order at 12:01 pm.

### **Approval of Minutes from January 10, 2017 meeting**

Alderman Schuler moved the committee approve the minutes from the January 10, 2017 committee meeting. Motion seconded by Alderman Sipma and carried unanimously.

### **Introduction and Initial Perspectives of Staff**

#### **a. County Weed Control**

Mr. Fick, the Ward County Weed Board Officer, gave a presentation about the Ward County Weed Board (WCWB). A noxious weed is defined as a weed that has been designated by agricultural authority as one that is injurious to agricultural or horticultural crops, natural habitats or ecosystems, or humans or livestock. Invasive plants can be noxious weeds but are also known as plants that are not native to the area. Being invasive weeds are not native plants, they usually have no natural competitors to limit and maintain them from growing out of control. For example, being weevils that eat their seeds.

The WCWB has five members from around the county appointed by the commissioners. They help landowners control their noxious weeds through education, developing weed management plans, through the use of biological agents (e.g. insects), and sale of chemical at a reduced cost to landowners certified to spray properly for weeds. Whether the landowner put the weeds there or not it is considered their responsibility to remove the weeds. Mr. Fick stated, the WCWB follows a similar procedure as the City in identifying a problem and asking the landowners to comply. Where they differ is if the landowner doesn't apply in cleaning up by an allotted time frame, the WCWB will fine the landowner \$80 a day up to \$4000. Any owed expenses to the Ward County Weed Board is applied to the owner's taxes.

Mr. Fick, as the current Weed Control Officer, has a job that entails following up on complaints, chemical spraying; educating landowners on the best way to control their noxious weeds and anything that is related to noxious weed control. He stated, himself, and two other employees operate the spray equipment and also hire two contractors on bids to help cover all roads. They also hire a helicopter contractor to spray pastures and gravel pits.

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The said the WCWB is funded by a dedicated mill levy though the county. The ND Department of Agriculture provides funding called Targeted Assistance Grant – TAG to weed boards that show need for the dollars, up to \$4000.00 for the county weed board and \$2000.00 for a city weed board.

Mr. Fick noted that the WCWB only controls noxious or invasive weeds that are on the ND Department of Agriculture noxious weed list for the State and County, such as Leafy Spurge, Purple Loose Strife, etc. Nuisance weeds such as foxtail barley are considered a nuisance weed but are a native weed, therefore are not on the qualifying list for the WCWB to control. He indicated the weed boards were created to help agricultural owners, however they have stepped in to help within the city limits with spraying and/or the use of biological agents.

Upon questioning from Alderman Schuler, Mr. Fick explained any resident may become certified to spray weeds. There are two options in obtaining certification, one is through NDSU office and let them know which areas you want to be certified, in which they give you books to study. After studying one must schedule and appointment to take a test. This costs between \$30-50 dollars per area of certification. The second option is NDSU in Fargo, which offers programs you can pay to attend whether for initial certification or to recertify.

Alderman Schuler questioned, if the City and Ward County Weed Board could apply for both the City and County funding under the TAG program if they worked together in a bi-party agreement. Mr. Fick said the funding is either for a county weed board or a city weed board. The City would have to create their own weed board in order to request funds. Alderman Sipma asked how many of these grants per year a county weed board can request funding. Mr. Fick stated it is \$4000.00 max bi annually, and there is a %0% match required in order to receive \$4000.00 back. He also stated the funding is on requested as the need arises.

Upon further questioning from Alderman Schuler, Mr. Fick stated, the Weed Board keeps track of everything and is data logged by GPS so they have a record of problem areas and spots to watch and maintain. The Committee asked for Mr. Fick's opinion in what he sees would be beneficial for the City, either a City Weed Board or work with Ward County Weed Board. Mr. Fick sees said he a need for a designated person in the city to attend to problems in the city limits in controlling weeds and who can work jointly with the WCWB, because they already have the tools and knowledge to manage weeds. He recommended the City Council itself can act as a Weed Board. The WCWB would prefer to maintain a low percentage of the WCWB officer spending his time on weed problems in city limits. Mr. Fick suggested it could be beneficial if the City is able to create a City Weed Officer position or create a position in Public Works that could have someone report to City Council and work with the WCWB on maintaining weeds in the City.

Alderman Podrygula asked for advice, the best way to reduce the problem of growth if foxtail barley is not able to be put on the noxious weeds list. Mr. Fick stated, this plant likes saltier soils that are more consistent with clay and stripped of its top soil. He suggested if a landowner can regrade the soil and reseed, and the new grass will help choke out the Foxtail. Upon further questioning from Alderman Podrygula, Mr. Fick stated, his budget is \$290,000 a year but is unsure how much of that comes from taxes from the City.

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Regarding a question about trespassing, the City Attorney stated, trespassing doesn't apply to the city staff if it is in order to abate nuisance weeds. Mr. Fick stated, if he sees something on a landowner's property as having a weed problem, as a Weed Officer, he has the authority to go on the property to assess the weed problem, as long as he does not disturb anything else on the property.

### **Adjournment**

Before adjourning, Alderman Podrygula requested two follow ups for the city employees to bring to the next meeting, one is how much the City contributes to county taxes for weed control and two, to bring specific suggestions for consideration of helping with the weed problem to the Committee meeting.

The next meeting will be Tuesday, January 24<sup>th</sup>, 2017 at 12:00 pm.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 1:01 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Lacey McCarten  
Administrative Clerk