

1. Current Status:
 - Irrigation initiated
 - Weeds removed
 - Additional plants planted
 - Challenges with deer and bunnies eating plants.
2. Location Considerations:
 - Exploring potential new sites for pocket prairies
 - Committee Member Hoffman suggested areas like Wicks Park
 - Chair Kimble identified potential spots at Coghlin Park
 - Scott Herbert recommended focusing on completing the Peterson Preserve before expanding.
3. Future Plans:
 - Potentially involve Garden Club
 - Explore planning native species in existing flower beds
 - Focus on creating beds full of plants, not just mulched areas
 - Consider shade-tolerant native plants for specific areas
4. Signage:
 - Nancy created a draft informational sign for the preserve
 - Aim to educate community about the project

The discussion emphasized gradual, thoughtful expansion of native plant initiatives.

3. Playground Spinner Placement:

The discussion on the playground spinner was brief. Committee member Thiel mentioned that in the previous meeting, they discussed potential locations. DPW Superintendent Herbert was supposed to provide an aerial view to help determine the best placement, but he had not yet completed this task. Thiel is waiting for Herbert to provide the aerial perspective to help narrow down the most suitable location for the spinner. No definitive decision was made during this meeting about the spinner's final placement.

4. Streetscaping:

Committee member Stanton provided a brief update on streetscaping:

1. Upcoming Parking Committee:
 - City Council will form a parking committee within the next month
 - Will address outdoor eating spaces and parking issues
 - Potential to influence streetscaping plans
2. Potential New Development:
 - Hinted at possible funding for a fire pit or warming station
 - Details are currently confidential
 - Seen as a positive potential addition to streetscaping efforts

No extensive details were discussed about specific streetscaping projects. The focus was more on the upcoming parking committee and a potential new feature (fire pit) that might be added to the streetscaping plan.

5. Dark Sky Research:

Committee member Thiel provided an update on the Dark Sky initiative:

1. Community Engagement:
 - Met with interested community members
 - Reviewed previous efforts by Chris Clark
 - Exploring ways to raise public awareness
2. Potential Strategies:
 - Create a website/resource page about dark sky initiatives
 - Possibly host a stargazing event
 - Committee Member Hoffman suggested a community event where lights are turned off to encourage stargazing
3. Current Context:
 - Douglas included an objective to amend their lighting ordinance to align with the dark skies lighting
 - Consumers Energy aware of and experienced with dark sky initiatives
4. Next Steps:
 - Gauge community interest through planning survey
 - Develop an informational resource
 - Potentially organize a community stargazing event
 - DPW Superintendent Herbert discussed potential approaches with Consumers Energy

The discussion focused on raising awareness and community involvement in dark sky preservation efforts.

6. Cook Park Review:

Chair Kimble suggested keeping it on the agenda but not making it a high priority at the moment. She proposed postponing a detailed review until fall, and DPW Superintendent Hebert agreed with this approach. No specific details or actions were discussed about Cook Park during this meeting.

Public Comments (Limit 3 mins): None.

Correspondence: None.

Member Closing Comments:

- Thiel – She thought it was a great meeting and enjoyed the discussion. She thought there were nice updates from everyone.
- Hoffman – He noted that it was a good meeting that was short and sweet. He also wished everyone a Happy Fourth of July.
- Charak – He said it was a good meeting and provided no other comments.
- Roche: She mentioned the upcoming discussion about the Saugatuck Harbor Natural Area in the next meeting. She noted that the management plan has been updated and an endowment with available funds exists. City council is now the board managing the endowment fund. There are plans to bring in vendors to work on invasive species and

examine trail conditions. Roche said they aim to have this on the July meeting agenda and are hoping they potentially make a motion to council to move forward with improvements.

- Stanton – She thanked the committee but had no other comments to offer.
- Kimble – She highlighted two key points in her closing comments. The Blue Star Bike Trail project has been on pause due to tribal concerns. They have finally secured a date for a walk-through with the tribe on August 21. They are hoping to start construction in the spring. A fundraiser is scheduled for August 11. Kimble expressed satisfaction with the Committee's progress of active projects. She noted that all current projects are showing movement and advancement. She thanked the committee members for their efforts.

Adjournment:

Motion by Stanton, second by Roche, to approve adjournment of the meeting. Via voice vote, motion carried unanimously. Chair Kimble adjourned the meeting at 11:03 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sara Williams, City Deputy Clerk & DPW Admin. Assistant

Pocket Prairie Update – 7/17/2025

Peterson Preserve Update

The Peterson Preserve Pocket Prairie continues to progress. New and replacement plants have been added since our last meeting as well as the Native Wildflower sign. However, growth is being hampered by our hungry deer and rabbits.

John Clese Meeting Notes

I became acquainted with John Clese after learning he was responsible for the native plantings at a property on Grand Street. Coincidentally, John learned of PPW's Pocket Prairie initiative and reached out to Scott Herbert to learn more about our project.

John is the owner of Lake Effect Garden and Design landscaping firm. The firm specializes in designs and projects that feature native plants. He has done several native plant installations in the area. In the city of Saugatuck, besides the property on Grand Street, he installed native plants at a residence on East Street.

John has now partnered with two other individuals and started a non-profit, Restoration Earth. This organization promotes the use of native plants to create a sustainable world. With the support of donors and partners, they aim to restore natural ecosystems, support biodiversity, and combat climate change across the United States.

John and I agreed to meet on July 15th to consider the possibility of working together on the Pocket Prairie initiative. We first toured the Peterson Preserve to view the trial Pocket Prairie. John advised adding more plants and focusing on deer resistant plants such as Anise Hyssop, Wild Quinine, Butterfly Weed, and Mountain Mint. John also viewed the other landscape beds at the Preserve. These include the two with the Serviceberry and crabapple trees and the one with the Peterson Preserve sign. John suggested a variety of native sedges be planted under the Serviceberry trees and was confident he could create a design for the Peterson Preserve sign bed that would be comprised of native plants. He also suggested we create a deer resistant test garden at the Preserve. The idea is to plant rows of different native plants and observe which ones best survive our ravenous deer and rabbits' appetites. This garden would include signs naming the various plants. The community could then be encouraged to visit the garden and learn about the species most likely to survive deer and rabbits in their own yards.

John and I also visited two more locations as possible pocket prairies. The first is the hillside that is between lower and upper Mason Street. Lower and upper Mason are not connected but there is a pedestrian staircase that connects the two. This is near the

backside of the SCA and gets frequent use by locals and visitors. This location was suggested by Randy Dirosa, a resident who lives nearby, in an email to the city recommending the location. It is a steep hillside that the city currently mows. Since it is located adjacent to the native plantings at the Grand Street property, continuing it would make a lovely display. We then visited the vegetated drainage area at Coughlin Park. John was confident that a rain garden of native plants could be located there.

John is very enthusiastic and knowledgeable about native plants and could be an excellent partner for the city. He has volunteered to present his ideas to the PPW Committee at our August meeting.

END