

Good afternoon, Council President Brendmoen and Council Members. I'm Shirley Erstad, Executive Director of Friends of the Parks and Trails of Saint Paul and Ramsey County. I live in St. Paul at 1660 Laurel Avenue.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak. I realize in the interests of time there was a suggestion not to have a public hearing and we appreciate your leadership in deciding to hold one.

The importance of this chapter cannot be over-stated. There are lots of plans and rules that cover this geographic area, including the Great River Passage Masterplan, the DNR's Critical Area rules, Future Land Use districts, zoning code, floodplain rules, neighborhood district plans, endangered and threatened species protections, forestry management guidelines, and others.

It may be tempting to feel as if those multiple overlays mean this chapter is not important, but it's quite the opposite. The mere fact that so many different rules apply underscores the very critical nature of this area to the heart and history of St. Paul itself.

Since giving testimony at the Planning Commission public hearing, there have been five amendments made by that body. We are concerned about amendment number 1.

Friends of the Mississippi River suggested adding that sentence but they also had suggested additional language to follow it. The second sentence read, "The city will utilize the criteria provided in the MRCCA rules to evaluate potential visual impacts of additional height, and if/when mitigation is needed." They also added, "In some cases" to the next sentence.

By just adding the first sentence, it gives that paragraph a different meaning. Therefore, we ask that Amendment 1 be amended to include all language that was suggested, making clear the intention of the added language.

We also support adding language to prioritize environmental cleanup whenever opportunities present themselves. This would include the Superfund site at Pig's Eye Lake as well as Area C on the Ford property.

It is troubling that the city of St. Paul, once stating that cleaning Area C to recreational standards was a priority, has pulled back from that commitment.

The river has been high most of this spring. In fact, barge traffic on the river has still not begun, meaning this will be the latest barge traffic will commence since records have been kept.

Anyone concerned about environmental justice should be paying attention. Surface area contamination in the floodplain on the western side of St. Paul means our neighbors to the east in West Side Flats and Battle Creek are downriver from that pollution. That's not acceptable and we should add language in this chapter to do something about it.

Thank you and happy United Nations World Environment Day.