Item 22: Ditch 17 Clean Up Issue

The following email was sent to Blaine Council Member Hovland.

From: Stephen Klein [mailto:srklein@q.com]
Sent: Sunday, April 28, 2013 6:49 PM
To: 'Jon Janke'
Cc: Ron Clark (rclarkinc@comcast.com)
Subject: RE: Proposed Volunteer Event on Ditch 17 between 89th St and Jefferson St., Blaine

Jon you seem like a good guy and I regret that we will not be able to follow through with the project we discussed, and that was fully disclosed to you in the proposed project summary sheet that I provided to you very shortly after we walked the site and discussed the project. (see attached) Your concern about entering private property is not something I proposed as the only landowners I planned to impact were the City of Blaine and District 16. I met with both organizations and believed I had their full cooperation.

When you did not raise any issues or concerns with my proposed handout I circulated in fairly broadly. The handout clearly talks about making a meaningful impact and intended to involve a fairly large group of volunteers. Having the project cancelled as it was makes us all look bad, and your organization as not very volunteer friendly.

I feel that I went through the normal and reasonable channels and you effectively hung me out to dry. When we jointly set the date and time I understand that we had a viable project and could begin the process of recruiting partners and volunteers. As time was rather short I moved rather quickly. I attended the Blaine City Council and handed out our project summary sheet and informed the community through cable TV about the project.

I met with the Dean of Student at Westwood Middle School to secure their cooperation and I was coordinating efforts with a head custodian, and a Science teacher who was planning to involve his students. I attended the Kraus Hartig VFW Boy Scout meeting and handed out materials for circulation to them. I forwarded materials to Anoka County Extension that they were in the process of sending out to the 4-H clubs in the area. I also spoke with and submitted Church bulletin inserts to St Timothy’s Catholic Church and Christ Lutheran Church. This was on top of recruiting some neighborhood volunteers/captains. I had quite a bit of work to try to withdraw this information and I likely expect some volunteers to show up on the planned date. The Blaine Life news article also referenced this project in their most recent issue. As you choose to cancel this event I believe it became your responsibility to communicate with the community and deal with any volunteers that are not notified. I will have no further formal role in this event.

Jon I worked in local government for many years and I understand the need to fine tune a project and I was prepared to do so and I indicated that to you during our phone call. I also understood the liability issues, and the need to work within the permit process as it might apply to certain aspects of our proposed project. I was however not interested in turning the project into a minor symbolic token garbage clean up effort. I wanted to involve the area youth in a meaningful project that they could remember and take pride in their contribution. I also want you to know that I did not find the attitude
of your associate to be helpful in the least. She does not project an attitude and presence that likely will draw volunteers to want to work with your organization on a repeat basis.

I have been asked by some of our proposed partners why the project was so abruptly cancelled, and what the problem was, and I did not want to speak on your behalf. I will forward your message to them so they have it directly from you. I hope this has been a learning experience for both of us. Partnering is hard but important on many levels.

Take care and I look forward to seeing the scope and reach of your project this fall.

Steve Klein
9030 Jefferson St NE
Blaine, Mn. 55434
From: Jon Janke [mailto:jjanke@cooncreekwd.org]
Sent: Thursday, April 25, 2013 4:26 PM
To: srklein@q.com
Cc: Tim Kelly; carneson@ci.blaine.mn.us
Subject: Proposed Volunteer Event on Ditch 17 between 89th St and Jefferson St., Blaine

This is a follow up to our telephone conversation on April 23, 2013.

It is our understanding that you would like to coordinate a volunteer cleanup of public ditch 17 in the vicinity of Aurelia Park in Blaine. We believe the reach you are talking about is between 89th St and Jefferson St. Further, it is our understanding that the cleanup would involve volunteer labor to remove:
- leaves
- woody debris
- brush and
- garbage from the channel and ditch banks, and
- call attention to the importance of water resources and Ditch 17 to the community.

These are all laudable goals. However, a project that involves approximately 20 private parcels and a city park requires close coordination with home owners and city officials if brush or trees are to be cut or removed, particularly on someone else's land. Such coordination takes planning, particularly to gain access to private property, and is typically more than a volunteer group is willing, or able, to undertake. For these reasons, the District cannot support, or lend its name to such an event at this time.

Further, the entire length of Ditch 17 was inspected in 2011. That inspection found several locations of trees, limbs and woody debris within or across the ditch 17 channel. Removal of that material is currently scheduled for later in 2013 and will involve equipment and personnel that are bonded, licensed and insured for the kind of work being conducted.

It is also the kind of work that is not conducive to having large groups of people in and around the work zone. So, again, a large volunteer clean up as you described, within the timeframe you described, is not possible for the District at this time.

We wish you the best of luck and thank you for your interest,

Jon Janke
Operations and Maintenance Coordinator
Coon Creek Watershed District
12301 Central Avenue Northeast
Suite 100
Blaine MN 55434

O (763) 755-0975
F (763) 755-0283

CC: Tim Kelly, Coon Creek Watershed District
Clark Arneson, City of Blaine