

**FINAL - MINUTES
OF THE NEW BRAUNFELS WATERSHED ADVISORY COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING OF THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 30, 2023**

AGENDA

1. CALL TO ORDER

Watershed Supervisor, Phillip Quast, called the meeting to order at 3:00 P.M.

2. ROLL CALL

Watershed Advisory Committee members present: Hank Crippen, Craig Wilson, Alexander Morvant, Ron Reaves, and Toni Carter

City Staff present: Watershed Supervisor, Phillip Quast, River and Watershed Manager, Amy Niles, Watershed Inspector, Henry Beenenga, and River Operations Specialist, Katie Johnson

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

No minutes to approve at this time.

4. CITIZENS' COMMUNICATIONS

This time is for citizens to address the Committee on issues and items of concerns not on this agenda. There will be no Committee action at this time.

There was not a formal citizen's communication, however there was one citizen, Alita Meyer, who attended the meeting on behalf of the Comal County Conservation Alliance.

5. DISCUSSION AND ACTION

A) Elect Committee Chair and Vice-Chair positions

Committee member Hank Crippen, is the Mayoral Appointment for the Watershed Advisory Committee. It was assumed that since the mayor appoints the chair that Hank was automatically the Chair of the committee which was later corrected. At the next meeting, an announcement for the mayor's selection will be declared. Crippen made a motion to make Craig Wilson Vice Chair of the committee and the motion was seconded by Alexander Morvant. The motion was approved unanimously.

B) Presentation on Dry Comal Creek and Comal River Watershed Protection Plan

Watershed Supervisor, Phillip Quast, presented the committee with an overview of the Watershed Protection Plan for the Dry Comal Creek and the Comal River. The presentation discussed the plan's purpose and overall goals for lowering the bacteria levels in these two areas. Quast emphasized that wildlife waste and human involvement were main contributing factors in bacteria levels. With the assistance of GBRA, water samples are taken and tested, and existing bacteria levels will continue to be monitored. Lastly, Quast spoke on the storm water filtration pilot program, which as of now, is at 30% design review and planned to be installed on Bergfeld Avenue.

C) Presentation on the City of New Braunfels Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System program

Phillip Quast briefly outlined the Separate Storm Sewer System program (MS4) to the committee. This program is managed by Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) and focuses on publicly owned or operated storm water drainage systems that are designed to collect or convey storm water. The MS4 program requires municipalities over a certain population, to have a permit which then authorizes them to discharge storm water to surface water in the state. To acquire a permit, municipalities must write their personal report that clearly shows that the required MS4 best management practices are being implemented within the city. Quast informed the committee that the new permit cycle is approaching at the start of 2024. He will present the new permit to the committee for suggestions and review. Once approved by the committee, the permit will be sent to City Council.

D) Presentation on the Edwards Aquifer Habitat Conservation Plan

Phillip Quast presented the committee with an outline of the Edwards Aquifer Habitat Conservation Plan. Quast discussed the Incidental Take Permit (ITP) and the methods of conservation in place to protect the endangered species and ensure water quality of the Comal River. These methods include removing invasive species such as tilapia and armored catfish, implementing low impact designs and green infrastructure, and city ordinances. The new permit cycle for ITP will begin in 2028, and according to Quast, the program will most likely be a 30-year permit. New Braunfels citizen, Alita Meyers, asked how the new parking lot for the Landa Park Aquatic Center was funded. Quast replied that the parking lot and essentially all the programs connected with the Edwards Aquifer Habitat Conservation Program, are funded by the Edwards Aquifer Authority.

E) **Presentation on Potential White-Tailed Deer Management within the City Limits of New Braunfels**

River and Watershed Manager, Amy Niles, opened the conversation of potential white-tailed deer management within the city limits of New Braunfels. Niles spoke on the notably high population of deer that live in New Braunfels, stating that a healthy population would be 1 deer to every 14 acres. In New Braunfels, there is about 1 deer to every .50 acres. Although there is no approved method of knowing the exact deer population, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) recommends focusing on the social carrying capacity. Niles noted that animal welfare has picked up 500 deceased deer in New Braunfels since the beginning of the year. Niles explained the negative impacts of having such a large deer population to the committee. A large deer population contributes to higher concentrations of bacteria in the Comal River and respecting tributaries, a higher number of automobile accidents, and a higher risk of spreading disease to humans and other animals. Niles stated that she and Phillip Quast have partnered with TPWD to understand the best course of action that will help the City of New Braunfels manage the deer population in an ethical and humane manner. They have also reached out to other municipalities who have conducted deer trapping. A formal proposal is underway; however, the general management plan has been discussed to ethically trap and process the deer and donate the meat to the New Braunfels Food Bank. Committee member Alexander Morvant asked if trapping was the only method of management. Niles replied that relocation is no longer an option in the state of Texas and birth control measures are extremely expensive. Committee member Craig Wilson asked if the deer trapping would be done by the City of New Braunfels or by a private group. Niles responded that the City of New Braunfels would contract a private group to trap and process the deer. Niles also explained that if the City were to orchestrate an organized hunt that allowed licensed citizens to hunt and kill deer, it would need to follow state and city ordinances and overall would not solely be effective to manage the current deer population. In conclusion, Niles stated that a full proposal will be presented to the committee at the next meeting.

6. AGENDA ITEMS FOR NEXT MEETING

The following agenda item was stated for the next meeting:

A. Whitetail Deer Management Proposal

7. ADJOURNMENT

This meeting was adjourned at 4:28 P.M.

By: _____
Hank Crippen, Chair

CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify the above Notice of Meeting was posted on the bulletin board at the New Braunfels City Hall.

Board Liaison

NOTE: Persons with disabilities who plan to attend this meeting and who may need auxiliary aids or services such as interpreters for persons who are deaf or hearing impaired, readers, or large print, are requested to contact the City Secretary's Office at 221-4010 at least two (2) work days prior to the meeting so that appropriate arrangements can be made.