



Sustainability Commission Agenda

Jan. 17, 2023 – 6:30 p.m.

City Council Chambers – Minnetonka Community Center

Members of the public who desire to monitor the meeting remotely or to give input or testimony during the meeting can find instructions at <https://www.minnetonkamn.gov/government/virtual-meeting-information>.

1. Call to Order

2. Roll Call

3. Approval of Agenda

4. Approval of Minutes: Nov. 15, 2022

5. Report from Staff:

- A. NexTrex Program
- B. EnerChange (No Cost Building Energy Audit for Nonprofits)
- C. Electric Vehicle Chargers
- D. Hennepin Energy Recovery Center Tour
- E. Upcoming Ambassador Events
- F. Climate Action and Adaptation Plan Update

6. Report from Sustainability Commission Members

7. Agenda Items

A. Environmental Justice Presentation

- Recommendation: Listen to the presentation, ask questions and consider ways the city can promote environmental justice
- Presenter: Karen Galles, Hennepin County Environment and Energy
- Staff Member: Drew Ingvalson

B. Ambassador Handouts

- Recommendation: Review tabling materials and decide what the sustainability commission would like to promote in 2023

Sustainability Commission Agenda

Jan. 17, 2023

Page 2

- Staff Member: Drew Ingvalson

C. Sustainable Minnetonka Awards Review

- Recommendation: Review the program and recommend changes (if needed)
- Staff Member: Drew Ingvalson

D. 2023 Sustainable Minnetonka Presentation Topics

- Recommendation: Each commissioner provide four presentation topics for the city to host in 2023 and recommend promotion ideas (if applicable)
- Staff Member: Drew Ingvalson

E. Earth Day Program/Initiatives

- Recommendation: Consider options the city could take to promote Earth Day (Saturday, April 22nd). Provide recommendation for action.
- Staff Member: Drew Ingvalson

8. Other Business

9. Adjournment

If you have questions about any of the agenda items, please contact:

- Drew Ingvalson, Associate Planner/Sustainability Coordinator (952) 939-8293, dingvalson@minnetonkamn.gov
- Loren Gordon, AICP, City Planner, (952) 939-8296, lgordon@minnetonkamn.gov
- Julie Wischnack, AICP, Community Development Director, (952) 939-8282, jwischnack@minnetonkamn.gov

**Unapproved
Minnetonka Sustainability Commission
Virtual Meeting
Minutes**

Nov. 15, 2022

1. Call to Order

Chair Golob called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

2. Roll Call

Sustainability commissioners Justin Anderson, Edwin Avalos, Elizabeth Boor, Brian Golob, Matt Henry, David Ingraham, and Ashley Pattain were present. Harapanahalli Muralidhara was absent.

Staff present: City Planner Loren Gordon and Staff Liaison/Associate Planner/Sustainability Coordinator Drew Ingvalson.

3. Approval of the Agenda

Henry moved, second by Pattain, to approve the agenda as submitted.

Anderson, Avalos, Boor, Henry, Ingraham, Pattain, and Golob voted yes. Muralidhara was absent. Motion carried.

4. Approval of Sustainability Commission Sept. 20, 2022 Meeting Minutes

Boor moved, second by Avalos, to approve the Sept. 20, 2022, minutes as submitted.

Anderson, Avalos, Boor, Golob, Henry, and Pattain voted yes. Muralidhara was absent. Ingraham abstained. Motion carried.

5. Report from Staff

Ingvalson gave the staff report:

- Winners of the Sustainable Minnetonka Awards have been presented with a plaque at the city council meeting on Oct. 24, 2022.
- The city council adopted the update to the solar energy system ordinance at its meeting held on Nov. 14, 2022. The update approved by the city council will allow ground-mounted solar-energy systems to be located in non-residential parking lots.
- An applicant for the young sustainability commissioner position is anticipated to be appointed to the commission by the end of 2022.

- A home energy squad event was held on Nov. 9, 2022. The turnout was smaller than expected. Attendees will be able to sign up for a free home energy squad visit at the winter farmer's market.
- Staff sent out a request for qualifications for someone to complete the climate action and adaptation plan. The application deadline is Dec. 21, 2022. The applications are expected to be reviewed in January for work to begin in February.
- Staff will be advertising the locations of the NexTrex recycling containers once they are in position.
- The city's fleet of vehicles now includes two Chevy Volts.
- At the school's request, Ingvalson taught students of the Minnetonka Vantage and Momentum Classes the regulations that must be met to develop a property, including those related to stormwater retention, tree removal, impervious surface, and setbacks.

6. Report from Sustainability Commission Members

7. Agenda Items

A. 2022 Work Plan Update

Ingvalson reported. Staff recommends that commissioners recommend approval of the 2022 work plan update to the city council.

Henry suggested that commissioners could assist with grant applications.

Chair Golob appreciated seeing the summary of what the commission has accomplished. Ingvalson stated that the summary would be reviewed by the city council before the end of 2022.

In response to Boor's question, Gordon answered that the city is not required to select the low bid for professional services like it is for capital improvement projects.

In response to Chair Golob's question, Ingvalson answered that the budget includes funds to perform community outreach.

Ingraham moved, second by Pattain, to recommend that the city council approve the 2022 work plan update.

Anderson, Avalos, Boor, Henry, Ingraham, Pattain, and Golob voted yes. Muralidhara was absent. Motion carried.

B. 2023 Work Plan

Ingvalson reported. Staff recommends that commissioners review and discuss the 2023 work plan, recommend changes or additions if needed, and recommend its approval to the city council.

Anderson suggested inviting staff, residents, and commissioners on the tours. Ingvalson explained that some presentations would take place at the sustainability commission meetings. Some tours have a strict limit to the number of visitors and require the identification of the participants. He will keep that opportunity in mind as the tours are planned.

Anderson noted that Eureka Recycling might be conducting in-person tours as well as virtual tours.

In 2023, Pattain would like the commission to look into ways to help reduce the cost haulers charge for organics recycling. Ingvalson will include that in his notes.

In response to Henry's question, Ingvalson explained that staff would be contacting Hennepin County staff to request an environmental justice presentation be done at a sustainability commission meeting.

Boor learned that Plymouth is working to create stormwater ponds that would hold salt and possibly remove it from stormwater. She would like a presentation on how that is done. Ingvalson will look into that possibility.

In response to Avalos' question, Ingvalson explained that a vulnerability assessment would be done to identify human, environmental and infrastructure vulnerabilities in the community related to climate change by Barr Engineering. The vulnerability assessment will be used by another party to complete the climate action and adaptation plan.

Avalos noted how much the drought-affected Shady Oak Lake this year. He is interested in seeing the results of the vulnerability assessment.

Anderson would like specifics of climate change impacts identified in Minnetonka.

Boor noted that Barr Engineering already did a vulnerability assessment for Hennepin County. Ingvalson explained that the vulnerability assessment would look more in-depth and be focused on Minnetonka to provide additional data and specific values not included in the report to Hennepin County.

Henry suggested including the vulnerability assessment as an attachment to the 2040 comprehensive guide plan. Ingvalson explained that the vulnerability assessment would be included as an attachment to the climate action and adaptation plan.

In response to Ingraham's question, Ingvalson explained that the vulnerability assessment would work with the natural resources management plan.

Chair Golob is excited to see the preview of the updated sustainable portion of the Minnetonka website in the first quarter of the year.

Chair Golob would like to learn which materials are being recycled. Anderson would like to see the breakdown of recyclables in the city and trace where each type of plastic goes.

Chair Golob noted that Earth Day occurs in the early spring, which may not allow enough time to organize an event. He would like a resolution providing a formal acknowledgment of Earth Day by the city. Boor likes the idea of recognizing Earth Day in a formal statement. She has learned from working at the watershed district that it is hard to plan an event on Earth Day since there are already so many events that take place that day.

Chair Golob would like the issues related to leaf blowers to be researched and discussed by the commission.

Ingvalson asked commissioners for their level of interest in adding the following items to the 2023 work plan:

- Tour a recycling facility and learn what happens to each type of plastic and other items put into recycling.
- Presentation and discussion on ways to reduce the cost of a hauler providing organics recycling.
- Presentation and discussion on the issues created by leaf blowers.

Henry would like to expand the leaf blower discussion to include all gas-powered-lawn equipment, including mowers. Chair Golob agreed.

Henry moved, second by Ingraham, to recommend that the city council approve the 2023 Work Plan with the addition of including a tour of a recycling facility and education regarding what happens to each type of item put into recycling, presentation and discussion on ways to reduce the cost of a hauler providing organics recycling; and a presentation and discussion on the issues created by gas-powered-lawn-maintenance equipment.

Anderson, Avalos, Boor, Henry, Ingraham, Pattain, and Golob voted yes. Muralidhara was absent. Motion carried.

8. Other Business

Pattain and Chair Golob appreciated Ingvalson and Gordon's work to move the efforts of the sustainability commission forward.

9. Adjournment

Avalos moved, second by Henry, to adjourn the meeting at 7:29 p.m. Motion carried unanimously.

By: _____
Lois T. Mason
Planning Secretary



**Sustainability Commission Agenda Item 7A
Meeting of January 17, 2023**

Title: Environmental Justice Presentation

Report From: Drew Ingvalson, Associate Planner/Sustainability Coordinator

Submitted through: Julie Wischnack, AICP, Community Development Director
Loren Gordon, AICP, City Planner

Action Requested: Motion Informational Public Hearing Vote
Form of Action: Resolution Ordinance Other N/A
Votes needed 5 votes N/A Other

Summary Statement

Karen Galles, Land and Water Supervisor at Hennepin County, will be presenting information on environmental justice to the sustainability commission.

Recommended Action

Listen to the presentation and ask questions. Take special note of information that relates to the City of Minnetonka and consider ways that the city can become a more equitable community.

Strategic Profile Relatability

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Financial Strength & Operational Excellence | <input type="checkbox"/> Safe & Healthy Community |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sustainability & Natural Resources | <input type="checkbox"/> Livable & Well-Planned Development |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Infrastructure & Asset Management | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Community Inclusiveness |
| <input type="checkbox"/> N/A | |

Statement: The speaker will be covering environmental justice efforts within Hennepin County and the City of Minnetonka. The presentation will cover the unfair connection between marginalized communities and their proximity to harmful environmental impacts.

Background

At the May 17, 2022 sustainability commission meeting, city staff polled the commission's interest in various sustainability learning opportunities. An environmental justice presentation received the most votes out of all of the opportunities. Staff contacted Karen Galles from Hennepin County to arrange a presentation for the commission.

Hennepin County Sustainability

Hennepin County serves as a leader in sustainability through several plans, initiatives, and programs. In 2021, Hennepin County approved their [Climate Action Plan](#). This plan provides “strategies to cut greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to our changing climate in ways that reduce vulnerabilities and ensure a more equitable and resilient Hennepin County.”

In addition, Hennepin County provides various opportunities for community members to get involved with sustainability through grants, educational challenges, and stewardship opportunities. View [here](#) to learn more about county initiatives.

Currently, the county is accepting applications for its [Plastic Free Challenge](#). The City of Minnetonka is a partner with this program and will be promoting it throughout January 2023.

About the Environmental Justice Presenter

Karen Galles has been the Land and Water Supervisor for Hennepin County for the past six years. Prior to this position, she worked as:

- 7 Mile Creek Watershed Coordinator (through Great River Greening)
- A Fellow, Capacity Development for REDD+(through Coalition for Rainforest Nations);
- A Trainer, GHG Accounting Systems & Methodology (for ALU GHG Group)

Ms. Galles graduated from St. Olaf College with a B.S. in Biology and later received an M.S. in Ecology, Soil, and Crop Sciences from Colorado State University.

Existing City of Minnetonka Efforts

In recent years, the City of Minnetonka has made several efforts to become more introspective of our organization and community to ensure that it is both equitable and inclusive. These efforts have not been focused exclusively on environmental justice; however, the city continually prioritizes equity when considering city projects, funding and initiatives.

Below are a few efforts the city has made regarding diversity, equity, and inclusion in the past few years:

- **Internal Diversity Committee-** The City of Minnetonka has had a few internal staff groups focused on diversity, equity, and inclusion throughout the past decade. In 2020, the city refreshed a previous committee and created the Internal Diversity Committee (IDC). The IDC is made up of staff members from all city departments. This group reviews various aspects of the organization to ensure it is taking steps to make the City of Minnetonka a more inclusive and equitable workplace.
- **DEI Task Force-** In 2021, the City of Minnetonka established a DEI Task Force. This group is charged with working collaboratively to engage the community, broaden policy outcomes and respond to the community's needs, views and expectations. DEI Task Force agendas and minutes can be found [here](#).
- **DEI Coordinator-** In 2022, the City of Minnetonka hired its first DEI coordinator (Keith Clarke). Sadly, Keith passed away unexpectedly in the fall of 2022. The city is continuing the planned DEI efforts and is hoping to hire a DEI coordinator in 2023.
- **Just Deeds-** The City of Minnetonka partners with the [Just Deeds Project](#), which assists property owners with the removal of discriminatory covenants from titles.



**Sustainability Commission Agenda Item 7B
Meeting of January 17, 2023**

Title: Sustainability Commission Ambassador Handouts

Report From: Drew Ingvalson, Associate Planner/Sustainability Coordinator

Submitted through: Julie Wischnack, AICP, Community Development Director
Loren Gordon, AICP, City Planner

Action Requested: Motion Informational Public Hearing Vote
Form of Action: Resolution Ordinance Other N/A
Votes needed 5 votes N/A Other

Summary Statement

The sustainability commission serves as ambassadors and distributes handouts at multiple city events. As such, the commission regularly reviews the handouts they provide to the community.

Recommended Action

Staff recommends the sustainability commission review the handouts selected by staff, provide comments about the proposed handouts and recommend additional handouts (if needed) for the 2023 city events.

Strategic Profile Relatability

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Financial Strength & Operational Excellence | <input type="checkbox"/> Safe & Healthy Community |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sustainability & Natural Resources | <input type="checkbox"/> Livable & Well-Planned Development |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Infrastructure & Asset Management | <input type="checkbox"/> Community Inclusiveness |
| <input type="checkbox"/> N/A | |

Statement: See [Strategic Profile](#).

Background

The sustainability commission expressed interest in tabling at multiple events in the 2023 Work Plan. These events include Summer Fest, Winter and Summer Farmers Markets, City Open House, and the Everything Electric Event.

The commission's goal at these events is to bring public awareness to the various city-sponsored programs to help the general public become more sustainable and protect the natural environment. Below is a list of programs and handouts that the city has previously provided at these events (see attached):

- Home Energy Squad Visits
- Support Renewable Energy
 - o Windsource
 - o Solar Rewards

- On-Site Solar
- Adopt-A-Drain
- Slowing the Spread of Emerald Ash Borer
- Organics Recycling Guide

Staff recommends removing the "Slowing the Spread of Emerald Ash Borer" handout from the table but keeping it available if residents request information. While identifying diseased trees is an important topic, the public has not shown a high level of interest.

Staff recommends that this item be replaced with the following:

- A handout about smart driveway salting (used seasonally);
- A handout about the new [Inflation Reduction Act](#) (which has a lot of energy efficiency cost-saving opportunities); and
- A [NexTrex](#) plastic bag and wrap recycling container (which has information about the program).

If selected, staff will create new handouts for future sustainability commission ambassador events.



**Sustainability Commission Agenda Item 7C
Meeting of January 17, 2023**

Title: Sustainability Minnetonka Awards Review

Report From: Drew Ingvalson, Associate Planner/Sustainability Coordinator

Submitted through: Julie Wischnack, AICP, Community Development Director
Loren Gordon, AICP, City Planner

Action Requested: Motion Informational Public Hearing Vote
Form of Action: Resolution Ordinance Other N/A
Votes needed 5 votes N/A Other

Summary Statement

In the fall of 2022, the sustainability commission selected its first-ever Sustainable Minnetonka Award winners. The city's [Energy Action Plan Addendum](#) (Strategy 2) and the [2023 Sustainability Commission Work Plan](#) direct the city to present Sustainable Minnetonka awards again in 2023.

Recommended Action

Provide comments on the proposed award plan.

Strategic Profile Relatability

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Financial Strength & Operational Excellence | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Safe & Healthy Community |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sustainability & Natural Resources | <input type="checkbox"/> Livable & Well-Planned Development |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Infrastructure & Asset Management | <input type="checkbox"/> Community Inclusiveness |
| <input type="checkbox"/> N/A | |

Statement: See [Strategic Profile](#).

Background

In 2022, the City of Minnetonka presented its inaugural Sustainable Minnetonka Awards. Below are the guidelines from last year and recommended changes.

Eligibility:

- Must be a Minnetonka property owner or tenant of a Minnetonka property with the property owner's approval to apply.
- The property owner does not need to be a Minnetonka resident.
- The project must have been completed in the past two years.
- The nomination may be made by persons on behalf of the property owner or others; however, the property owner must sign off on the use of photos for the property to be eligible.
- City staff and board/commission/council members are not eligible.

Promotion: The City of Minnetonka promoted the awards on various platforms, including:

- Sustainable Minnetonka webpage;
- Emails to specific project managers;
- City's social media platforms;
- Minnetonka Memo;
- Local school earth club advisors; and
- At City Hall, City Community Center, and Williston Fitness Center.

In 2022, the city had to extend the deadline for the awards due to a lack of submittals. Staff plans to send application information to more specific projects/businesses that have completed unique projects recently to increase the number of award applicants in 2023.

To increase public awareness of the awards, staff also encourages sustainability commission members to share this information with their social groups and businesses that complete sustainability projects.

Submittal: Applicants must complete a form and submit a photo (including consenting to the City of Minnetonka, which allows sharing of names, photos, and project information, addresses will not be shared without consent).

- Staff will create an application form that requests the following:
 - o Applicant information.
 - o Project category.
 - o Explanation of the project.

The application will be posted on the [Sustainable Minnetonka](#) and/or [Minnetonka Matters](#) web pages.

Review: Conducted by city staff and Minnetonka Sustainability Commission.

- City staff will collect applications and provide relevant information to the commission for voting.
- The commission will vote for winners in each category.
- Staff will tabulate points for each category.
- The top vote-getter for each category will receive the award.

Awards

- Submittals must be for projects that go above and beyond city code requirements.
- Categories and examples (included, but not limited to):
 - o **Energy:** solar panels or solar-powered electricity, wind power, smart grid systems, energy efficiency projects, electric vehicles, electric equipment, charging stations, geothermal HVAC
 - o **Landscape:** native plantings, pollinator-friendly gardens, low/no-mow grass
 - o **Waste:** organics recycling, composting, food waste reduction, clothes recycling/repurposing, reused/recycled construction materials
 - o **Water:** rain gardens, water retention ponds/systems, greywater reuse systems, shoreline preservation/restoration, or green roofs
 - o **Young Adult:** any sustainability project in the categories above completed by someone under 25 years old
- The winner will be:
 - o Selected at a sustainability commission meeting.

- Announced and provided a plaque, landscaping stone, or another award (no monetary award) at a city council meeting.
- Recognized in Minnetonka Memo and at other city-sponsored events.

2022 Review

In 2022, the city received eight applicants for the five awards. Unfortunately, the city did not receive a submittal for the “waste” category. The 2022 category submittals and winners are listed below.

Category	Applicant
Energy	Dominium (winner)
Landscape	Dr. Dennis Yockers (winner) LeAnne Jergensen (winner) Lisa Linde Michael and Emilie Kennedy
Waste	-
Water	Opus 2 Phase 2 Condominiums (winner)
Young Person	Hopkins West Junior High Community School (winner)

Proposed Timeline

- **February/March 2023:** City will post the application on the city webpage.
- **March-June 2023:** City will promote award applications with special postings around Earth Day (April 22nd).
- **End of June 2023:** Application deadline.
- **Early July 2023:** Sustainability Commission will be given applicants' submittal information.
- **July 11, 2023:** The sustainability commission will vote for winners at the July 11th sustainability commission meeting.
- **Fall 2023:** Winners will be given awards at a city council meeting.
- **Winter 2023/2024:** Winners will be recognized in the Minnetonka Memo.



**Sustainability Commission Agenda Item 7D
Meeting of January 17, 2023**

Title: 2023 Sustainable Minnetonka Presentation Topics
Report From: Drew Ingvalson, Associate Planner/Sustainability Coordinator
Submitted through: Julie Wischnack, AICP, Community Development Director
Loren Gordon, AICP, City Planner

Action Requested: Motion Informational Public Hearing Vote
Form of Action: Resolution Ordinance Other N/A
Votes needed 5 votes N/A Other

Summary Statement

The City of Minnetonka regularly hosts presentations (both in-person or virtual) for residents to learn more about sustainable practices. In the city's Energy Action Plan Addendum, the city committed to hosting at least four presentations each year ([Strategy 11](#)).

Recommended Action

Each commissioner provided four presentation topics for the city to host in 2023 and recommended promotion ideas (if applicable).

Strategic Profile Relatability

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Financial Strength & Operational Excellence | <input type="checkbox"/> Safe & Healthy Community |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sustainability & Natural Resources | <input type="checkbox"/> Livable & Well-Planned Development |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Infrastructure & Asset Management | <input type="checkbox"/> Community Inclusiveness |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A | |

Statement: See [Strategic Profile](#).

Background

The City of Minnetonka has a long history of providing educational opportunities for community members. The City has done this through webinars, in-person presentations, city email subscribers, postings in the Minnetonka Memo, and more. Recently, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the city had planned to host several in-person events in 2020/2021 through the newly approved Energy Action Plan. However, due to COVID-19, the city pivoted that year and did monthly webinars throughout 2021 instead of in-person events (see webinars [here](#), under the 2021 webinar series). Webinar topics that year included:

- Home energy efficiency;
- Reducing your waste;
- Renewable energy;
- Electric vehicle and chargers;
- Electrification; and

- On-site solar purchasing.

The webinars were very well attended (from 50-60 people) in the early months but dwindled down to 15-30 by the end of the year. City staff believes that there was a bit of attendee fatigue due to the number of webinars. City staff and the Energy Action Team decided to only commit to four presentations/webinars moving forward. These webinars should be exciting and provide new information and/or funding opportunities.

Potential Presentations/Webinars

In 2022, the City of Minnetonka hosted several presentation events with a high level of success. Staff recommends the sustainability commission consider these in-person events again in 2023. In addition, staff will research ways to allow people to attend them virtually or will record them for people to view at a later date.

- [Organics Recycling](#), presented by Hennepin County (spring 2023)
- **Electric Vehicles and Chargers** (summer 2023)
- [On-Site Solar Purchasing](#), presented by MREA (summer/fall 2023)
- [Home Energy Audits](#), presented by Center for Energy and Environment (fall 2023)

Two additional events that staff would recommend the city consider hosting in 2023 include smart salting and the Inflation Reduction Act.

- **Smart Salting:** The commission has shown an interest in researching ways to help reduce chloride use within our community and is scheduled in the 2023 work plan to host a presenter on chlorides in Q3 of this year. The scheduled sustainability commission presentation could double as a webinar, or the city could also host a standalone event to promote responsible chloride use. This event would make the most sense to be done in the Fall/early Winter of 2023.
- **Inflation Reduction Act (IRA):** In 2022, the federal government passed the [Inflation Reduction Act](#). The IRA bill includes significant tax credits and upfront discounts for:
 - o Home energy efficiency (electrification of equipment, electric panels/wiring, weatherization, heat pumps);
 - o Renewable energy (solar installation and battery storage); and
 - o Greenhouse gas reduction actions (electric vehicles and chargers).

If these, or other options, were selected, staff would research potential speakers and presentation dates.

Presentation Promotion

City staff has promoted presentations (both in-person and virtual) through the Minnetonka Memo, [Sustainable Minnetonka](#) webpage, email subscriber groups, postings at city facilities, and city social media accounts. Staff recommends that the commission consider alternative promotion opportunities.

Sustainability Commission's Task

- 1) Review the proposed presentation options and consider alternative promotion opportunities.
- 2) Recommend additional presentation options.
- 3) Each commissioner selects up to four presentation topics for 2023 and recommends additional promotion opportunities (if applicable).



**Sustainability Commission Agenda Item 7E
Meeting of January 17, 2023**

Title: Earth Day Program/Initiatives
Report From: Drew Ingvalson, Associate Planner/Sustainability Coordinator
Submitted through: Julie Wischnack, AICP, Community Development Director
Loren Gordon, AICP, City Planner

Action Requested: Motion Informational Public Hearing Vote
Form of Action: Resolution Ordinance Other N/A
Votes needed 5 votes N/A Other

Summary Statement

The sustainability commission included "discuss ways the city can celebrate 2023 Earth Day (Saturday, April 22nd)" in the Q1 for the 2023 Sustainability Commission Work Plan.

Recommended Action

Celebrate Earth Day through social media postings, sustainability articles in the Minnetonka Memo, a city council resolution recognizing April 22nd as Earth Day, and hosting an organics recycling presenter in April 2023 (if available).

Strategic Profile Relatability

Financial Strength & Operational Excellence Safe & Healthy Community
 Sustainability & Natural Resources Livable & Well-Planned Development
 Infrastructure & Asset Management Community Inclusiveness
 N/A

Statement: See [Strategic Profile](#).

Background

The first official Earth Day occurred on April 22, 1970. This annual event was spurred due to a large oil spill near Santa Barbara, California. In response to the oil spill, Senator Gaylord Nelson (D-WI) and U.S. Rep Pete McCloskey (R-CA) co-chaired the first Earth Day in partnership with Denis Hayes (an environmental activist). The event started as a way to educate college students but changed into a countrywide event with the assistance of volunteers and the national media. People participated by gathering in streets, parks, and classrooms to talk about the importance of the conservation and preservation of our planet.

Today, Earth Day has turned into a global event that looks to help change individual behaviors and policies on the local, national and global levels. For more information about Earth Day, visit earthday.org.

Past Local Events

Several local organizations (including Minnetonka) have hosted Earth Day (April 22nd and Arbor Day (April 28th) events. Below are a few past events in the area.

- Nine Mile Creek
 - o [“Dog Trots,”](#) which involved walking your dog with a group on local trails
 - o [“Valley Park Clean-Up, Hopkins”](#)
- City of Minnetonka
 - o “Plant trees on Arbor Day” in Covington Park
 - o “Garlic Mustard Removal” in Big Willow Park (canceled due to weather)
- City of Eden Prairie
 - o [Arbor Day Walk and Green Fair](#)
 - o [City Park Clean Up](#)
- City of St. Louis Park
 - o [Arbor Day and Community Tree Planting Celebration](#)

Volunteer Opportunities

Several organizations provide volunteer opportunities. Specifically, [Hennepin County](#) and [Three Rivers Park District](#) both dedicate webpages that provide celebration and volunteer opportunities for community members.

Natural Resources Division Earth Day/Arbor Day Initiatives

There are often many events held in the Twin Cities around Earth Day, from volunteering to simply spending time in nature. Considering this, the city prefers to think of every day as Earth Day. The city creates various in-person opportunities for residents to learn about how to conserve and protect our planet throughout the year without making people choose between a city event or another local Earth Day event.

This year, the city's natural resources division has planned a few events and initiatives to educate residents about conservation and sustainability. Specifically, the natural resources division:

- Drafts an Arbor Day proclamation that is approved by the city council.
- Plans to host a small Arbor Day tree-planting event shortly after Earth Day.
- Will be conducting a new “Community Forest Campaign.” The five-week campaign will begin on Earth Day and continue through the last week of June. The campaign will utilize the city’s various social media accounts to educate community members about various tree-related topics.
- Every year, the natural resources division creates a special insert for the April edition of the Minnetonka Memo. The insert typically provides information about how community members can become better land stewards through small actions. Below are links to recent natural resources April inserts.
 - o [2022](#)
 - o [2021](#)
 - o [2020](#)
 - o [2019](#)

Proposed Earth Day Initiatives

Being aware of the various initiatives already being done by area organizations and the city's natural resources division, staff recommends completing supplemental sustainability initiatives around Earth Day, such as the following:

- **Social Media:** There will be several social media postings on and after Earth Day (through the natural resources division "Community Forest Campaign"). However, staff could also put together a set of home electrification and efficiency posts for the 3-weeks in April leading up to Earth Day. This would provide a different topic and not overlap with an existing initiative.
- **Minnetonka Memo:** The April 2023 edition of the Minnetonka Memo will include the natural resources division's special insert. However, again, the city could also add articles into the Memo that include promotions of the Home Energy Squad, electric yard equipment, and/or other sustainability best practices that do not overlap with the already planned natural resources insert.
- **April Presenter:** The Energy Action Plan Addendum commits the city to hosting four presentations throughout 2023 ([Strategy 11](#)). Staff does not recommend hosting a presenter on Earth Day (Saturday, April 22nd) due to other events occurring on that date and weekends often being a difficult day for events. Alternatively, staff would recommend hosting a presenter on another day during April. In April 2022, the city hosted a virtual presentation on organic recycling presented by Hennepin County. This could be a good topic to cover again through an in-person presentation.

Sustainability Commission Task

Determine what initiatives the city should complete around the Earth Day Celebration on April 22nd.