

**Unapproved
Minnetonka Sustainability Commission
Minutes**

Jan. 17, 2023

1. Call to Order

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

2. Roll Call

Sustainability commissioners Edwin Avalos, Molly Birr, 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 Drew Ingvalson.

3. Approval of the Agenda

Henry moved, second by Avalos, to approve the agenda as submitted with additional handouts provided in the change memo dated Jan. 17, 2023.

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

4. Approval of Sustainability Commission Nov. 15, 2022 Meeting Minutes

Ingraham moved, second by Henry, to approve the Nov. 15, 2022 meeting minutes as submitted with the removal of “virtual meeting.”

Anderson, Avalos, Birr, Boor, Golob, Henry, Ingraham, Muralidhara, Park and Pattain voted yes. Motion carried.

5. Report from Staff

Ingvalson gave the staff report regarding:

- NexTrex recycling collection areas located at Williston Fitness Center and city hall collected 292 pounds of recyclable plastic bags and film in January 2023.
- EnerChange provides no-cost-building-energy audits for nonprofit organizations.
- There is one level-three-electric-vehicle charger in the fire department parking lot. More level-three chargers will be installed when parts become available. The level-three charger price will increase from \$.25 to \$.35 per kWh. Level-two chargers will continue to charge \$.25 per kWh.

- Staff is hoping to schedule a tour of the Hennepin Energy Recovery Center in February or March.
- Upcoming ambassador events.
- A consultant will start working on the Climate Action and Adaptation Plan in February 2023. Barr Engineering will be completing a vulnerability assessment by the end of February 2023.

Avalos suggested providing updates on the NexTrex recycling collection and electric charging stations in the Minnetonka Memo. Ingvalson agreed.

6. Report from Sustainability Commission Members

Chair Golob shared an article from the Minneapolis Star Tribune that provides statistics regarding the financial costs and loss of life caused by extreme weather in recent history.

7. Agenda Items

A. Environmental Justice Presentation

Ingvalson reported. Staff recommended commissioners listen to the presentation, ask questions and consider ways the city can promote environmental justice.

Karen Galles, Hennepin County Land and Water Supervisor, gave a presentation on environmental justice. She stated that:

- Environmental justice is the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin or income with respect to the development, implementation and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations and policies.
- Environmental justice will be achieved when everyone enjoys the same degree of protection from environmental and health hazards and equal access to the decision-making process to have a healthy environment in which to live, learn and work.
- There was an impact created by the construction of the interstate highway system in Minnesota which divides neighborhoods and causes health issues.
- Flint, Michigan leaders chose a cheaper water source alternative without testing its safety and failed to act when problems were reported causing long-term health issues from lead.
- At the Hunters Point Naval Shipyards in San Francisco, redlining and discrimination prevented workers from moving away from hazardous areas used for radioactive waste positioned close to low-income neighborhoods. Clean up started in the 1990s and continues now. Litigation going on now is fighting to prevent the city of San Francisco from repopulating the contaminated area.

- Emerging climate-driven-justice concerns in regard to flooding and an increase in heat create a greater need for stormwater management features.
- The ability of a resident to respond determines whether a flood or other hazardous event is an inconvenience, management problem or catastrophic event.
- Vulnerability studies work to identify vulnerable areas to hazards, such as flooding, and vulnerable residents.
- People deserve to have access to clean water and natural resources in their neighborhood.
- ParkScore provides an analysis of what residents live within a 10-minute walk to a park in the United States.
- Principles of environmental justice ensure full and fair participation for all in policy and decision making; work for all people to share equally in benefits; and mitigate disproportionate adverse impacts. Gathering data and information is a necessary first step.

Boor noted that Minnetonka does not have as many vulnerable communities as some other cities, but access for people unable to pay a high price to move into Minnetonka is limited. She is happy the city is moving forward with a proposed development that will provide housing by Habitat for Humanity in the Minnetonka Mills area. Keeping an area “historical” is not a good enough reason to prevent an opportunity that would provide the type of housing needed in Minnetonka. She appreciated Ms. Galles’ presentation.

Chair Golob told a lot of visitors at the Farmers Markets held in 2022 about the Just Deeds program. He and his wife went through the process to eliminate the restriction from his property. He hopes he inspired some residents to do the same.

Birr asked Ms. Galles to identify some smaller-scale-environmental disadvantages Minnetonka could address. Ms. Galles was not familiar enough with Minnetonka, but suggested that information could be found on the MN Pollution Control Agency’s website under the heading “What’s in my Neighborhood?”

Avalos would like Minnetonka to be more accessible for individuals to get around the city without a vehicle. He appreciated Ms. Galles acknowledging how the same event, like a basement flooding, could impact certain individuals more than others. He noted the frequency of water main breaks that occurred in St. Louis Park and the amount of money paid to property owners which may cover the cost for some, but not all.

B. Ambassador Handouts

Ingvolson reported. Staff recommended commissioners review tabling materials and decide what the commission would like to promote in 2023.

Avalos suggested including information on organics recycling provided by garbage collectors in Minnetonka. Ingraham agreed and suggested instructions on how a resident could compost on one's own property also be included.

Boor suggested advertising the compost drop-off site available to residents at public works. Ingvalson agreed.

Chair Golob asked if Minnetonka has an ordinance that prevents residents from composting in their back yard. Ingvalson answered in the negative.

Pattain suggested advertising the benefits of composting. She likes the steps and pictures provided on the brochure. She appreciates the information provided regarding the inflation reduction act; steps to take to end the spread of emerald ash bore; and how to use best salt practices.

Chair Golob suggested advertising the options of dropping compost off at the public works site and the option of it being hauled away by a Minnetonka refuse collector.

Henry suggested including an explanation of how salt impacts ground water with information to promote best salt practices.

Chair Golob agreed with Henry. He did some research and was astonished the problem that a small quantity of salt can cause in streams and bodies of water. He would also like to present the information at ambassador events.

Boor noted that the MNPCA has many chloride outreach materials that may be utilized. She would appreciate including steps to guide apartment residents on the best way to encourage an apartment-building owner to reduce the amount of salt deposited on the apartment building parking lot in the handouts.

The public hearing was opened. No testimony was submitted and the public hearing was closed.

Boor moved, Pattain seconded, a motion to approve the use of the tabling materials presented by staff for the commission to promote in 2023.

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

C. Sustainable Minnetonka Awards Review

Ingvalson reported. Staff recommended commissioners review the program and recommend changes if needed.

Avalos suggested a screen with a slide show at the winter farmer's market or photo board at the summer farmer's market be utilized to advertise the 2023 sustainability awards and photos of the 2022 winners.

Boor suggested tracking building permits for project that help the environment to invite the applicant to apply for a sustainable award. Ingvalson explained that planning staff did invite land-use applicants with projects that fit the award categories in 2022 to apply for the sustainability award and will continue to do so in 2023.

Henry suggested starting the time to receive sustainable awards applications on Earth Day, April 22, 2023, and extending the deadline to apply to a later date. He suggested hanging flyers to advertise the awards at grocery stores and places of worship.

Chair Golob liked that idea and thought schools would also be a good place to advertise the sustainable-award program. Ingvalson said that he has been reaching out to schools and will continue to do so. He invited commissioners to let him know of specific programs that may benefit from the awards category information and application.

Chair Golob thought the category titled “waste” is a broad category. He suggested changing the category name to “solid waste.” Henry suggested changing the category name to “waste reduction.” Chair Golob agreed.

Henry asked Birr if she learned of the sustainable awards at school. Birr explained that she did not hear of the sustainable awards at school, but she is not currently a member of the Earth Club. She suggested including the information in a school’s morning show and in-class announcements.

The public hearing was opened. No testimony was submitted and the public hearing was closed.

Ingraham moved, second by Henry, to recommend that the city council approve the Minnetonka Sustainable Awards program as submitted by staff with a change to the name of one category from “waste” to “waste reduction” and a change to the application period to be open from April 22, 2023, Earth Day, to a date to be determined in September 2023. Avalos, Birr, Boor, Golob, Henry, Ingraham, Park and Pattain voted yes. Muralidhara was absent. Motion carried.

D. 2023 Sustainable Minnetonka Presentation Topics

Ingvalson reported. Staff recommended each commissioner provide their top four presentation topics for the city to host in 2023 and for commissioners to recommend promotion ideas if applicable.

Chair Golob asked if commissioners have additional topics to add.

Henry suggested a parks and trails update.

Chair Golob suggested learning from a recycling hauler what happens to items collected by curbside recycling.

Avalos would like the public to hear the environmental justice presentation. It is relevant today and work being done with I-35W. Ingvalson noted that the environmental justice presentation will be shared on the city's social media sites and Youtube channel.

Henry was comfortable with having four webinars per year. Chair Golob agreed that one a quarter would be good.

Boor suggested advertising the funding opportunities available for individuals to complete sustainable initiatives. Chair Golob agreed. He noted that a presentation on the inflation act and its potential benefits would be beneficial. Henry suggested explaining how the inflation act would impact each individual.

Ingvalson asked each commissioner to choose their top four presentation topics.

Avalos chose:

- Parks and trail update.
- Presentation on what happens to curbside recycling items.
- Environmental justice presentation.
- Inflation reduction act and its impact on each person presentation.

Birr chose:

- Inflation reduction act and its impact on each person presentation.
- Smart salting practices.
- Organics recycling.
- Home energy audits.

Boor chose:

- Inflation reduction act and its impact on each person presentation.
- Smart salting practices.
- Parks and trails update.
- Home energy audits and benefits of a passive home.

Chair Golob chose:

- Smart salting practices.
- Inflation reduction act and its impact on each person presentation.
- Home energy audits.
- Presentation on what happens to curbside recycling items.

Henry chose:

- Smart salting practices.
- Inflation reduction act and its impact on each person presentation.

- Parks and trails update.
- A webinar on how to reduce one's greenhouse gas footprint by utilizing sustainable initiatives including solar gardens, solar subscriptions, wind energy and passive homes.

Ingraham chose:

- Inflation reduction act and its impact on each person presentation.
- Smart salting practices.
- Home energy audits.
- A webinar on how to reduce one's greenhouse gas footprint by utilizing sustainable initiatives including solar gardens, solar subscriptions, wind energy and passive homes.

Pattain chose:

- Smart salting practices.
- Inflation reduction act and its impact on each person presentation.
- Parks and trails update.
- A webinar on how to reduce one's greenhouse gas footprint by utilizing sustainable initiatives including solar gardens, solar subscriptions, wind energy and passive homes.

E. Earth Day Program/Initiatives

Ingvalson reported. Staff recommended commissioners consider options the city could take to promote Earth Day, April 22, 2023, and make a recommendation for action.

Avalos did not want to compete with another event already planned for that day, but favors supporting an existing event.

Henry suggested the mayor give a speech and put it on Youtube, Minnetonka's social media sites and website celebrating the initiatives done by the city including sourcing 100 percent of its electricity from sustainable sources. The photo contest entries may be included in the presentation.

Chair Golob confirmed with Ingvalson that the city council could adopt a resolution approving a proclamation in support of acknowledging April 22, 2023 as Earth Day. Henry suggested posting approval of the proclamation on the website and social media sites.

The public hearing was opened. No testimony was submitted and the public hearing was closed.

Henry moved, second by Avalos, to recommend that the city council adopt a resolution proclaiming April 22, 2023 to be Earth Day in Minnetonka. Avalos, Birr, Boor, Golob, Henry, Ingraham, Park and Pattain voted yes. Muralidhara was absent. Motion carried.

8. Other Business

9. Adjournment

Pattain moved, second by Birr, to adjourn the meeting at 8 p.m. Motion carried unanimously.

By: _____
Lois T. Mason
Planning Secretary