



Sustainability Commission Agenda

Feb. 28, 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: Jan. 17, 2023

5. Report from Staff:

- A. CAAP Update
- B. NexTrex Recycling Update
- C. Hennepin Energy Recovery Center Tour

6. Report from Sustainability Commission Members

7. Agenda Items

A. Pollinator Conservation in Minnetonka and Requests for Participating in “No Mow May”

- Recommendation: Recommend the city does not participate in “No Mow May” and, instead, continues to support the city’s Resilient Yards education program.
- Staff Members: Leslie Yetka and Drew Ingvalson

B. Restaurant Business Outreach

- Recommendation: Recommend staff move forward with putting together waste reduction and energy efficiency handouts and talking points for sustainability commission members to share with Minnetonka restaurants.
- Staff Member: Drew Ingvalson

Sustainability Commission Agenda

Feb. 28, 2023

Page 2

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
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. Justin Anderson and Harapanahalli Muralidhara were absent.

Staff present: Staff Liaison Drew Ingvalson
Guest Presenter: Karen Galles, Hennepin County

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, and Pattain voted yes. Anderson and Muralidhara were 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.”

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

5. Report from Staff

Ingvalson gave the staff report regarding the following:

- 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.

- The 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 neighborhoods.
- 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 backyards. 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 groundwater with information to promote best salt practices.

Chair Golob agreed with Henry. He did some research and was astonished by 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 MPCA 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, and 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, and Pattain voted yes. Anderson and Muralidhara were 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 a photo board at the summer farmer's market be utilized for advertising the 2023 sustainability awards and photos of the 2022 winners.

Boor suggested tracking building permits for the 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" was 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 had 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, and Pattain voted yes. Anderson and Muralidhara were 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 had 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 is being done with I-35W. Ingvalson noted that the environmental justice presentation would 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's presentation.

Birr chose:

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

Boor chose:

- Inflation reduction act and its impact on each person's 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's 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's 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's 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's 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 favored 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, and Pattain voted yes. Anderson and Muralidhara were 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



**Sustainability Commission Agenda Item 7A
Meeting of February 28, 2023**

Title: Pollinator Conservation in Minnetonka and Requests for Participating in “No Mow May”

Report From: Leslie Yetka, Natural Resources Manager
Drew Ingvalson, Associate Planner/Sustainability Coordinator

Submitted through: Julie Wischnack, AICP, Community Development Director
Will Manchester, P.E., Public Works 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 has received requests from various groups and residents to promote "No Mow May," which includes temporarily suspending enforcement of Minnetonka city code regarding noncompliant tall grass and weeds (see attached for example). The city council requested this topic be reviewed by the Sustainability Commission for review and recommendation.

Recommended Action

Approve a recommendation to not promote "No Mow May" and continue to promote the city's current Resilient Yards education program, started in 2022, as part of a larger natural resources [Resilient Minnetonka](#) initiative.

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: Enhancing and expanding pollinator habitats has several sustainability and natural resource benefits. Pollinators help create a healthy ecosystem that supports biodiversity and plant reproduction. In addition, pollinators provide essential benefits to several human crops and, thus, assist with human food security.

Background

“No Mow May” (NMM) is an initiative of the national nonprofit [Xerces Society](#) and originated in Europe from the nonprofit organization [Plantlife](#), based in the United Kingdom. According to the Xerces website, “The goal of No Mow May is to allow grass to grow unmown for the month of

May, creating habitat and forage for early season pollinators." Several local communities have promoted the NMM initiative and there has been press coverage on the topic. Over the past few years, both advocacy groups and individuals have contacted city staff and local officials encouraging the adoption of NMM in Minnetonka.

City Code: Tall Grass and Weeds

The City of Minnetonka code, section 845.030(3) (a), states that "all turf grasses, pollinator lawns, and weeds must not exceed a height of 10 inches."

Staff reviewed comparable cities and found that the majority of comparable cities have an 8-inch height limit for grass and weeds. Out of Minnetonka's 12 comparable cities, only Minnetonka and Edina allow properties to have grass 10 inches tall.

Comparable City	Tall Grass/Weed Max Height
Apple Valley	8 inches
Bloomington	8 inches
Brooklyn Park	8 inches
Burnsville	8 inches
Eagan	8 inches
Eden Prairie	10 inches or going to seed
Edina	10 inches
Lakeville	8 inches*
Maple Grove	8 inches or going to seed
Plymouth	8 inches
St. Louis Park	6 inches**
Woodbury	8 inches
Total	10 out of 12 are eight inches or less
Minnetonka	10 inches

* For any lot less than one acre that has a building on it or an empty lot that abuts a lot containing a building

**Specific to turf grass, weeds, or rank vegetation

The Minnetonka city code exempts the following areas from the 10-inch tall requirement:

- Wetlands or floodplains;
- Drainage ponds or ditches that store or carry stormwater;
- Pastures (subject to requirements); and
- Undisturbed areas.

In addition to the exemptions above, the Minnetonka city code also provides opportunities for private property owners to establish lawns that support vegetation that is native to Minnesota and our region. Since 1992, the City of Minnetonka has promoted alternative lawns in the city. The most recent amendment to that ordinance occurred in 2020. The ordinance requires these areas must include plant life defined as "meadow vegetation," or plants that are typically found in our area's woodlands, meadows, and prairies, except weeds. Lawns that establish meadow vegetation provide several environmental benefits, including:

- A long-term habitat for pollinators;
- Habitat for insects (and food source for other wildlife);
- Enhanced water infiltration;
- Lower yard maintenance (after being established) and watering needs; and

- Increased carbon sequestration (in comparison to turf lawns).

To be compliant with city code, areas with meadow vegetation must:

- Eliminate prior vegetation (turf) and be replaced with meadow vegetation.
- Be cut at least once per year to a height of no more than 10 inches if weeds cover more than 25% of the area.
- When being established, a sign must be posted on the property to denote that it is a meadow vegetation or pollinator lawn (only required if in view of the public). The sign may be removed when the vegetation is established, and less than 25% of the lawn is weeds.

Tall Grass and Weed Complaints

Tall grass and weed complaints make up a significant portion of the nuisance complaints submitted to the city every year (nearly one out of every five complaints). Specifically, the City of Minnetonka averages nearly 95 tall grass/weed complaints each year. Of those annual complaints, over half of them occur during the month and a half time period of No Mow May (May 1 – June 15).

Year	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	5-year average
Long Grass/Weed Complaints May 1- June 15	51	56	53	48	38	49.2
Total Long Grass/Weed Complaints	86	113	98	89	90	95.2

Which Comparable Cities are participating in “No Mow May?”

This year, only two of Minnetonka's comparable cities have decided not to enforce their tall grass/weed maximum height ordinances for NMM (Brooklyn Park and Edina).

- The City of Edina participated in NMM in 2022 and has made a few changes to its promotion and program for 2023. Specifically, the City of Edina will be offering three (3) free sustainable yard workshops for residents, provided by [Blue Thumb](#).
- The City of Brooklyn Park discussed NMM in 2022 and has decided to participate in the initiative in 2023. However, they have decided to limit their program participation to single and two-family homes.

Two cities (Burnsville and St. Louis Park) discussed NMM in the past year and decided not to move forward with the initiative. The cities noted that it puts stress on turf grass to allow it to grow to a tall height and then trim such a large amount of it. In addition, both cities found that there are more productive ways to support pollinators than allowing tall turf grass. Specifically, both Burnsville and St. Louis Park promote native plant habitats on public and private yards.

Comparable City	Participant in No Mow May	NMM Timeframe	Registration Requirement
Apple Valley	No	-	-
Bloomington	No	-	-

Brooklyn Park	Yes	May 1 – June 10	Properties must sign up and post a yard sign
Burnsville*	No	-	-
Eagan	No	-	-
Eden Prairie	No	-	-
Edina	Yes	May 1 – June 15	Properties must sign up and post a yard sign
Lakeville	No	-	-
Maple Grove	No	-	-
Plymouth	No	-	-
St. Louis Park*	No	-	-
Woodbury	No	-	-
Total	2 out of 12	-	-

* City has discussed No Mow May and decided not to participate

Staff Recommendation

City staff has reviewed the specific campaign, and while the end goal of the program, to promote pollinators, is in line with city goals, promoting Resilient Yards, rather than the No Mow May program is recommended for several important reasons:

1. **Little Benefit to Pollinators:** The message embedded in NMM of just “letting your lawn go” will, for most typical Minnetonka lawns, provide little benefit to pollinators and only encourages aggressive, non-native species (such as dandelions) to thrive:
 - The typical maintained Minnetonka lawn is primarily made up of turf grass with relatively few native flowering species. The act of letting it grow longer in May is not going to introduce new native flowers that are needed to support pollinators, and when aggressive flowers such as dandelion inevitably start to grow, it could lead to increased herbicide use the rest of the season to control them.
 - Research cited by Xerces Society, university researchers, and others concludes that mowing every two to three weeks is, in fact, optimal for maintaining flowers that support pollinators in lawns. The researchers hypothesize that a two to three-week mowing cycle leaves more flowers in the lawn than not mowing because it keeps the long turf grass from out-competing the flowers. They also hypothesize that longer turf grass can make the flowers harder to find for pollinators.
 - A primary research paper often cited for supporting the NMM initiative has [recently been retracted](#) due to significant errors in methodology and erroneous conclusions.
2. **Inconsistent with Best Practices:** The NMM campaign recommends suspending local ordinances related to lawn height in May to allow for the lawn to grow tall. This is contrary to lawn maintenance best practices and makes enforcement more challenging once June arrives:
 - In Minnetonka, unmown lawns are one of the main drivers of nuisance complaints related to landscaping during the growing season. [City ordinance](#) requires a height of 10 inches or less for turf but also allows for turf alternatives

such as pollinator lawns ("bee lawns") and low-maintenance fescue, which are intentionally planted and require regular mowing to thrive.

- If left unmown in May, it will take some effort to get the lawn back under control due to the amount of thatch (dead plant material) produced and the stress of cutting so much leaf material at once. Once June arrives, the lawn will require mowing to be in compliance with city ordinance, producing a significant amount of thatch that may, in turn, stress the lawn and cover any beneficial flowers that exist. If mowing doesn't happen quickly, it may lead to more challenging enforcement of the lawn height ordinance.
3. **Conflicting Message:** Mixed messaging on the benefits and obstacles of NMM makes it difficult for landowners to understand the best actions to take to support pollinators:
- The University of Minnesota Bee Lab [website on NMM](#) describes it as a program to support spring flowers for pollinators but also indicates that "People should not take the catchphrase 'No Mow May' literally." They indicate that mowing in May is actually needed to reduce the spread of invasive plants (e.g., dandelions) and actually encourages some common flowering plants, such as clover, to bloom.
 - [Iowa State University Extension](#) describes the need to support pollinators as well as the downsides to letting a lawn go, as advocated by NMM.
 - Various other articles on some obstacles of NMM:
<https://www.theimpatientgardener.com/no-mow-may/>
<https://www.rewildingmag.com/no-mow-may-downside/>
<https://gardenrant.com/2022/04/no-mow-month-xerces-society.html>
<https://www.iamgreenwise.com/https-www-iamgreenwise-nomowmay/>
<https://www.delgazette.com/news/96203/controversy-stirs-over-no-mow-may>

Alternative Pollinator Conservation - City Initiatives Summary

While the need to provide more flowers to meet pollinator conservation goals is important, there are more effective actions landowners can take that also align with the current messages the city communicates. In the spring of 2022, natural resources staff initiated the [Resilient Minnetonka](#) webpage on Minnetonka Matters (Minnetonka's community engagement platform), which includes information on beneficial landscaping practices including:

- removing lawn and planting natives
- mowing the existing lawn every 2-3 weeks for optimal health
- intentional planting and caring for a pollinator lawn

Previous Initiatives: All of these actions can help support pollinators and also provide for a more resilient landscape. In fact, the city has a long history of promoting and implementing pollinator conservation practices and actions that property owners can take:

- Outreach on the website, in the Minnetonka Memo, and in the city's Natural Resources e-Bulletin recommends that people who have a lawn and want to support pollinators should consider intentionally planting a pollinator lawn (or "bee lawn"). The intentional planting and caring for a pollinator lawn requires mowing every 2-3 weeks to encourage optimal blooming of flowers and keep the turf grass from overgrowing.

- Starting in 2022, the city piloted a Resilient Yards incentive program as part of Resilient Minnetonka, including workshops and an online curriculum (in partnership with [Metro Blooms](#)), on-site consultations, and rebates for purchasing native plants. The program will continue in 2023 and include more funds for helping landowners take action on their property. In 2022, the city had:
 - 23 people attended the workshop
 - 38 people accessed the learning modules
 - 24 people took advantage of on-site consultations with Metro Blooms
 - Five people received a \$150 rebate for landscaping projects
- The city has promoted a [pollinator awareness campaign](#) using Minnetonka Matters to help educate people on the benefits of protecting pollinators and taking conservation actions.
- Since 2017, the city has participated in the national Mayors Monarch Pledge, achieving a [champion-level status](#) for the past two years by completing implementation benchmarks.

2023 Initiatives: While NMM raises awareness of the importance of pollinator conservation, staff feels the city’s current focus on Resilient Yards is more likely to benefit pollinators. Thus, staff time and resources should continue to focus on current outreach. For 2023, this will include the following:

- An April insert in the Minnetonka Memo focused on lawns and creating more resilient yards;
- Outreach using social media and the Natural Resources e-Bulletin advertising a Resilient Yards [workshop](#) related learning modules and technical assistance that is available to the public and is part of a larger Resilient Minnetonka initiative;
- A native plant sale to support planting for pollinators, beginning in the spring; and
- Rebates for landowners who want to take action on their property to support pollinators and create more resilient landscapes.
- Natural Resources staff are available to answer questions, provide information, and direct people to resources related to sustainable yard practices.

Public Comment

The city received comments from the public about this item. Please see attached.

From: Kim&Ashley ZeroWasteAdvocates <[REDACTED]>

Sent: Wednesday, December 28, 2022 10:21 AM

To: Brad Wiersum <bwersum@minnetonkamn.gov>; Deborah Calvert <dcalvert@minnetonkamn.gov>; Kimberly Wilburn <kwilburn@minnetonkamn.gov>; Brian Kirk <bkirk@minnetonkamn.gov>; Rebecca Schack <rschack@minnetonkamn.gov>; Bradley Schaeppi <bschaeppi@minnetonkamn.gov>; Kissy Coakley <kcoakley@minnetonkamn.gov>; Drew Ingvalson <dingvalson@minnetonkamn.gov>

Subject: No Mow May in Minnetonka

Dear City Council,

Since we contacted you last year, many other city councils have voted to allow their citizens to participate in No Mow May:

- Bemidji
- Brooklyn Park
- Columbia Heights
- Crystal
- Grand Rapids
- Edina (1200 registered participants in 2022)
- Mankato
- Mendota Heights
- Monticello
- New Brighton
- North Mankato
- Otsego
- Red Wing
- Rochester
- Rosemount
- Roseville
- Vandnais Heights

- West St Paul

Additional cities are voting in 2023. We are asking your city council to amend your city code regulating lawn height to suspend its enforcement during the month of May. No Mow May has been hugely popular for a number of reasons:

- It has instant positive environmental impact
 - Provides food for pollinators after hibernation
 - Reduces gasoline mower emissions, and less water is needed on longer lawns
 - Reduces noise pollution, promoting bird reproduction
 - Brings more public interest to pollinators than any other attempts
- Requires minimal city effort with big impact
 - It's completely OPTIONAL for residents
 - Cities can claim "doing their part"
 - As popularity grows, residents become upset when not allowed to participate
 - Ignites residents' interest in adding native pollinator plants to their yards
- Supported by countless environmental organization
 - MN Department of Natural Resources (DNR)
 - University of Minnesota, Bee Squad
 - British Environmental Group
 - Bee City USA

No Mow May has gained popularity due to it being an obvious win-win situation. We have a 5 minute google slide presentation. Please let us know if you would like us to share the slides with you, need us to speak at your council meeting, or if you add No Mow May to your agenda. We are also available to answer any questions.

Thank you,

Zero Waste Advocates of Minnesota

Kim Haroldson & Ashley Kennedy

Kim:

Ashley:

"Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, Nothing is going to get better. It's not."

~Dr Seuss, The Lorax

From: Heather Holm
 To: Edwin Avelos; Elizabeth Boor; Brian Golob; Matt Henry; David Ingraham; Harapanahalli Muralidhara; Ashley Pattain
 Cc: Leslie Yetka; Matt Kumka; Drew Ingvalson
 Subject: No Mow May
 Date: Wednesday, February 1, 2023 9:59:42 AM

Hello Sustainability Commission members,

I attended the council study session last week and noted that No Mow May was included in the agenda as a future study session discussion item, but will first be reviewed by the Sustainability Commission. I understand by corresponding with Natural Resources staff that elected officials and staff have received a number of emails from individuals, groups, and the media in support of this initiative.

While the No Mow May initiative may seem like an easy solution to support pollinators, **the science and intent has been called into question by many well-respected scientists.**

To summarize:

- the primary research paper cited (Wisconsin study) touting the benefits of No Mow May has been recently retracted by the journal. Here is the link explaining the reasons for this: <https://peerj.com/articles/10021/retraction/>
- many scientists and researchers including Dr. Zach Portman (UMN Native Bee Lab) wrote to the journal citing their concerns about the inconsistencies and questionable conclusions. Dr. Portman wrote about this on his website: <https://zportman.medium.com/documenting-serious-issues-in-a-bee-paper-on-no-mow-may-dd9b563fcafd>
- last spring, leading bee researcher and conservation scientist, Sheila Colla, myself, and conservation gardener Lorraine Johnson wrote a popular science article about the downsides of this initiative: <https://www.rewildingmag.com/no-mow-may-downside/>, namely:
 - 1 No Mow May is an initiative that started in the UK and resulted in an abundance of blooming *native* plants (a good thing for British bees!) In the US and specifically in Minnesota, this practice **results in non-native, weedy, and invasive plants blooming** in lawns. Only one of the eight plants in the chart below (summary of plants known to bloom in unmown lawns in Minnesota in May) is native.
 - 2 Dandelions, the primary flowering plant that blooms in lawns in Minnesota, are **nutritionally inadequate for bees**; the pollen is very low in protein content and studies have demonstrated that bees cannot rear offspring on dandelion pollen alone.
 - 3 No Mow May, i.e., not mowing your lawn during the month of May, encourages a do-nothing approach, and this is not an effective solution to address pollinator decline or loss of habitat.
 - 4 Bees (460+ species in Minnesota alone) need a diversity of native plants, not weedy lawns. Approximately 27% of the 460 species that occur in Minnesota specialize on collecting pollen from native plants. Many of these specialists are active in the spring and won't use/visit the plants in unmown lawns.
 - 5 The notion that lawns can provide diverse floral resources and thriving habitat for pollinators is false.

The benefits of this initiative (potential reduced chemical use in lawns) can be addressed by providing homeowners with organic and cultural practices that result in healthy, lush lawns. For example, mowing your lawn at a height of three inches or more, topdressing with compost, mowing less often, and using electric or manual mowers instead of gas-powered mowers.

	Scientific Name	Common Name	Native or Non-native	Invasive	Sources	Notes
1	<i>Taraxacum officinale</i>	Common Dandelion	Non-native	No		Low protein content in pollen
2	<i>Trifolium repens</i>	Dutch White Clover	Non-native	Yes	state-listed in Wisconsin	
3	<i>Lotus corniculatus</i>	Birdsfoot Trefoil	Non-native	Yes	MN DNR terrestrial invasive	
4	<i>Viola sororia</i>	Common Blue Violet	Native	No		Supports bumble bees, mining bees including one specialist Pollen (the main protein source for bees) from creeping Charlie is not readily available to visiting bees and other insect pollinators
5	<i>Glechoma hederacea</i>	Creeping Charlie	Non-native	Yes	MN DNR terrestrial invasive	
6	<i>Hieracium aurantiacum</i>	Orange Hawkweed	Non-native	Yes	MN DNR terrestrial invasive	
7	<i>Veronica serpyllifolia</i>	Thyme-leaved Speedwell	Non-native	No		No evidence/research that this plant is visited by insects.
8	<i>Hesperis matronalis</i>	Dame's Rocket	Non-native	Yes	Minnesota Wildflowers	

I would be happy to send you more information/research or speak to the commission to answer any questions on this topic and discuss the nuances of pollinator conservation. I understand that you have only a handful of opportunities to allocate to discussion topics, so I suggest that you consider using this time to address a more important or pressing sustainability topic.

Sincerely,
 Heather Holm
 Pollinator Conservationist and Author
www.pollinatorsnativeplants.com



**Sustainability Commission Agenda Item 7B
Meeting of Feb. 28, 2023**

Title: Restaurant Business Outreach

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's [Energy Action Plan Addendum](#) (Strategy 6) states that the city shall "launch a targeted outreach campaign to advise action to local businesses." In addition, one of the sustainability commission's duties and responsibilities outlined in the city code is "serving as an ambassador to the community" about programs that relate to sustainability.

There are several utility and county programs that can help restaurants become more energy efficient and reduce their waste. The sustainability commission is tasked with determining if they would like to participate in a restaurant-focused outreach campaign.

Recommended Action

Recommend staff move forward with putting together waste reduction and energy efficiency handouts (with talking points) for sustainability commission members to share with Minnetonka restaurants.

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 City of Minnetonka regularly informs businesses of cost-saving opportunities. The city typically does this through:

- Traditional mailings;
- Emailing business subscribers;
- Reaching out to specific businesses (if a program applies to them); and

- Posting articles in the [Thrive Minnetonka](#) newsletter, a business publication from the City of Minnetonka, to help businesses start, grow, and thrive.

However, the city is continually considering new ways to connect with our business community. Current restaurant rebates, grants, and programs provide a unique opportunity for the sustainability commission to assist with business outreach efforts.

Sustainability Commissioner Outreach

In addition to the outreach methods above, the staff is recommending that the sustainability commission assist with restaurant business outreach. This new outreach technique would have commissioners:

- Visit restaurants (optimally restaurants that they patron and during non-busy hours);
- Distribute handouts about energy efficiency and waste reduction programs;
- Talk with on-site managers about programs; and
- Provide contacts for more detailed questions.

With assistance from the Partners in Energy program, the city would create the following:

- Easy-to-digest handouts of programs that are relevant for restaurant businesses (with a focus on cost savings);
- Talking points for commissioners; and
- A shared spreadsheet to display restaurants that have been visited by commissioners.

In addition, staff would monitor the number of businesses that sign up for programs as a result of the additional outreach.

Restaurant Program Opportunities

The city is continually looking for opportunities that are relevant for business owners. Currently, there are multiple programs that can help offset the costs of businesses becoming more sustainable. Below are some programs that the city has promoted in the past through our traditional outreach methods and new programs that the city could promote.

Waste Programs:

- [Business Recycling Container Grants](#) (Hennepin County): Small businesses and non-profits are eligible for up to \$3,000 worth of containers and bags, with no match requirement.
- [Business Waste Prevention Grants](#) (Hennepin County): Areas of focus can include prevention of food waste, reuse and recovery of goods and materials, and development and use of recovered products. Applicants may apply for up to \$50,000 (minimum of \$5,000 per project, and projects over \$10,000 require a 25% match).

- [MNimize Rebate](#) (Hennepin County and the Minnesota Waste Wise Foundation): Participating businesses receive technical assistance and a \$500 rebate toward expenses to reduce single-use plastics. This rebate could be used to purchase durable reusable or certified compostable alternatives to replace single-use plastic items or for other creative plastic reduction strategies.

Energy Programs:

- [Business Lighting](#) (Xcel): Businesses are eligible for business LED rebates, lighting assessments (free for small/mid-sized businesses), and more.
- [Business Energy Assessments](#) (Xcel): An energy advisor will provide operational, energy-efficiency equipment and cost-saving recommendations. This will include a short-term road map report (2 years) that covers low-cost strategies.
- [Foodservice](#) (Xcel): Rebates are available for new energy-efficient food service equipment to help businesses reduce their energy usage and save money.
- Commercial Refrigeration: Restaurants are eligible for a free, no-obligation refrigeration assessment that includes a report with recommendations and rebate opportunities.
- [Foodservice Rebates](#) (CenterPoint): Restaurants can receive rebates for ovens, broilers, dishwashers, fryers, and other equipment.

Timeline

- Feb. 28, 2022:** The sustainability commission decides if they want to conduct outreach to Minnetonka restaurants.
- May 16, 2022:** The sustainability commission will review handouts and talking points provided by staff.
- June 2022:** Sustainability commissioners start connecting with local restaurants and tracking the ones they have visited.