

**Minnetonka Sustainability Commission
Minutes**

Feb. 28, 2023

1. Call to Order

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

2. Roll Call

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

Staff present: City Planner Loren Gordon, Staff Liaison Drew Ingvalson and Natural Resources Manager Leslie Yetka.

3. Approval of the Agenda

Henry moved, second by Pattain, to approve the agenda as submitted with a few changes and an additional link found in the change memo dated Feb. 28, 2023.

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

4. Approval of Sustainability Commission Jan. 17, 2021 Meeting Minutes

Ingraham moved, second by Henry, to approve the minutes as submitted with a change to replace “public hearing” with “public-input portion.”

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

5. Report from Staff

Ingvalson gave the staff report:

- Seven project submittals were submitted for the Minnetonka Climate Action and Adaptation Plan (CAAP). LHB was selected to create the CAAP. LHB started and operates the Regional Indicators Initiative which tracks energy emissions.
- The city’s NexTrex collection program received 542 pounds of plastic bags and film in January and 425 pounds in February.
- Sustainability commissioners will tour the Hennepin Energy Recovery Center on March 30, 2023 at 1 p.m.

6. Report from Sustainability Commission Members: None

7. Agenda Items

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

Yetka and Ingvalson reported. Staff recommends that commissioners recommend that the city council not promote “no mow May” and continue to promote the city’s current resilient yards education program as part of a larger natural resources resilient initiative.

The public-input portion of the meeting was opened.

Heather Holm, 15327 Lakeshore Avenue, stated that:

- She is a pollinator conservationist and cannot understand how "no mow May" has become so popular. She considers it greenwashing which means that misleading information is disseminated to deceive members of the public about an initiative’s environmental impact.
- She provided a detailed email included in the meeting agenda packet that explains how not mowing grass does not help pollinators.
- Pollinators need more than weeds and evasive plants.
- She supports Minnetonka adopting a climate action and adaptation plan.
- She provided a brochure with information on how to create a climate-resilient landscape created by a non-profit called Wild Ones.
- She supports the city for not supporting the "no mow May" initiative.
- She invited commissioners to participate in a pollinator walk this spring.

Dr. Dennis Yockers, 3648 Hazelmoor Place, stated that:

- He agrees that the city should not support “no mow May.”
- He found no information on native landscaping in large box stores that carry lawn management products.
- Grass does not support animal life or help with climate resilience.
- A street improvement project was completed in his neighborhood. The city offered to plant grass or native plants in the restored area at the completion of the street improvement project. Only one of the 100 residences chose the native plants.
- Native plantings help with stormwater management.
- He suggested being more aggressive in educating residents on the importance of native plants. He suggested holding a workshop to show examples of resilient landscapes.

The public-input portion of the meeting was closed.

Henry appreciated the thorough review provided by staff and resident experts. He supports staff's recommendation and the city educating residents on the benefits of pollinator-friendly plants and climate-resilient landscapes.

Ingraham supports staff's recommendation to not support "No Mow May" and reinforces the science behind that decision. He likes the city offering to plant native plantings for the restored area of street improvement projects.

Henry recommended that the city offer pollinator-friendly plantings for restoration areas of every street improvement project. Ingvanson made a note of the suggestion.

Boor is glad Minnetonka is taking a more scientific approach to promote more sustainable lawns.

In response to Boor's question, Yetka explained that she is aware that the Nine Mile Creek Watershed District does soil testing to check fertilizer levels. Minnetonka is looking at creating a soil-health initiative; soil-protection ordinance; and soil-management plan for the city which may include soil testing. Anyone can get their soil tested through the UMN.

Boor encouraged anyone interested to check the Nine Mile Creek Watershed District website to apply for funding for cost-share programs to promote native landscaping.

Pattain thanked the expert residents and Yetka for providing a lot of valuable information. She learned a lot. She hopes more opportunities to educate residents will take place as questions are raised regarding why the city is not participating in "no mow May." She appreciated hearing the scientific side and would like written information to reference when speaking to residents.

Chair Golob thanked Yetka and the residents for their expertise. He applauded staff on the pollinator and resilient landscape initiatives.

Ingraham moved, second by Pattain, to recommend that the city council not promote "no mow May" and continue to promote the city's current resilient-yards-education program as part of a larger natural resources resilient Minnetonka initiative.

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

B. Restaurant Business Outreach

Ingvanson reported. Staff recommends commissioners affirm their interest with staff putting together waste reduction and energy efficiency handouts with talking points for sustainability commissioners to share with Minnetonka restaurant owners and staff.

Yetka described the city's salt-storage ordinance that requires salt to be stored in a manner to prevent it from leaking out of a storage container. Regulating the use of salt

used to prevent icy roads and parking lots may occur in the future, but, right now, the best way to minimize salt use and its impact on the environment is through education. The salt-smart campaign disseminates information on the best practices for salt use in the Thrive newsletter, which is sent to all businesses; on electronic billboards; in the natural resources bulletin; and in the Minnetonka Memo.

Boor supports the proposal. A personal invitation is more effective than an email. She supports commissioners acting as community advocates. She welcomes new ideas being added as they are developed.

Pattain confirmed with Ingvalson that commissioners would visit restaurants and provide information in person.

Henry supports the proposal. He agrees that speaking with someone in person has more of an impact. He welcomes the opportunity to advocate for the community.

Chair Golob agreed. The key to success would be to visit the restaurants during quiet times. He suggested making a few trial runs and reconvening to identify the most effective techniques used. He likes the idea.

Ingvalson explained that he would contact the county and utility providers to find out how many participants took advantage of the grants previously and compare those results with what happens this round to help gauge the success of the in-person visits.

Ingraham would like access to a spreadsheet that would show if a restaurant receives the Thrive newsletter and if the restaurant has already participated in a program. Ingvalson will look into what information he is able to obtain.

Boor asked if a commissioner could refer an interested party to a city staff member who could assist walking them through the application process. Ingvalson answered in the affirmative. Commissioners would be provided talking points and instructions on the next steps.

Henry suggested commissioners be given identification to wear during the restaurant visits. Ingvalson and Chair Golob agreed.

Chair Golob felt this would be well worth the amount of time spent on it. It could be extremely beneficial for members of the business community. It is part of the energy action plan. This is a positive action to take for the city and the planet.

Boor moved, second by Henry, to recommend that the city council move forward with putting together waste reduction and energy efficiency handouts with talking points for sustainability commissioners to share with Minnetonka restaurant owners and staff.

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

8. Other Business

9. Adjournment

Boor moved, second by Pattain, to adjourn the meeting at 8:15 p.m. Motion was carried unanimously.

By: _____
Lois T. Mason
Planning Secretary