

**Minnetonka Sustainability Commission
Minutes**

Sept. 26, 2023

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, Brian Golob, Matt Henry, Diane Meier and Amanda Norman were present. Molly Birr, David Ingraham and Ashley Pattain were absent.

Staff present: Community Development Director Julie Wischnack, Staff Liaison Drew Ingvalson and Natural Resources Manager Leslie Yetka.

3. Approval of the Agenda

Norman moved, second by Henry, to approve the agenda as submitted with additional comments provided in the change memo dated Sept. 26, 2023.

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

4. Approval of Sustainability Commission July 11, 2023 Meeting Minutes

Henry moved, second by Avalos, to approve the minutes as submitted.

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

5. Report from Staff

A. Climate Action and Adaptation Plan

Ingvalson reported that the climate action and adaptation plan information is posted on the city's website at minnetonkamatters.com. Staff has held several pop-up events; focus groups with non-profit organizations and apartment residents; and an open house to receive feedback from the public. The survey received 773 responses. Eighty-three percent of the respondents are homeowners.

B. Everything Electric Event Recap

Ingvalson reported that the everything-electric event was held at the Minnetonka Farmer's Market at Ridgedale Commons Park. Attendees requested more written information on types of electric vehicles and lawn equipment.

Norman suggested including information on heat pumps at the next everything-electric event.

Anderson suggested adding solar contractors and homeowners with solar panels at the next one.

Henry suggested providing information on solar gardens at the next everything-electric event.

Ingvalson said that attendance was comparable to the last event. Attendance may have been lower due to the weather and the event being held on the first day of school.

C. On-Site Solar Energy Event Update

Ingvalson reported that the city will host an on-site solar energy event in 2024.

D. Community Solar Garden Promotion

Ingvalson reported that staff has been talking to Cooperative Energy Futures, which is a business that rents roofs for community solar gardens. A Greencorp member will work with staff to identify interested participants and make community solar garden sign-up easier for residents.

E. No-Cost Energy Audit Promotion

Ingvalson reported that staff and a Greencorp member will be promoting the no-cost-energy audits for non-profits, multi-family-residential buildings and single-family-residential homeowners.

F. Ambassador Events: Winter Farmers Markets

Ingvalson reported that commissioners may now sign up for ambassador events at the winter farmer's market.

G. 2024 Sustainability Commission Work Plan

Ingvalson reported that the 2023 work plan is currently being created to provide a roadmap for next year's work. Commissioners are encouraged to provide recommendations to include in the work plan and sign up for a short conversation with Ingvalson to collect ideas.

H. Sustainable Minnetonka Awards Update

Ingvalson reported that the time period to receive applications for the Sustainable Minnetonka Awards will be extended to allow more time to advertise and encourage possible applicants. More information is available on the sustainable Minnetonka webpage at minnetonkamn.gov/our-city/sustainable-minnetonka.

I. Restaurant Outreach Update

Ingvalson reported that there are 60 restaurants still available for a sustainability commissioner to provide outreach information.

Chair Golob met with a restaurant manager who said that decisions for the restaurant would need to be made by the corporate representative. He found that a good time to visit a restaurant is between 2 p.m. and 4 p.m. on a weekday.

6. Report from Sustainability Commission Members

Meier introduced herself. She is a climate-for-health ambassador working to accelerate action to address negative health effects created by drought, flooding and wildfires. Her family has electric vehicles; is planning on using a heat pump for air conditioning; has solar panels on their roof; and participates in a solar community. She and her husband teach a community solar class. She would like Minnetonka to collaborate with neighboring communities as well as Hennepin County to further sustainable goals.

Ingvalson announced that Ingraham resigned from the commission. Chair Golob stated that the commission will miss Ingraham's insight and critical-thinking skills.

Norman introduced herself. She and her husband own an energy-data-management company. She is a huge supporter of everything sustainable. She is certified by the International Society of Sustainability Professionals as a Sustainability Excellent Associate. She is interested in providing more education to the public on sustainable solutions and making them easier for folks to utilize. She appreciated commissioners' efforts and being part of the commission.

Chair Golob welcomed Meier and Norman to the commission.

7. Agenda Items

A. Hennepin County Presentation

Chair Golob introduced the item and called for the staff report.

Ingvalson introduced Hennepin County Director of Climate and Resiliency Diana Chaman Salas and Hennepin County Supervising Environmentalist Carolyn Collopy. Staff recommended commissioners listen to the presentation; ask questions regarding the county's plans, programs and initiatives; and consider partnership opportunities and ways to share information with the Minnetonka community.

Ms. Chaman Salas gave a presentation on Hennepin County's climate-action strategy.

Henry asked what initiatives would be used to meet the goals. Ms. Chaman Salas answered that land use changes; expansion of transit; and travel demand management, including car-sharing services and e-bikes, would be utilized. She will share the report with staff to share with commissioners and the public. Employees being able to work remotely creates the largest reduction in emissions. The use of e-vehicles and expanding affordable housing near mobility hubs are also initiatives being implemented to reduce emissions.

In response to Henry's question, Ms. Chaman Salas explained that Hennepin County connects cities with resources to learn the best practices for trees and provides access to grants for tree removal and planting. Hennepin County also utilizes Greencorp members to plant trees and remove them when necessary. Hennepin County's greenhouse emissions dashboard is scheduled to become public in the future.

Ms. Collopy gave a presentation on Hennepin County's zero-waste plan.

In response to Avalos's question, Ms. Collopy explained that the current idea is for all packaging producers to pay a fee based on how much packaging each contributes. Hennepin County has been working with other states with similar laws already in place to create a bill to introduce during Minnesota's next legislative session. Avalos agrees that it makes sense for the producers to share responsibility. Ms. Collopy noted that there are already similar laws in place for producers of paint and batteries.

In response to Anderson's question, Ms. Collopy explained that Hennepin County offers grants to businesses and non-profit organizations. Hennepin County provides small businesses and non-profit organizations with free recycling and organic containers. Hennepin County awards waste-prevention grants for businesses to purchase new equipment needed to reduce waste. One example is a tortilla-producing company that used a grant to purchase equipment to allow imperfect tortillas to be sent back to the beginning of the tortilla-making process instead of being thrown away. The grants have also been used by food-rescue organizations to purchase trucks and refrigeration and by businesses to switch to reusable service ware. There are also grants available for schools and multi-family residential properties.

Henry asked if the stuff burned at the recovery center is considered waste. Ms. Collopy answered affirmatively. Just under half of the waste is burned at the Hennepin Energy Recovery Center and the rest goes to a landfill.

Ms. Collopy stated that:

- Three cities in Hennepin County have adopted policies that require businesses to use bags that are reusable, recyclable or compostable.
- A city may create a policy to deal with construction and demolition waste.
- A city requiring organized collecting of garbage decreases the amount of emissions; decreases wear and tear on roads; and typically results in a

decrease in the rate. In some cities, supporting these types of proposals has caused councilmembers to lose the next election. It would be helpful if the state would make it easier for a city to go through the process of requiring sustainable practices.

- Plymouth negotiated with Republic garbage hauling to provide organics recycling. Every Plymouth resident will pay the same rate for organic recycling and regular recycling whether the resident does or does not utilize organic recycling or regular recycling.

Chair Golob thought a resident who delivers one's organic scraps to the compost collection at public works should not have to pay for organics recycling pick up.

Chair Golob noted that switching from open-hauler-garbage collection to organized collection for a city is a very contentious issue for many residents. Ms. Collopy agreed. She would like the state to make it an easier process.

In response to Chair Golob's question, Ms. Collopy said that Hennepin County is looking into the feasibility of utilizing an anaerobic digester for food waste.

Anderson said that he has a large vegetable garden that utilizes all food waste. His household would use the organics recycling for tissues only.

In response to Meier's question, Ms. Collopy stated that fees for the use of bags have resulted in a large reduction in bag use.

The public input portion of the meeting was opened and closed.

Chair Golob thanked the speakers for their time and expertise.

B. Invasive Species

Chair Golob introduced the item and called for the staff report.

Yetka reported. Staff recommends commissioners listen to the presentation; provide feedback; and discuss ways commissioners can share information and opportunities with the Minnetonka community.

Avalos asked if it would be possible to have samples of the invasive species preserved in resin to use to educate residents. Yetka answered affirmatively. Natural resources staff have emerald ash bores preserved in resin that are used at booths at the city open house and farmer's market.

Meier asked if it is too late to treat an elm tree to prevent emerald ash bore from killing the tree. Yetka explained that the treatment is not a guarantee the tree will survive, but it remains effective when done every two to three years and must continue being done until all of the emerald ash borer die off in the area.

The public input portion of the meeting was opened and closed.

C. Resilient Minnetonka/Watershed District Grants

Chair Golob introduced the item and called for the staff report.

Yetka reported. Staff recommends commissioners listen to the presentation; provide feedback; and discuss ways commissioners can share information and opportunities with the Minnetonka community.

Henry suggested organizing volunteers to remove buckthorn from private properties. Yetka agreed that would be beneficial. There is a residential buckthorn pickup provided by the city.

Chair Golob thanked Yetka for her presentations and for answering questions.

The public input portion of the meeting was opened and closed.

D. One-Stop-Efficiency-Shop Campaign

Chair Golob introduced the item and called for the staff report.

Ingvalson reported. Staff recommends commissioners approve the proposed campaign dates and materials.

Anderson suggested clarifying that there is no cost for the visit and installation of a free smart thermostat may be scheduled for a future date. Ingvalson agreed.

The public input portion of the meeting was opened and closed.

Norman suggested rephrasing the description from “audit” to “consultation” or a similar, friendlier word.

Henry moved, second by Norman, to approve the proposed campaign dates and materials with a change to the word “audit” to a word more inviting and friendly.

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

8. Other Business

9. Adjournment

Norman moved, second by Anderson, to adjourn the meeting at 9:50 p.m. Motion carried unanimously.

By: _____
Lois T. Mason
Planning Secretary