

**Unapproved  
Minnetonka Sustainability Commission  
Minutes**

**Nov. 21, 2023**

**1. Call to Order**

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

**2. Roll Call**

Sustainability commissioners Justin Anderson, Brian Golob, Matt Henry, Diane Meier, Amanda Norman and Ashley Pattain were present. Edwin Avalos and Molly Birr were absent.

Staff present: City Planner Loren Gordon, Staff Liaison Drew Ingvalson, Natural Resources Manager Leslie Yetka and Minnesota GreenCorps Member Clare Grilley.

Presenters Lydia Major and Becky Alexander from LHB and Abby Finis from Local Climate Solutions attended the meeting.

**3. Approval of the Agenda**

Henry moved, second by Norman, to approve the agenda as submitted with additional information on the community survey and draft actions provided in the change memo dated Nov. 21, 2023.

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

**4. Approval of Sustainability Commission Sept. 26, 2021 Meeting Minutes**

Meier moved, second by Norman, to approve the minutes as submitted.

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

**5. Agenda Items**

**A. Climate Action and Adaptation Plan Presentation**

Ingvalson introduced Lydia Major and Becky Alexander from LHB and Abby Finis from Local Climate Solutions who gave a presentation on the climate action and adaptation plan. The presentation covered the project's schedule and engagement; greenhouse gas goals; strategy development; and next steps.

Ms. Alexander stated that the online survey responses are overwhelmingly positive. The proposed greenhouse gas goals are:

- To reduce 2018-community-wide-greenhouse-gas-emission levels by 66 percent per person by 2030 and achieve net-zero-greenhouse-gas emissions by 2050.
- All new buildings to be electric and as energy efficient as possible.
- To have energy-efficient retrofits and electrification for one out of every four buildings by 2030.
- For there to be no use of fossil fuels in buildings by 2050.
- Electricity to be carbon free by 2040.
- Eliminate two out of every five vehicle trips by 2030.
- By 2030, one out five vehicles to be electric.
- All vehicles to create zero emissions by 2050.
- Each person cut their waste by 1.2 pounds per day and 75 percent of waste to be recycled or composted by 2030.
- By 2050, 90 percent of waste to be recycled or composted.

Ms. Finis provided a list of possible remedies.

Henry supports stricter building codes for new construction and providing easy-to-understand instructions on how to implement emission-reducing substitutes like a heat pump.

Chair Golob likes the information clearly laid out with graphics. He is concerned that delaying mowing may be counterproductive and cause more emissions than routinely maintaining a lawn.

Meier suggested the city provide motivation for individuals to purchase and utilize electric vehicles by providing more electric-vehicle chargers; requiring businesses to complete an energy-smart assessment; and enlisting neighborhood watch leaders to attend sustainability commission meetings and share the information learned with their neighbors.

Norman likes the clear and concise organization of the complex information. Page five is a little overwhelming. She suggested material be shared with teachers and staff in schools including cafeteria and janitorial staff. The information provided in the hyperlinks is amazing. A hyperlink may be used to track and show how far the city is to meeting a goal. She appreciates the great work.

Pattain appreciates the hard work put into the plan. She found it very inviting to look at and read. She noted that it would make a large impact if employers would allow workers to work remotely at least two days a week. Reducing garbage or refuse would have less of an impact, but would be easier to achieve. She does organics recycling. She would like it to be more financially accessible to residents at home. She appreciates the thought put into determining what needs to happen and outlining how it could be done.

Chair Golob strongly supports encouraging employers to allow employees to work from home to decrease emissions.

Meier thought a work group with other cities would be beneficial to discuss implementation of some of the goals. Chair Golob agreed.

Henry supports making single-use plastics compostable.

Ms. Finis continued the presentation and provided information on climate-ready businesses and climate-friendly properties.

Chair Golob suggested changing “back-up power” to “back-up commercial generator.” The checklist is an excellent summary of useful information. The links are helpful and the information is well laid out.

Norman suggested businesses track the amount of time vehicles spend parked idling in loading docks.

Ms. Finis continued the presentation focusing on strategies a city could use to reduce greenhouse gas and promote climate adaptation and resilience.

Henry supports specific language to require a reduction in salt use on roads.

In response to Henry’s question, Ms. Finis provided Ann Arbor Michigan as a good example of a website that encourages residents to implement strategies to reduce greenhouse gases.

Henry suggested doing research to see if cloud seeding and other practices being done in one state would impact rain in other states.

Norman found the list very helpful. She suggested tying the strategies to a data-feedback system to set priorities based on possible impact. It would be nice to see the strategies broken down by season to know when to do each strategy. She appreciates the amazing work done so far.

Ms. Finis shared next steps. Ingvalson invited commissioners to send any additional comments to him within a week’s time.

Chair Golob opened the public input portion of the meeting. No one chose to speak. The public input portion of the meeting was closed.

Chair Golob thanked the presenters.

## **B. Salt Reduction Best Practices for Winter Maintenance**

Yetka reported.

Meier suggested that the city provide sand for residents to utilize for slippery sidewalks. Yetka supports that idea.

Henry confirmed with Yetka that the city tracks salt use for roads. The use of salt does depend on the weather. The winter months are warming which will create more freeze-thaw cycles each year. Dealing with that will need to be addressed.

In response to Henry's question, Yetka answered that Minnetonka's only body of water that meets the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency's (MNPCA) standards of being impaired by chloride is Minnehaha Creek. A body of water must exceed the MNPCA's standards for at least three years to be considered impaired. Crane Lake has a high chloride level that is close to exceeding the standard. There is funding budgeted in 2026 to explore opportunities for mitigating the chloride entering Crane Lake from the surrounding paved areas. Henry supports posting the chloride levels on the sustainability website. Yetka stated that the watershed districts report on the water quality of each body of water. The city's website could provide links to that information. Henry would like a snapshot of Minnetonka's water bodies on Minnetonka's website with links to additional information. Yetka noted that as lakes turn over and discharge downstream, salt is transported down to the Mississippi River and the Gulf. Henry would like the public to be made aware of an overall increase in chloride levels.

In response to Henry's question, Yetka explained that salt from water softeners discharges into the sanitary-sewer system. Water-treatment plants do not remove salt from the discharge which continues to flow into a river and downstream. An on-demand-water softener only runs when needed and contributes less salt than older water softeners. Reverse osmosis is the only way to remove salt from water. Henry and Yetka support encouraging residents to utilize on-demand water softeners.

Chair Golob suggested commissioners provide literature to residents on salt-use reduction at the upcoming farmer's markets. Yetka stated that natural resources staff have flyers and salt cups that they hand out at the city open house that commissioners are welcome to utilize.

In response to Henry's question, Yetka explained that Eden Prairie has a centralized water-treatment system.

Henry would like the city to coerce or reward businesses for reducing salt usage on parking lots. Yetka explained that legislation has been introduced at the state level to limit liability for slip and fall cases that occur at a location that uses salt appropriately, but the legislation has not passed. Minnetonka City Council approved an ordinance that requires proper salt storage. Proper salt storage is also required by the state stormwater permit.

Henry supports the city council amending policy 11.17 to include salt as a pollutant and pledging to limit salt use while maintaining public safety.

In response to Henry's question, Yetka explained that sodium chloride deposited on a street will wash down a storm drain. Public works staff will sweep up salt piles and store it to be reused. Homeowners may call public works to have them retrieve a pile of salt.

Yetka invited those interested to attend the annual salt symposium held on-line every year in August that covers chloride best practices and new technologies.

Yetka stated that a public service announcement will be displayed on an electronic, dynamic sign in Minnetonka in December to promote smart-salting practices.

Pattain enjoyed the presentation and learned a lot. She looks forward to sharing that information with residents at the farmer's market.

Norman stated that Japan uses reclaimed-heated-water bubblers to deice the roads. She would be interested in finding out the cost to implement that system. Anderson supports building one and testing it.

Chair Golob noted that one teaspoon of salt contaminates five gallons of water. He thanked Yetka for the presentation.

Chair Golob opened the public input portion of the meeting. No one chose to speak. The public input portion of the meeting was closed.

### **C. 2023 Work Plan**

Ingvalson reported. Staff recommend commissioners recommend approval of the 2023 work plan to the city council.

Anderson recommended putting an empty bullet-point circle in front of incomplete tasks and a solid bullet-point circle in front of completed tasks to help differentiate them from each other.

Chair Golob confirmed with Ingvalson that the commission did not complete choosing webinar topics in 2023. Ingvalson will add that task to the 2024 work plan.

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

Henry moved, second by Anderson, to recommend that the city council approve the 2023 work plan. Anderson, Henry, Meier, Norman, Pattain and Golob voted yes. Avalos and Birr were absent. Motion carried.

### **D. 2024 Work Plan**

Ingvalson reported. Staff recommend commissioners provide recommendations to include in the work plan, discuss ideas and recommend approval of the 2024 work plan to the city council.

Chair Golob suggested changing “wastewater-treatment center” to “wastewater-treatment facility.”

Anderson suggested hosting an e-waste drop-off event on a specific day. Ingvalson will research the possibility of collaborating with Hennepin County for an e-waste drop-off event to be held in 2025. The city is currently working with Hennepin County on a joint building materials drop-off event.

Henry would like to promote the sustainability webpage to residents by providing a QR code in a brochure and Minnetonka Memo and making the webpage easier to navigate. Ingvalson will work with communications staff to consider ways to advertise the sustainability page.

Norman suggested hosting a resident-focus group to collect real-time feedback on the functionality of the sustainability webpage.

Ingvalson noted that a tour of public works is planned for the third quarter of 2024 and would provide an opportunity for commissioners to ask questions regarding salt use on roads and explore what could be changed to the salt-use policy. He will look at scheduling the tour earlier in the year.

Henry suggested inviting a salt specialist from the MNPCA to provide a presentation on best-salt practices.

Meier found the sustainability webpage easy to navigate. She suggested providing a link on the city’s home page to the climate action and adaptation plan and sustainability page. Ingvalson explained that he recently spoke with communications staff who mentioned that would be included as part of a larger, cohesive communications plan being developed.

Henry suggested having a speaker from the Center for Energy and the Environment present to the commission on details regarding energy audits for businesses.

Henry suggested touring a passive house, windfarm and nuclear power plant.

Anderson supports touring the Prairie Island Nuclear Plant.

Ingvalson will include those suggestions on a list that will be referenced for 2024 and future years and conduct a vote early in 2024 to prioritize the tour locations.

Ingvalson received unanimous confirmation from commissioners in support of modifying the 2024 work plan to include reviewing ways to improve the sustainable Minnetonka webpage; moving up the tour of public works to the second quarter; scheduling a presentation from public works staff regarding salt use; adding a presentation from Hennepin County staff on e-waste; and choosing webinar topics as well as the tours and educational opportunities already included.

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

Pattain moved, second by Meier, to recommend that the city council approve the 2024 work plan with changes to include considering ways to improve the sustainable Minnetonka webpage; scheduling the public works tour earlier in 2024; scheduling a presentation from public works staff on salt use; adding a presentation from Hennepin County staff on e-waste; and choosing webinar topics. Anderson, Henry, Meier, Norman, Pattain and Golob voted yes. Avalos and Birr were absent. Motion carried.

## 6. Report from Staff

Ingvalson gave the staff report:

- Energy Smart did receive submittals, but has not shared the results yet. MNimize did not have any sign ups follow-up with a visit.
- The one-stop-efficiency shop made 23-lighting assessments and installed 13-smart thermostats.
- The Sustainable Minnetonka Awards applications will be reviewed at the next planning commission meeting.
- The 2024 sustainability commission meeting dates will be Jan. 16th, March 19th, May 21st, July 23rd, Sept. 17th and Nov. 12th.

Ingvalson introduced Minnesota GreenCorps Member Clare Grilley. Grilley explained that she will be working with staff until August 2024 on multiple items including waste reduction, recycling and organics management. She has been attending a lot of events. She will be at the winter farmer's market on Dec. 9, 2023. She studied environmental science policy management and graduated from the UMN. She will continue to attend the sustainability commission meetings. Ingvalson stated that Grilley has been working on the Next Steps program and on promoting organics recycling in multi-family-residential buildings. Commissioners welcomed Grilley.

## 7. Report from Commissioners

Meier attended an international climate and health conference that works to find solutions for populations dealing with food insecurities, hurricanes and a shortage of healthcare workers.

Chair Golob stated that Pattain, Meier and Norman participated in the small-business blitz and received a lot of interest from business owners when they learned that the business would receive help and a rebate.

## 8. Other Business: None

## 9. Adjournment

Meier moved, second by Anderson, to adjourn the meeting at 9:42 p.m. Motion carried unanimously.

By: \_\_\_\_\_  
Lois T. Mason  
Planning Secretary