

**Minnetonka Sustainability Commission  
Virtual Meeting  
Minutes**

**July 13, 2021**

**1. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m.

**2. Roll Call**

Sustainability Commissioners Justin Anderson, Edwin Avalos, Brian Golob, Matt Henry, David Ingraham, Harapanahalli Muralidhara, Megan Park, and Ashley Pattain were present. Greta Beck was absent.

Staff present: Community Development Director Julie Wischnack, City Planner Loren Gordon, Staff Liaison Drew Ingvalson, Assistant City Planner Susan Thomas, Natural Resources Manager Leslie Yetka, and IT Assistant Joona Sundstrom.

**3. Approval of the Agenda**

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

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

**4. Approval of Sustainability Commission Meeting Minutes**

Golob moved, second by Park, to approve the May 11, 2021 sustainability commission minutes as submitted.

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

**5. Report from Staff**

Ingvalson reported that Summerfest was canceled due to rain, so an ambassador from the sustainability commission was unable to attend that event. Park and Pattain attended the Farmer's Market on June 29, 2021. The next ambassador event will be the Farmer's Market on July 27, 2021.

Ingvalson reported that the UMN Bee Lab was voted the top learning opportunity by commissioners with stormwater/wetlands and the special waste facility coming in second and third. He is working on scheduling a presentation by the UMN Bee Lab representatives.

Ingvalson presented the commission's work plan for the second and third quarters of 2021. The commission has already completed many tasks. He reviewed the

commission's remaining goals for 2021 including updating the energy action plan; implementing a process to recognize residents and businesses for utilizing sustainable practices; recommending programs and events that could enhance the city's energy action plan; exploring the opportunity for the city to host or attend an electric-vehicle-ride-and-drive event; and exploring the opportunity for the city to host a solar-energy event.

Commissioners are invited to a joint city council and boards and commissions dinner on July 21, 2021 at 6 p.m.

The next sustainability commission meeting is scheduled to be held on Sept. 14, 2021.

## **6. Report from Sustainability Commission Members**

Henry reported that the Bird Wing house was relocated to Polymeth Park.

Golob announced that there would be an electric vehicle event called Plugged In on Sept. 9, 2021 at 5:30 p.m. at Wayzata City Hall.

Park reported that there was a good crowd at the Farmer's Market on June 29, 2021. The free LED lightbulbs were a huge hit. Pattain, Ingvalson, and Park handed out information on home energy squad visits, adopting a storm drain program, and emerald ash borer eradication efforts. She enjoyed meeting and talking with visitors.

Anderson reported that LEGO announced that it is working on being able to make bricks and elements out of plastic soda and water bottles.

## **7. Agenda Items**

### **A. Sustainability Commission Ambassador Handouts**

Ingvalson reported. He recommended commissioners discuss the handouts: Home Energy Squad, Support Renewable Energy, Adopt-A-Drain, Slowing the Spread of Emerald Ash Borer, and Organics Recycling Guide.

In response to Anderson's question, Wischnack answered that Randy's Sanitation collects organic recycling items.

Avalos asked what is included with the Home Energy Squad visit. Wischnack had one done at her house and said that she had weather stripping added around a door, diffusers added to her faucets, an energy-saving blanket wrapped around her water heater, and was provided LED light bulbs. She thought it was a good deal at \$100. It is now being offered for \$50.

Avalos asked if residents are advised not to plant ash trees. Yetka answered in the affirmative. There are no known ash species resistant to emerald ash borers.

Golob said that his home visit by the Home Energy Squad was great. The people who did his visit were very thorough and it was well worth it.

Pattain stated that her garbage hauler is Randy's Sanitation and she utilizes organic recycling. She said that it is very easy and encourages others to try it.

Golob thought the Hennepin County handout could use more information on appropriate compost containers and the best use of compost as a good soil conditioner. Wischnack said that the Hennepin County website provides a great deal more information on composting and organics recycling. Drew noted that the link to the website is included in the handout.

## **B. Tree Protection Ordinance Review**

Ingvolson, Wischnack, Yetka and Gordon reported. They recommended commissioners provide comments on the city's proposed tree ordinance.

When commissioners were asked to rate from one to ten, with one being least and ten being most, how impactful he or she believes the city tree policies and regulations are in preserving trees in the community the answers ranged from seven to nine and the average was eight.

When commissioners were asked what his or her takeaway was when reviewing the community-wide survey results, commissioners were surprised that 79 percent of respondents were "not too concerned" or "not at all concerned" with the city's natural amenities of wetlands, parks, and forested areas.

When commissioners were asked if he or she is familiar with the city's Plant Pest Program and efforts in managing tree diseases, four out of five commissioners knew of the annual tree sale. Two out of five commissioners were aware of the Plant Pest Program. Staff will follow up with a commissioner's idea to partner with local businesses to advertise the events.

Ingvolson asked commissioners to comment on what he or she considers to be most important when it comes to tree protection between the choices of limiting tree removal, maintaining the existing tree canopy, and expanding the tree canopy.

Henry stated that they are all related. Limiting tree removal maintains the existing tree canopy which is an important piece. It is hard to replace a 100-year-old tree, so limiting tree removal is probably the most important.

Golob agreed with Henry.

When commissioners were asked what he or she believes are the greatest concerns relating to trees and tree canopies in the community, Anderson stated that he is concerned with urbanization, an increase in building footprint size, and a decrease in green space.

Muralidhara encouraged the planting of more trees. The temperature is gradually increasing which increases the photosynthesis rate. The water level will drop. He was concerned with how increasing density would impact that.

Ingraham felt that development and climate change are primary concerns. Staff's proposals in the June 2020 study session had good ideas including creating removal maximums on high-priority trees and an idea to extend tree removal guidelines into residential properties that are not undergoing major development. He felt some oversight of a 100-year old, significant tree located on a developed property might be beneficial.

When asked if commissioners felt tree replacement of smaller trees would be an appropriate strategy or if the ordinance should limit the removal of smaller trees, Ingraham felt that it would be reasonable for small trees to be removed and replaced somewhere else.

Pattain agreed with Ingraham. As long as the small tree would be replaced, then it would be appropriate for it to be removed.

When commissioners were asked if he or she believes redevelopment projects should have tree removal limits:

- Pattain felt that there should be removal limits for redevelopment. It would be appropriate for the city to have some consideration regarding whether a tree should be removed.
- Avalos agreed that there should be tree-removal limits for redevelopment projects, but was interested in hearing the reasoning behind opposing views.
- Anderson answered affirmatively. There may be large parcels with very old trees being redeveloped. There should be limits if there is a chance that a large number of significant, old trees would be removed.
- Park was unsure removal limits would be needed. She felt that there could be a balance struck with tree removal limits or the city could provide guidance when it comes to redevelopment. Redevelopment is a healthy part of building a community in a city. Keeping the current tree canopy intact is important, but could be done while creating a better community.
- Henry was impressed with developers who proposed redevelopments that positioned buildings to preserve high-priority trees. He felt that there could be a little more protection of trees in redevelopments than what exists now, but he did not want to go to the extreme. Property owners already typically work to preserve trees which increase a property's value.

Ingvalson asked commissioners if the city should provide incentives to encourage single-family residential property owners to plant more trees, use restrictions to limit tree removal, or take a neutral stance on tree removal for a single-family residential property.

Anderson thought putting restrictions on homeowners may seem too restrictive. He supports providing incentives to homeowners to increase the tree canopy. He could see that being very effective.

Park agreed with Anderson. Some people automatically fight when given a restriction. Positive reinforcement with an incentive would be the way to go.

Ingvalson asked if commissioners could think of any other information which may help the city council's discussion on the tree protection ordinance.

Henry suggested trying to track the impact of programs such as the tree sale on the increase it had on the tree canopy if possible.

Park thought an additional handout with a list of the dates of community events like the plant sale and the number of plants that were sold to show the potential positive impact each event had would be helpful.

Avalos would appreciate details on the circumstances that required some properties being developed to remove a large percentage of the trees and what was done to mitigate tree removal.

Anderson has seen beautiful results when an evasive species, such as buckthorn, was removed. The city can definitely keep working on the buckthorn information program and introduce incentives for homeowners to remove buckthorn from their yards, especially if the property borders a forested area.

Ingvalson said that staff will submit commissioners' comments to the planning commission who will make a recommendation to the city council regarding the tree protection ordinance. Ingvalson will report back to sustainability commissioners with the results.

### **C. Chair and Vice-Chair Election**

Ingvalson reported. He recommended that the sustainability commission elect a commissioner to serve as chair and one to serve as vice-chair of the sustainability commission for the remainder of 2021.

Golob introduced himself and stated that he would be honored to serve as chair of the sustainability commission.

In a unanimous decision of those present, Golob was elected to serve as chair of the sustainability commission for the remainder of 2021.

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

Pattain introduced herself and stated that she would appreciate the opportunity to serve as vice-chair of the sustainability commission.

In a unanimous decision of those present, Pattain was elected to serve as vice-chair of the sustainability commission for the remainder of 2021.

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

## 8. Other Business

Ingvalson reported that:

- The next sustainability commission meeting is scheduled for Sept. 14, 2021.
- The next ambassador event will be the Farmer's Market on July 27, 2021.
- Staff will be looking into the possibility of the city hosting a solar event and scheduling a learning opportunity for commissioners presented by representatives of the UMN Bee Lab.
- The topic of the August Sustainable Minnetonka Webinar will focus on electric vehicles and the webinar in September will provide information on electric vehicle chargers.

## 9. Adjournment

Henry moved, second by Ingraham, to adjourn the meeting at 8:30 p.m. Motion carried unanimously by those present.

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