



**NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION AGENDA
MENDOTA HEIGHTS CITY HALL
COUNCIL CHAMBERS**

**Wednesday, March 8, 2023
6:00 p.m.**

- 1. Call to Order**
- 2. Roll Call**
- 3. Adopt Agenda**
- 4. Approval of Minutes**
 - a. Approve meeting minutes from the February 8, 2023 Natural Resources Commission Meeting
- 5. Citizen Comment Period (for items not on the agenda)**
- 6. New Business**
 - a. Review updated city website
 - b. Green Steps Update
 - c. Pollinator Awareness Month
 - d. Earth and Arbor Day Event
- 7. Old Business**
 - a. Commission Processes and Procedures
 - b. Committee Reports – Workplan
 - Ordinance and Policy Development
 - Education and Outreach
 - Urban Forestry
 - Green Steps
 - Sustainability
- 8. Staff Announcements**
- 9. Commission Comments**
- 10. Adjourn**

**CITY OF MENDOTA HEIGHTS
NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION
Wednesday, February 8, 2023- 6:00 P.M.
Mendota Heights City Hall-Council Chambers
DRAFT Minutes**

The regular meeting of the Mendota Heights Natural Resources Commission was held on Wednesday, February 8, 2023, at Mendota Heights City Hall; 1101 Victoria Curve.

1. Call to Order

Chair Swank called the meeting to order at 6:00pm.

2. Roll Call

Coordinator Spreiter called the roll. Commissioners present: Fahnhorst, McCaslin, Husbands, Swank, Tupper, Stein and Student Commissioner Byrnes. Commissioners Absent: Commissioner Quick. Staff present: Natural Resources Coordinator Krista Spreiter, Assistant City Administrator Kelly Torkelson, Parks and Recreation Manager Meredith Lawrence, Recycling Coordinator Courtney Selstad.

3. Approval of the Agenda

Motion to approve the agenda by Stein, second by Fahnhorst.

Commissioner Husbands shared that she had a comment from a resident about the downside of No Mow May and wondered if the item could be added to the agenda.

Assistant City Administrator shared that the commission is able to add items to the agenda, however staff do not have materials prepared for a conversation about Now Mow May at this meeting. Staff are planning to bring the item to a future meeting before the May meeting.

Commissioner Husbands requested to bring the item to the March meeting. Commissioner husbands sought clarification about the role of the commission in advising the city council.

Assistant City Administrator confirmed that the Natural Resources Commission is an advisory commission, but the city council gives direction about what they would like to commission to advise on.

Motion passed 6-0.

4. Approval of the Minutes

- a. Approve meeting minutes from the February 8, 2023 Natural Resources Commission Meeting.

*Motion to approved the minutes by Fahnhorst, seconded by McCaslin
Motion passed 6-0*

5. Citizen Comment Period

Chair Swank invited residents to come to attend the Natural Resources Commission meeting and to share thoughts with the commission. No one came forward for comment.

6. New Business

a. 2023 Commission Position Appointments

Assistant City Administrator shared that this is an annual action that is required within the Natural Resources Commission Bylaws.

Chair Swank said that she was open to serving as chair for another year, but thought that other should share in future years.

Motion by Fahnhorst for Commissioner Swank to continue as chair, second by Commissioner Stein.

Motion passes 6-0

Motion by Commissioner Stein for Commissioner Tupper to serve as vice chair, second by Commissioner Swank

Motion passes 6-0

b. Tree Sale Update

Coordinator Spreiter shared an update on the upcoming Spring Tree Sale. The city is partnering with Tree Trust for the sale. The city was able to provide twice as many trees this year that will be available for purchase. Tree Trust will be there to help load and the trees are able to be loaded into regular vehicles. Coordinator Spreiter reviewed the varieties of trees that will be available.

Commissioner Husbands asked about systemic pesticides in the trees that are being provided. Coordinator Spreiter has confirmed with Tree Trust that all of the trees are neonicotinoids free.

Commissioner Fahnhorst shared that he was excited about both the variety of trees and the number of trees that are available through the program.

Commissioner Stein asked how many of the species that are being included are native species. Coordinator Spreiter shared that all of the species are native, but some are hybrid native- technically making them not native. But some of them are pure native varieties.

c. Earth Day and Arbor Day Planning

Coordinator Spreiter shared an update that the city is hosting an annual Earth and Arbor Day Event. The event will take place on Friday April 28 and 29 and offering a citywide clean up event, educational opportunities and giveaways. Staff is looking for additional ideas or offerings that could be included in the event.

Vice Chair Tupper asked about the timeline for promotion and advertising. Coordinator Spreiter shared that we try to start promotion as soon as we have final details.

Commissioner Husbands asked about if there were vendors that we were working with and asked about what details still needed to be finalized. Coordinator Spreiter talked about how staff have looked at partnering with the raptor center, ordering tree seedlings for a giveaway, or having a speaker come in for the event. Staff would have to look into and confirm if these partners would be available. Commissioner Husbands

thought that the seedling giveaway initiative would be a great feature as a part of the Tree City initiative. Commissioner Husbands asked for clarification if the city is now technically a tree city.

Coordinator Spreiter confirmed that the city has completed all the steps for recognition, but it has not been formally approved by the program yet. Commissioner Husbands asked if we could have this be an announcement of the city's status as tree city.

Coordinator Spreiter clarified that it would depend how long the review of the city's profile takes to determine if we would officially be recognized in time for this event.

Chair Swank shared that it could be a good way to share that we have completed all the steps even if we are not officially recognized yet. She also shared that she thought the raptor center would be a great partner as well.

Commissioner Stein asked about the planting by the Mendota Heights sign, some kind of project around that would be a good thing to incorporate. It is nearby Commissioner Byrnes school which is a good connection with the commission.

Commissioner Tupper asked if the parks commission would be looking at this as well or if it was just the Natural Resource Commission that was being reached out. She wondered if the education subcommittee would be able to review and bring some ideas to discuss at the March meeting.

Staff will bring an update to a future meeting.

- d. Staff update: Recycling Coordinator
Assistant City Administrator introduced Courtney Selstad to the Commission. Recycling Coordinator Selstad reviewed her background and what she is working on in the city. Commissioners welcomed Courtney to the city.

7. Old Business

- a. Committee Appointments
Coordinator Spreiter reviewed the proposed committee appointments for the commissioners.

Assistant City Administrator added clarification that Student Commissioner Byrnes is not a voting member of the commission so her committee having four commissioners serving does not create a quorum at the committee.

Commissioner Husbands requested that staff refer to the goals with the content for clarification on what is being reviewed. Regarding the forestry committee could be helpful in the planning for Arbor Day and Earth Day as well.

Commissioner Tupper thanked staff for the time they are putting into, attending and organizing the committee meetings.

- b. Committee Reports
Assistant City Administrator shared that this item is going to be a standing item on commission agendas. This is going to be an opportunity for the commissioners to share if there was anything that the whole commission wanted the committees to engage on that this was the time for that to be shared.

Commissioner Husbands asked for some feedback on how the green steps committee update went.

Commissioner Tupper shared that the green steps committee reviewed the spreadsheet of where the status of the reporting was at this time and what the city needed to do to get to future steps. The spreadsheet will continue to be updated and working to understand what needs to be done in order to get to step three.

Commissioner Husbands asked for clarification about the frequency of the committee meetings. Coordinator Spreiter shared that it depends on what is slated for the work plan at this time.

8. Staff Announcements

Coordinator Spreiter shared upcoming events for Frozen Fun Fest and encouraged commissioners to review the city website for events. She reminded people about the rules of the Medallion Hunt, the medallion is not hidden in any native plantings, it is not at Oheyawahe, and it is not more than 5 ft off the trail. The online tree sale will begin before the next meeting. There are also some educational opportunities coming up.

Assistant City Administrator shared that the city is going to be hiring a parks and recreation intern. Coffee with the Council is also this upcoming weekend for people to come and share with the city council. In addition, the city has summer seasonal positions open.

Commissioner Husbands asked what the parks and recreation intern is going to be working on. Assistant City Administrator shared that the intern will be on a variety of initiatives. Parks and Recreation Manager shared that the new intern is going to be working on projects, sharing with the commission, and working with staff on projects to learn about the parks and recreation profession.

9. Commission Comments

Commissioner McCaslin updated that he was not able to attend the ice fishing event. Commissioner Tupper offered to fill in if the commission was wanting to do something specific.

10. Adjourn

*Motion to adjourn the meeting by Husbands, second by Stein.
Motion passes 6-0.*

Chair Swank adjourned the meeting at 6:43pm.

Auxiliary aids for persons with disabilities are available at least 120 hours in advance. If a notice of less than 120 hours is received, the City of Mendota Heights will make every attempt to provide the aids. This may not, however, be possible on short notice. Please contact City Administration at 651-452-1850.



DATE: March 8, 2023
TO: Natural Resources Commission
FROM: Kelly Torkelson, Assistant City Administrator
SUBJECT: New City Website Update

Background:

The new city website has launched with features that support ADA accessibility of content, mobile friendly use, branding to highlight the Mendota Heights community, and easy navigability to site content.

With the website redesign, it was determined that natural resources would benefit from having an elevated department specific site. The site groups together parks and natural resources and provides tools for highlighting specific natural resources content. The department page provides content specific navigation buttons including:

- Stormwater management
- City park directory
- Recycling
- Forestry

In addition, the site also features content specific news and highlights as well as a calendar feature that specifically highlights upcoming natural resources related events.

Action

None- Informational Only



DATE: March 8, 2023
TO: Natural Resources Commission
FROM: Courtney Selstad, Recycling Coordinator
SUBJECT: GreenStep Cities update

Background:

Per Goal 4 of the 2023 Natural Resources Commission Work Plan, city staff are working to advance Mendota Heights in the GreenStep Cities (GSC) program, where the city currently sits at Step 1 of 5.

There are almost 300 different activities that earn credit towards the GSC program. There are required components in several categories, supplemented by optional actions of the city's choosing. A city achieves Steps 2 and 3 when a specific combination of those activities are completed. Steps 4 and 5 are achieved through a comprehensive set of data reporting and improvements on key metrics.

Update:

Many city activities completed over the last several years qualify for credit as GSC actions. Staff are identifying those applicable activities and entering the details into the GSC system for advancement to Step 2. This reporting will be complete by the annual deadline of April 1.

Review of the requirements for advancement to Step 3 is also underway by staff, to understand where the city has completed the necessary tasks and what areas are still outstanding. Over half of the Step 3 requirements have at least been started, with several that are already complete.

Staff plan to meet with the City Council at their April work session to get additional direction on priority areas or activities that can be implemented using the GSC framework and applied to step advancement. This direction will assist in determining next steps for some remaining components of Step 3, as well as inform related budget recommendations for 2024.

Requested Action: None at this time.



DATE: March 8, 2023
TO: Natural Resources Commission
FROM: Krista Spreiter, Natural Resources Coordinator
SUBJECT: Pollinator Awareness Month

Background

This year in lieu of No-Mow May, the City will be promoting pollinators throughout the month of May through Pollinator Awareness Month. Education will be provided to residents via social media, Friday News, and other means on how residents can protect native pollinators and their habitat. Each issue of Friday news in May will address one topic on pollinator awareness. There will also be a 'Tip of the Day' provided on social media Monday through Friday. Some topics include:

- Creating a pollinator-friendly landscape throughout the four seasons
- Establishing a permanent, pollinator-friendly, no-mow lawn
- Alternatives to pesticide and herbicide use
- Simple things everyone can do to protect pollinators

Requested Action

Information only. Discussion and suggestions from the Commission are welcome.



DATE: March 8, 2023
TO: Natural Resources Commission
FROM: Krista Spreiter, Natural Resources Coordinator
SUBJECT: Earth and Arbor Day Celebration Update

Background

The 2023 Mendota Heights Earth and Arbor Day Celebration will be held on April 29th. A city-wide clean-up event, educational opportunities, drawings, giveaways, and a pollinator planting volunteer event will be included in the celebration. Details for the event include:

9a-Noon

City-wide trash and clean up event: Residents can pick a local Mendota Heights park or other public space to assist in keeping our city clean. Garbage, recycling, and organics bags will be available for pick up at City Hall from 9a-Noon on Saturday, April 29th. Residents do not need to sign up, all can participate. Collected materials can be left in or near garbage receptacles at each City park. Volunteers should wear appropriate attire, including protective gloves, closed-toe shoes, and dress for the weather. Safety vests are also available for loan if desired. This is also a great time to help keep our storm drains free of sediment, trash, and other debris. Residents may sign up to [Adopt-a-Drain](#) in honor of the celebration, or can sign up any time throughout the year, to help keep our surface waters clean.

9a-Noon

Residents are invited to Stop by City Hall for free giveaways and learn about tree care, pollinators, and simple ways you can protect our surface waters. Drawings and giveaways include:

- Drawing for a free 10-gallon Container Tree
- Drawing for a Compost Bin or Rainbarrel from the Recycling Association of MN
- Pick up a **FREE** bare root tree (while supplies last)

1:30-3:00p

Pocket Pollinator Garden Planting Volunteer Event at Valley View Heights Park:

Residents can sign up to volunteer at Valley View Heights Park from 1:30pm-3:00pm on Saturday, April 29th to assist City Staff in planting native pollinator plants around the park sign. Volunteers should wear appropriate attire, including gardening gloves, closed-toe shoes, and dress for the weather. Please ensure anything you wear or bring with you has been cleaned to prevent the spread of invasive species. Hand trowels and other tools will be provided. **Please sign up through the [Mendota Heights Volunteer Program](#).**

Requested Action

Information only.



DATE: March 8, 2023
TO: Natural Resources Commission
FROM: Kelly Torkelson, Assistant City Administrator
SUBJECT: Commission Processes and Procedures

Summary:

The Natural Resources Commission is coming up on almost a year in existence. Staff is going to take this opportunity to review orientation and training materials for the rules of the commission, what the role of the commission is within city operations, and how items can be brought forward in meetings or the workplan.

1. Agenda Items

The City Council directs the uses of resources, funds, and priorities of the city. The role of staff is to administer the direction of the city council. The Natural Resources Commission is one of four advisory commissions to the city council. The other commissions in the city are:

- Airport Relations Commission
- Parks and Recreation Commission
- Planning Commission
- Natural Resources Commission

The planning commission has special statutory authority that the other commissions do not have. The work of the commissions is to provide additional insight and guidance on topics that the City Council is considering or working on. Ensuring that the commission works within the purview of the guidance of the city council is critical in ensuring that resources are being used effectively and that efforts are building towards the goals outlined by the city council.

The purpose of the commission agenda is to ensure that the public is notified in advance regarding what topics and business the commission is going to be discussing and to ensure that the commission has the necessary support from staff to be able to effectively review and make recommendations on business being discussed. Staff use the commission approved workplan to guide agenda content. In addition, staff either meet or connect with the chair and vice chair prior to the commission packet being published to review agenda items. If commissioners are interested in having specific items added to an upcoming agenda, they should connect with the chair or vice chair or directly with staff prior to the packet being published. Staff and the chair and vice chair will work together to determine what content is ready for inclusion on an

agenda.

Reasons why an item may not be on an agenda may include, but is not limited to:

- Addition research or staff time is necessary in order to be able to properly support commission discussions or questions related to a topic
- A proposed item is outside of the guidance that the city council has directed the commission to work on
- The commission has already reviewed the item and not recommended additional action or discussion on the topic

2. Budget

City Commissions do not make budget recommendations to the city council. The city council may request that a commission provide additional feedback or guidance on budget items or priorities, but the commission is not evaluating or recommending items to be reviewed by the city council during the budgeting process.

The City Council will be reviewing strategic priorities in the upcoming months which will guide staff in developing budget recommendations to be reviewed by the city administrator during the summer. Recommendations from the City Administrator are reviewed by the City Council during the late summer/early fall and preliminarily approved in September. The preliminary budget is available for review and public comment prior to the council formally adopting it in December.

The City Council may request additional advice from the commission on budgeted items at any time, not just during the budgeting process.

3. Open Meeting Law

The Natural Resources Commission is a public body that is legally bound by open meeting law guidance. Pursuant to Minnesota Statutes §§ 13D.01 - 13D.07, almost all meetings of the city council, city commissions, and city committees must be open to the public. A meeting exists when a quorum of the city council, a city commission, or a city committee is together and:

1. Make a decision concerning city business; or
2. Discuss city business; or
3. Obtain information on city business.

A quorum of the Natural Resources Commission is four members. Any communication between four members of the commission on commission business is considered to be a meeting and if that communication is not done through the required processes it can be grounds for penalties. The commission has defined committees to work on items on the commission work plan. The committees have been designed specifically to avoid quorum, however, in the case that a commissioner not in a committee reaches to that committee on commission business, they may be in violation of open meeting law.

During each commission meeting there is a standing item on the agenda to review Committee Reports. If a commission has something that they would like a committee that they are not a part of to review or

discuss, they should bring it forward at the commission meeting rather than reaching out to the committee outside of the public meeting.

In addition to direct communication to a quorum of members, commissions must also be aware of potential serial communication. Serial communication occurs when one member consults another, who consults another, and so forth. This is not permitted under the Open Meeting Law. In the case that a Commissioner discusses commission business with another commissioner outside of a public meeting, they should disclose all commission members with whom they have discussed the topic with. One of the main goals of the Open Meeting Law is to ensure that deliberations take place in a public setting. Text messaging and/or other electronic communication to other members during a meeting about City matters is also not permitted. Deliberations and discussions must occur in a public forum.

If a court finds that an individual intentionally violated this open meeting law, penalties include:

1. Individual fine of \$300.00 per occurrence for an intentional violation, which may not be paid by the City.
2. Three intentional violations in three separate actions can result in removal from office.
3. Additional costs and attorney's fees may be imposed up to \$13,000.00. The City may pay this amount.

Action

None- Informational Only