

**CITY OF MENDOTA HEIGHTS
NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION
Wednesday, March 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, March 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, and Stein. Commissioners Absent: Commissioner Quick and Student Commissioner Byrnes. Staff present: Natural Resources Coordinator Krista Spreiter and Assistant City Administrator Kelly Torkelson.

3. Adopt Agenda

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

Motion passed 6-0.

4. Approval of Minutes

a. Approve meeting minutes from the February 8, 2023 Natural Resources Commission Meeting
Motion to approved the minutes by Husbands, seconded by Fahnhorst.

Motion passed 6-0.

5. Citizen Comment Period (for items not on the agenda)

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. Review updated city website

Assistant City Administrator Torkelson shared information regarding the new City website and its new redesign features; including a highlighted department page for Parks and Natural Resources.

Vice chair Tupper commented that she appreciated the updated website and noted it looked really clean and easy to use.

b. Green Steps Update

Natural Resources Coordinator Spreiter noted that Recycling Coordinator Selstad has been working to advance the City within the Green Steps program, where we currently sit at step 1 of 5. Coordinator Selstad is reporting the many activities that the City has already completed. If the City moves to Step 2, the City would be recognized at the League of MN Cities conference in June. She is also working with the Green Steps workgroup and will be attending a work session with City Council.

Commissioner Tupper asked if the Green Steps workgroup should pause until after the work session with City Council.

Coordinator Spreiter suggested they wait until after the work session.

c. Pollinator Awareness Month

Coordinator Spreiter noted the City will participate in “Pollinator Awareness Month” for the month of May. Staff will share a topic each week in the Friday News publication, as well as tips on social media. She is working on yard signs available for residents, as well as a coloring contest for kids.

Commissioner Husbands noted that the City’s annual “Touch-A-Truck” event would be a good spot to advertise. She also suggested educating residents on best practices for lawn care. Chair Swank suggested educating residents on alternatives for pesticide and herbicide use; in which Student Commissioner Byrnes will share more research and information on upcoming.

Commissioner Stein expressed support for the City’s new holistic approach and ideas.

Commissioner Husbands added information regarding pollinators and insects and their benefits to the food chain. This could be a way to involve children more too.

Commissioner McCaslin noted that he liked the tip of the day plan and suggested interviewing a resident who follows pollinator-friendly actions, as well as highlighting all the things that the City is doing to support pollinators.

d. Earth and Arbor Day Event

Coordinator Spreiter noted the City will hold Earth and Arbor day on April 29 from 9:00am-12:00pm. There will be a city-wide parks and open space clean up for residents to participate in; the City will pick up any collected items. Residents can also stop by City Hall to learn more about natural resources topics, as well as participate in drawings for prizes. From 1:30-3:00pm there will be a volunteer planting event at Valley View Heights Park. In order to volunteer residents should sign up on the City’s volunteer webpage.

Commissioner Stein asked if the Commission could help during this event. Coordinator Spreiter will follow up with the Commission regarding supporting tasks.

Assistant City Administrator Torkelson urged the Commissioners to share the event on social media and spread the word.

Commissioner Husbands noted the difference and location of Valley View Park vs. Valley Park. She also asked if the prior buckthorn removal event could be included in this event as a way to attend to the project.

Coordinator Spreiter noted that she’ll look at future dates to revisit that project.

Chair Swank suggested the Commission take turns at the events in order to ensure adequate coverage.

7. Old Business

a. Commission Processes and Procedures

Assistant City Administrator Torkelson revisited the Commission's processes and procedure as they come up on one year of existence. She reviewed how items get added to the agendas, the budget process, and open meeting law.

Chair Swank noted some tips for mentally separating commission vs council work.

b. Committee Reports – Workplan

- Ordinance and Policy Development

Commissioner Fahnhorst and Commissioner Stein shared their focused review of some City Ordinances such as the tree ordinance.

- Education and Outreach

Chair Swank noted they discussed Pollinator Awareness Month and a more formalized recognition for residents with pollinator-friendly yards. They are looking at engagement materials aimed at children. They will meet on a monthly basis.

Commissioner Tupper added they'll have more content regarding May events at the next meeting.

Commissioner Fahnhorst commented that he liked the pollinator-friendly outreach and suggested they track more details about residents' projects.

Commissioner McCaslin suggested the committee also recognize residents without yards but who still adhere to pollinator-friendly practices.

Commissioner Stein mentioned the planting along Victoria Road that could potentially be a community garden with opportunity for education.

- Urban Forestry

This committee hasn't met yet.

- Green Steps

Chair Swank will set up a meeting soon to continue this work.

- Sustainability

Commissioner Stein commented on ways that the City can be more energy-efficient and save money. He shared information regarding a rebate program with Xcel Energy.

Chair Swank suggested the commission help get information out to residents for awareness.

Commissioner Fahnhorst suggested adding links on the website.

8. Staff Announcements

Coordinator Spreiter noted that the Tree Sale sold out within a few hours. Fifty-seven residents ordered trees and those can be picked up at Public Works on May 13th from 9:00am-12:00pm. The

City is holding a rain barrel and compost bin sale with the same pick up date and time.

9. Commission Comments

Commissioner Husbands noted information regarding the 2023 Environmental Commissions Conference. She recommends the Commission discuss more and attend if possible.

10. Adjourn

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

Chair Swank adjourned the meeting at 7:07pm.