

**CITY OF MENDOTA HEIGHTS
NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION
Wednesday, April 12, 2023- 6:00 P.M.
Mendota Heights City Hall-Council Chambers
Minutes**

The regular meeting of the Mendota Heights Natural Resources Commission was held on Wednesday, April 12, 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

Natural Resources Coordinator Spreiter called the roll. Commissioners present: Quick, Fahnhorst, McCaslin, Husbands, Swank, Tupper, and Stein. Commissioners Absent: 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 Quick.

Motion passed 7-0.

4. Approval of Minutes

a. March Minutes

Motion to approve the minutes by Husbands, second by Tupper.

Motion passed 7-0.

b. Joint Work Session Minutes

Motion to approve the minutes by Fahnhorst, second by McCaslin.

Motion passed 7-0.

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

6. New Business

a. GreenStep Cities Update

Coordinator Spreiter shared an update regarding Recycling Coordinator Courtney Selstad's progress; advancing Mendota Heights to Step 2. The City will be recognized in May.

Assistant City Administrator Torkelson confirmed the City Council worksession will be open to the public, but it won't be a joint worksession.

b. Q1 Workplan Status Report

Coordinator Spreiter shared an update on the 2023 workplan. The Goal 1 Committee continues to review the ordinances. The Goal 2 Committee is developing materials. Goal 3

has been completed, adopting a “tree-of-the-month” program. Goal 4, regarding GreenSteps, has been completed by onboarding our new Recycling and Sustainability Coordinator. Goal 5, reviewing community sustainability efforts, is still in process.

C. Touch-a-Truck Event Update

Coordinator Spreiter shared details of the upcoming Legacy Event; Touch-A-Truck. The event will be held on May 13, 10:00am-12:00pm. The rain backup date is May 14. There will be several varieties of vehicles there for residents to experience. There may be an electric vehicle (EV) on site.

Commissioner Quick noted she liked the idea of the commission being present at the event.

Chair Swank asked whether the commission wanted to participate in a few events; electric vehicle support and a community poll of “how did you get here”.

Commissioner Stein suggested supporting the electric vehicle portion of the event, especially EV owners. Commissioner Quick concurred.

Commissioner Tupper would be interested in staffing a board regarding “how did you get here” discussion and chatting with residents about sustainable transportation.

Commissioner Stein suggested sharing information on electric bikes.

Chair Swank asked whether commissioners could bring their own vehicles or scooters, etc., and if there would be any issue with that. She asked for more ideas regarding the “how did you get here” engagement tool. She suggested including the categories; walking, bicycling, car, EV, electric bike, skateboard, motorcycle, etc.

d. Tree-of-the-Month Update

Coordinator Spreiter shared details regarding this new program. The Committee came up with a proposal; sharing an article in Friday News showcasing a tree species native to MN and highlighting benefits and growing conditions of that species.

Commissioner Fahnhorst asked how we would choose the Tree of the Month, adding he thinks Coordinator Spreiter can make the decision. He suggested some fun social media ideas.

Commissioner Tupper added the idea of utilizing the content from the Friday News article on social media, calling to action residents to interact with the tree of the month.

Commissioner Stein agreed on the idea of pure native trees, and having a Master Gardener share the importance of them.

Commissioner McCaslin suggested adding information regarding the amount of those tree types we have in the City, per the GIS information.

Commissioner Tupper added how exciting she is to see this work getting accomplished.

Motion to approve the Tree of The Month program by Quick, second by Husbands.

Motion passed 7-0.

e. Tree Budget Recommendations

Coordinator Spreiter noted that the City Council's approved 2023 budget included a Tree City Designation Fund. She shared data on estimated costs and initiatives. She also further explained the Demonstration Tree Planting Model.

Commissioner Quick suggested investing in a tree survey.

Chair Swank asked the timeframe of having a tree survey done.

Coordinator Spreiter thought that type of project would take about two years, and cost around \$21,000. There might be a possibility to break that up into a few year's budget.

Commissioner Fahnhorst asked what the expectation is for tree care in rights-of-way land for residents and the City.

Coordinator Spreiter stated the City prefers that there's no planting in the right-of-way due to utility lines and road reconstruction potential, as well as lack of staff for maintenance.

Commissioner Husbands shared information regarding a program used in St. Louis Park.

Commissioner Tupper shared her appreciation to the City Council for adding this to their budget. She would like to see money go towards treating trees as infrastructure, much like maintaining playgrounds.

Commissioner Fahnhorst added that unless there's a specific goal for the tree survey, perhaps they can save that budget item for another year and utilize the funds in another way.

Coordinator Spreiter shared that a tree survey can be utilized to identify high value trees, identifying health of trees, and identifying the actual number of public tree species.

Commissioner Stein agreed on maintaining trees as normal infrastructure work.

Commissioner McCaslin asked if there was a smart-phone based program that might help identify trees and take the place of a large, official tree survey.

Commissioner Husbands noted the gravel pit at Public Works that might be utilized for new tree plantings. She suggested adding an intern or student representative to help water newly planted trees.

Commissioner Fahnhorst advocated for the tree care line item, in emergency situations for example.

7. Old Business

a. Pollinator Awareness Month Update

Coordinator Spreiter shared information regarding this event in May. The City will be promoting pollinators; education via social media and Friday News.

b. Committee Reports – Workplan

Coordinator Spreiter shared information regarding proposed format changes for committee reports.

- **Ordinance and Policy Development**
Commissioner Fahnhorst shared information regarding potential ordinances that could be added, including trees, landscaping, and land use.
- **Education and Outreach**
Commissioner Tupper shared the focus of upcoming events; Touch-A-Truck and Pollinator Awareness Month. She shared a few items that could be used for tabling.
- **Urban Forestry**
Commissioner Husbands shared information regarding the \$25,000 budget and the Tree-of-the-Month program.
- **Green Steps**
More information will be shared after the City Council's upcoming worksession.
- **Sustainability**
Commissioner Stein shared information regarding the timeframe of taking advantage of different energy-saving programs.

8. Staff Announcements

Coordinator Spreiter shared a reminder of the Earth and Arbor Day event on April 29.

Assistant City Administrator Torkelson reminded the commission of upcoming social media posts, and asked if the commission would help spread the word.

9. Commission Comments

Commissioner Husbands shared information regarding an article in the Washington Post about nativizing a homeowner's yard.

Commissioner Quick shared information regarding the Spring Tree Giveaway from a local organization.

10. Adjourn

*Motion to adjourn the meeting by Tupper, second by Stein.
Motion passes 7-0.*

Chair Swank adjourned the meeting at 7:09pm.