

**CITY OF MENDOTA HEIGHTS  
NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION  
Wednesday, May 10, 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, May 10, 2023, at Mendota Heights City Hall; 1101 Victoria Curve.

**1. Call to Order**

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

**2. Roll Call**

Natural Resources Coordinator Spreiter called the roll. Commissioners present: Student Commissioner Byrnes, McCaslin, Husbands, Tupper, and Stein. Commissioners Absent: Fahnhorst, Swank, and Quick. Staff present: Natural Resources Coordinator Krista Spreiter and Assistant City Administrator Kelly Torkelson.

**3. Adopt Agenda**

*Motion to approve the agenda by Husbands, second by Stein.*

*Motion passed 4-0.*

**4. Approval of Minutes**

a. Approval of April 12, 2023 Natural Resources Commission Meeting Minutes

*Motion to approve the minutes by McCaslin, second by Husbands.*

*Motion passed 4-0.*

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

NA

**6. New Business**

a. Natural Resources Commission Bylaws Update

Assistant City Administrator Torkelson shared updates to the Commission's attendance policy, to go into effect from this meeting date moving forwards.

Commissioner Husbands asked for clarification on the differentiation between excused absences and non-communicated ones.

Assistant City Administrator Torkelson noted that there can be no more than three consecutive or 25% of total meetings missed, unless an exception is granted by the City Administrator and City Council. These bylaws will be reviewed every year.

*Motion to approve the update to the bylaws by Stein, second by Husbands.*

*Motion passed 4-0.*

b. Natural Resources Project Planning and NRMP Review

Natural Resources Coordinator Spreiter reviewed the priority projects set forth in the Natural Resources Management Plan (NRMP); Valley Park Pollinator Corridor, Valley Park Forest Enhancement North, Valley Park South Central Forest Enhancement, Valley Park Northwest Forest Enhancement, Valley Park East Forest Enhancement, and Valley Park South Oak/Aspen Knoll Enhancement.

She reviewed a flow chart that illustrates the budget process. Council is asking the Commission for budget recommendations by the end of June.

Commissioner Husbands asked for clarification on the Pollinator Corridor project plans.

Natural Resources Coordinator Spreiter noted that the reassessment done in the spring will identify areas that might need to be started over on and explained some of the initial setbacks and challenges with the project. Herself and Great River Greening will provide the reassessment.

Commissioner Husbands asked for clarification between funding regarding grants versus City.

Coordinator Spreiter replied that the estimates provided were the total cost, not considering grant funding. She added there is no guarantee for the additional grant funding in 2024.

Commissioner Husbands suggested digging deeper into the budget information at a worksession.

Assistant City Administrator Torkelson provided information regarding the budget process.

Vice Chair Tupper asked if the funding recommendations being discussed now are in addition to funding required to be considered a "tree city".

Coordinator Spreiter recommended to keep the two funding categories separate.

Commissioner Stein asked if some line items were to be outsourced.

Commissioner McCaslin commented that the pollinator corridor project was in rough shape beforehand, and agreed that breaking the project up into smaller segments would be ideal.

Commissioner Husbands asked for clarification on the budget process and how it reaches the City Council's decision.

Assistant City Administrator Torkelson noted that the City Council will review this Commission's meeting minutes, which could include recommendations.

c. Comprehensive Plan Sustainability Chapter Review

Natural Resources Coordinator provided an overview of goals from Chapter 8, "Resilience", of the City's Comprehensive Plan.

Vice Chair Tupper asked how the Resilience chapter will fit into their decision-making process. Coordinator Spreiter suggested reviewing this chapter 8 of the Comp Plan, the "Natural Resources" Chapter in the Comp Plan, and the NRMP as the Commission's guiding documents.

**7. Old Business**

a. Green Steps Planning

Assistant City Administrator Torkelson stated that the City has reached Step 2 of the Green Steps program. This happened due to the recording of the existing work that the City has completed. There are several steps that would need to be completed before reaching the Step 3, in which the City Council has suggested the Commission starts working on. She added that the Commission can also add their own priority areas that are outside of the Green Steps guidelines. She suggested a worksession planned within the next few weeks.

Commissioner Stein suggested that the work of the subcommittees should guide the Commission's input regarding prioritization, and then check off any Green Steps progress if it happens along the way.

Commissioner McCaslin commented that grouping #16-19 of Green Steps could be an area of focus and agreed in tying back to subcommittee work.

Commissioner Husbands suggested staying the course with subcommittee work then they'll eventually check boxes within Green Steps.

Vice Chair Tupper asked if staff or Commission members had thoughts about the role of the Green Steps subcommittee.

Assistant City Administrator Torkelson suggested the Green Steps subcommittee could act as an advisor or accountability partner.

Vice Chair Tupper noted that each subcommittee can identify priorities that fit naturally in the work that's happening. She asked if each of the subcommittee could come prepared with priority recommendations to the June Commission meeting.

Coordinator Spreiter will coordinate meetings with subcommittee leads to get dates on the calendar as soon as possible.

Commissioner Husbands would like to see a more formal structure and process within the subcommittee meetings. She'd appreciate a report from each subcommittee at each Commission meeting.

Coordinator Spreiter noted that the Urban Forestry and Green Steps subcommittees don't have recurring meetings scheduled at this time.

b. Earth and Arbor Day Report

Natural Resources Coordinator Spreiter provided a recap of the event, which was held on April 29. Approximately 25 residents participated in the trash and clean up supply pickup, as well as the educational event at City Hall. Other residents participated on their own. The pollinator garden planting at Valley View Heights Park was a success, having planted over 100 native pollinator plants. She thanked commission members for helping at the event.

Vice Chair Tupper thanked Coordinator Spreiter and staff for the work put into the event, noting it was a great event.

Commissioner Husbands thanked staff for holding the event. She asked how the giveaway trees were funded.

Coordinator Spreiter stated they used the Earth and Arbor Day budget to pay for those 100 giveaway trees.

C. Touch-a-Truck Event Planning

Natural Resources Coordinator noted the event will be held from 10:00am-12:00pm on May 13, with a rain backup date of May 14. Staff has recently learned there will no longer be an electric vehicle at this event, so the commission should determine if a presence is still essential.

Commissioner Stein suggested not needing to participate that way, without the presence of the electric vehicle.

Vice Chair Tupper agreed.

Staff will continue to bring forward any potential partnerships and pertinent events that the Commission might be interested in being present at.

Commissioner Husbands asked if staff could contact dealerships and vendors to bring electric vehicles to events.

Vice Chair Tupper asked if staff could contact Dakota County to bring their electric vehicles to events.

Assistant City Administrator Torkelson noted that staff did try to connect with dealerships this year, and were unable to secure their presence at Touch-A-Truck, and that staff can contact Dakota County in the future.

Vice Chair Tupper confirmed there won't be a formal appearance from this Commission at the event this year.

d. Committee Reports – Workplan

- Ordinance and Policy Development

Commissioner Stein stated that this work will take a lot of time to research, write, and bring to the City Council. The committee would like to focus on one ordinance at a time, based on input from the Commission. They would like to potentially focus on a tree preservation ordinance.

Vice Chair Tupper agrees that focusing on one ordinance would be a good idea.

Commissioner Husbands agrees that a tree ordinance would be a good priority.

Commissioner McCaslin would like to see a road map explaining how the ordinance change process works.

Assistant City Administrator Torkelson noted that staff can provide input as needed, or seek legal input as needed.

Natural Resources Coordinator Spreiter will develop a generic flow chart to provide guidelines for each ordinance.

- Education and Outreach

Student Commissioner Byrnes noted that the committee recently met to discuss the upcoming Touch-A-Truck event, the new QR codes that the Parks and Rec Commission are going to implement at parks, and how this commission can be a part of the new QR code system.

Coordinator Spreiter noted that the QR code program will provide generic information to start, and lead patrons back to the City's website.

- Urban Forestry

This commission hasn't met yet; no updates.

- Green Steps

This commission hasn't met yet; no updates.

- Sustainability

Commissioner Stein noted that he, Commissioner Husbands, and Coordinator Spreiter met with two staff from the City of Saint Cloud to learn more about their work with sustainability. Commissioner Stein signed up for the MN Department of Commerce updates on energy related rebates and incentives that will come out in 2023 and will keep the Commission informed on these.

Commissioner Husbands enjoyed working with the staff from the City of Saint Cloud. She noted that they presented a sustainability plan which was very user friendly.

## **8. Staff Announcements**

Natural Resources Coordinator reminded residents of the pickup dates for the tree sale, rain barrel sale, and compost bin sale. She reminded residents of the dates for the Touch-A-Truck event. She noted that pollinator-awareness month is up and running, and residents can find tips on the City's social media page. Pollinator-friendly yard signs are still available for residents to have.

## **9. Commission Comments**

Commissioner Husbands shared a call-to-action for the City Council; fully fund the NRMP, and to please involve this commission in the City Council's decision-making process when the City's natural resources are being considered.

Commissioner McCaslin commented that it's the main bird migration timeframe coming up.

Vice Chair Tupper thanked staff for their work on pollinator-awareness month. She reminded residents not to blow grass clippings into the streets.

## **10. Adjourn**

Vice Chair Tupper adjourned the meeting at 7:30pm.