

**CITY OF MENDOTA HEIGHTS  
NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION  
Wednesday, June 14, 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, June 14, 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: Swank, Husbands, Stein, and Fahnhorst. Commissioners Absent: McCaslin, Tupper, 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 Fahnhorst.*

*Motion passed 4-0.*

**4. Approval of Minutes**

Approval of May 10, 2023 Natural Resources Commission Meeting Minutes

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

*Motion passed 4-0.*

Approval of June 1, 2023 Natural Resources Commission Work Session Meeting Minutes

*Motion to approve the minutes by Stein, second by Fahnhorst.*

*Motion passed 4-0.*

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

NA

**6. New Business**

**a. Summer Recycling Events Update**

Natural Resources Coordinator Spreiter shared information on the past and upcoming 2023 recycling events, per the memo from Recycling Coordinator Courtney Selstad.

Chair Swank clarified how these events are being promoted and shared; through the City's website and City's social media accounts.

**b. Quarterly Work Session Scheduling**

Natural Resources Coordinator Spreiter proposed regular quarterly work sessions to focus on the work plan goals. She presented two proposed schedule options for the Commission to choose from.

Chair Swank noted there may be a conflict with the Education and Outreach Committee meeting dates.

Commissioners shared their preferences for scheduling.

**C. Natural Resources Commissioner Resignation**

Natural Resources Coordinator Spreiter shared that Commissioner Rachel Quick has resigned from the Commission. Her term was set to expire in 2024, City Council has authorized staff to advertise and interview for the open commission seat, with an anticipated appointment of a new commission member in early August.

**7. Old Business**

**a. Pollinator Awareness Month Report**

Natural Resources Coordinator Spreiter provided a recap of the program held in May.

Chair Swank and Commissioner Stein thanked staff for the work on this program, as well as commissioners who supported the efforts.

**b. Budget Planning- Green Steps**

Natural Resources Coordinator Spreiter provided a recap from the June 1 work session regarding budget priorities. Priority best practices determined from commissioner responses include; efficient existing public building, design for natural resources conservation, living and complete streets, efficient city fleets, community forests and soils, stormwater management, surface water, benchmarks and community engagement, climate adaptation, and community resilience.

Commissioner Husbands asked the next steps for translating the priorities to the actual budget.

Coordinator Spreiter stated they'll bring the recommendations to City Council next.

Assistant City Administrator Torkelson noted this is wide ranging in scope, which brings up several applications for prioritization. Staff can also use this budget planning to see if any priorities can be integrated into other projects, or if there are opportunities to make some items staff initiatives, rather than budget items.

Commissioner Husbands asked if the commission should prioritize the list further for City Council, and/or if they should create a strategic plan that creates specific asks.

Chair Swank provided more information on the Green Steps program and how the steps are laid out, and how the Green Steps committee will work to determine specific tasks to take on.

Commissioner Husbands noted her concern regarding setting specific budget priorities now, so that they can be assailable in 2024, and that the Commission isn't funded yet.

Chair Swank suggested the Commission gives themselves some grace, as they're still a brand-new group that might not be ready to provide specific asks yet.

Commissioner Stein noted that these reflect the committee's work and priorities, which is good to see. He noted he agrees that specificity is usually more effective.

Assistant City Administrator Torkelson reminded commissioners that they can present any sort of specific or non-specific asks to the City Council. She encouraged the Commission to look at how this budget can lay the groundwork for future action plans, but noted the process can be slow at times. She noted the priorities direction should be determined at the meeting tonight, as to get on the City Council's agenda in August.

Assistant City Administrator Torkelson noted that are looking at how to categorize the Natural Resources budget to be easily prioritized and managed;

Commissioner Stein advocated for the prioritization growing from the work of the subcommittees.

Chair Swank agreed that prioritization could be done by subcommittees.

*Motion to provide a recommendation to City Council as presented tonight by Fahnhorst, second by Stein.*

*Motion passed 4-0.*

C. Budget Planning- Natural Resources Management Plan Projects

Natural Resources Coordinator Spreiter noted priority projects determined by a survey taken by commissioners. Priority projects in order include; Valley Park Pollinator Corridor, Valley Park Forest Enhancement North, Valley Park Northwest Forest Enhancement, Valley Park East Forest Enhancement, Valley Park South Central Forest Enhancement, and Valley Park South Oak and Aspen Knoll Forest Enhancement. Other projects to consider include; maintaining current restoration areas, climate action plan, Valley Park strategic natural resources plan, additional natural resources staffing, and increasing the natural resources budget 5% annually.

Commissioner Fahnhorst asked for clarification on a budget figure on the Natural Resource Management Plan list.

Coordinator Spreiter noted the budget figure in question might be a typo and she'll revisit the issue.

Commissioner Stein suggested being vigilant and spending some budget on follow-up to restoration projects.

Coordinator Spreiter confirmed there would need to be a budget item created for existing restoration projects, but there is a planned budget for maintenance of existing restoration projects.

Chair Swank agrees with the idea to provide budget to this type of preservation. She asked how many of the projects are anticipated to be funded by grants.

Coordinator Spreiter noted there are some projects that have already been partially funded by grants, and there is often less grant funding available for restoration projects.

Commissioner Stein suggested adding one more budget item to the current list; to uphold the restoration work already accomplished.

Commissioner Fahnhorst suggested exploring the use of a stewardship account that would allocate a percentage of the allotted funds for continual maintenance of projects.

Commissioner Husbands asked for clarification of the stewardship account use for grants or City funds.

Commissioner Fahnhorst clarified it could be both, if accounted appropriately. He noted the purpose of the percentage breakdown is to hold a rough correct proportion for projects.

Assistant City Administrator Torkelson noted that staff would have to create a policy for a budget process change as presented by the Commission. She noted that City Council also has the goal of maintaining projects.

The Commission has directed staff to determine if a stewardship account can be created and used moving forwards in the budgeting process.

*Motion to recommend priority projects to City Council as presented by Fahnhorst, second by Stein.*

*Motion passed 4-0.*

d. Committee Reports – Workplan

- Ordinance and Policy Development

Commissioner Fahnhorst reported the committee is collaborating on a document that will address a tree ordinance first, with waters and other ordinances to follow. This document will be sent to the remainder of the Commission to be reviewed and edited. The goal is to discuss more at the regular July Commission meeting and then dive into the details at the September Worksession meeting.

Commissioner Stein added that it's important for the Commission to adhere to the deadlines. Staff will send reminders of upcoming deadlines.

- Education and Outreach

No meeting was held. Chari Swank noted the committee is looking to participate at the upcoming Parks Celebration Event in August.

- Urban Forestry

Commissioner Husbands reported the committee discussed the tree budget, a tree giveaway, a planting demonstration, and generally embracing the forestry portion of "urban". She shared initial details of the tree giveaway plan.

Coordinator Spreiter noted that trees should be planted in the fall and could give a proposed date soon.

Commissioner Husbands noted, due to the logistics, the tree planting project may not be ready this year.

Coordinator Spreiter noted that the budget allotted for this would carry over into next year or could be used towards other needs.

- Green Steps

Chair Swank noted this committee will start meeting regularly again.

- Sustainability

Commissioner Stein reported of an upcoming presentation with a representative from Xcel Energy to be held on July 10. A presentation will be given on Xcel's "Partners in Energy" Program. Another goal is to set up the City and its residents to take advantage of the Inflation Reduction Act rebates and incentives.

Coordinator Spreiter noted that if other Commission members wanted to attend the July 10 presentation they would publish a notice of quorum. This presentation could also be recorded and shared with the Commission members.

#### **8. Staff Announcements**

Natural Resources Coordinator Spreiter noted a new volunteer opportunity for a curb-cut raingarden planting in the Ivy Hills neighborhood on June 23. Interested volunteers can visit the City's website. She added the City is hosting a workshop series for "Landscaping for Clean Water" through the Lower Mississippi River Watershed Management Organization on June 20<sup>th</sup> and June 22<sup>nd</sup>. Coordinator Spreiter encouraged interested residents to apply for the open Commission position. Applications are due July 7. She also reminded all of City Hall being closed on June 19, July 3, and July 4.

#### **9. Commission Comments**

Chair Swank encouraged interested resident to apply for the open Commission position and noted they can reach out to staff or commission members for any questions.

#### **10. Adjourn**

*Motion to adjourn the meeting by Stein, second by Husbands.*

*Motion passed 4-0.*

*Chair Swank adjourned the meeting at 7:19pm.*