



CITY OF MENDOTA HEIGHTS

NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING AGENDA

March 12, 2025 at 6:00 PM
Mendota Heights City Hall
Council Chambers

- 1. Call to Order**
- 2. Roll Call**
- 3. Adopt Agenda**
- 4. Approval of Minutes**
 - a. Approve meeting minutes from the January 8, 2025 Natural Resources Commission Meeting and the February 12, 2025 Natural Resources Work Session.
 - b. Approve Meeting minutes from the June 12, 2024 Natural Resources Commission Meeting.
- 5. Citizen Comment Period (for items not on the agenda)**
- 6. New Business**
 - a. Election of Officers
 - b. Oak Awards Presentation
- 7. Old Business**
 - a. Geothermal Planning Grant Update
 - b. Earth and Arbor Week Update
 - c. 2025 Committee Assignments
- 8. Staff Announcements**
- 9. Commission Comments**
- 10. Committee Reports**
- 11. Adjourn**



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

Wednesday, January 8, 2024

6:00 p.m.

Draft Meeting Minutes

The regular meeting of the Mendota Heights Natural Resources Commission was held on Wednesday, January 8, 2025, at Mendota Heights City Hall; 1101 Victoria Curve.

1. Call to Order

Vice Chair Knosalla called the meeting to order at 6:02p.m.

2. Roll Call

Roll Call: Natural Resources Coordinator Krista Spreiter called the role. Commissioners present: Sheets, Knosalla, Stein, Husbands, McCaslin, and Student Commissioner Trudeau. Absent: Commissioners Fahnhorst and Chair Swank.

3. Adopt Agenda

Motion to approve the agenda by Commissioner McCaslin, second by Commissioner Stein.

Motion passed 6-0.

4. Approval of Minutes

- a. The Commission was asked to approve the meeting minutes from the December 11, 2024 Natural Resources Commission Meeting.

Motion to approve the minutes by Commissioner Sheets. Second by Commissioner Husbands.

Motion passed 6-0.

5. Citizen Comment Period

No citizens appeared to address the Commission.

6. New Business

- a. Commissioner Resignation

Coordinator Spreiter relayed to the Commission that Commissioner Fahnhorst had chose to not seek reappointment. The Commissioner's term ends January 31st. The City has begun the process of seeking candidates to fill the vacancy on the Commission.

Coordinator Spreiter shared that interviews for Commissioners will be held tomorrow, January 9th. If the City Council chooses, a new commissioner would be appointed at either the January 21st or February 4th City Council meeting.

b. Annual Commissioner Orientation

Coordinator Spreiter shared with the Commission the purpose of holding annual Commissioner orientation for all Commissioners serving on an advisory commission. The orientation serves as an informational training and refresher on the framework of government in Mendota Heights, the purpose of the commissions, and meeting protocol. Coordinator Spreiter also recited the Natural Resources Commission's charter as it appears in Ordinance 572 of City Code. Coordinator Spreiter reminded the Commission to respond to Staff with availability for the sessions offered if they have not already. Vice Chair Knosalla stated that she appreciated virtual option given last year.

7. Old Business

a. Partners in Energy Update

Coordinator Spreiter gave an update of the status of the Partners in Energy Program. Spreiter shared that the Memorandum of Understanding was approved by the City Council at the January 7th meeting. A kick-off meeting with Partners in Energy Staff, City Staff, the Sustainability Committee of the Natural Resources Commission, and a few members of the Energy Action Team will be held on February 4th. Commissioner Stein shared that he thought the planning portion was well done and supported by the Xcel Energy Staff and facilitators, and was impressed with the process thus far. Commissioner Sheets asked how much of the implementation in regards to education and outreach will be City responsibility and how much will be Xcel. Commissioner Stein shared that Xcel can help and support with outreach as well as all aspects. Vice Chair Knosalla asked if there are resources and materials already developed. Coordinator Spreiter stated Xcel will support by providing existing programs and outreach materials. Student Commissioner Trudeau asked how PiE will be seen and how the EAP will be seen in the community? Commissioner Stein stated the hope is that the Community will see it in several different ways: In municipal buildings, outreach to residents, rebate resources, etc. Vice Chair Knosalla added that the Energy Action Team is open to new ways to get information out there. Commissioner Sheets asked if there is budget ear marked for targeted communication. How do we get the information in front of targeted audiences digitally through Meta (for those that are not opting in)? Commissioner Stein also shared that one of the questions of the Council and brought forward in the process was How will we measure success? Commissioner Sheets asked if there are other ways to measure outside of the tracking that Xcel Energy is able to measure. Coordinator Spreiter will bring these questions to the Partners in Energy Staff.

b. 2025 Work Plan Review

Coordinator Spreiter reviewed the Initiatives for each Goal in Quarter 1. Vice Chair Knosalla suggested if the initiative of holding a community event was in conjunction with the PiE Energy Action Plan implementation, that it is moved to Quarter 2, and also suggested holding the event the week of Earth and Arbor Week. Student Commissioner Trudeau Suggested scheduling a joint Committee meeting between Goal 2 and Goal 5. Vice Chair Knosalla suggested discussion to take

place at the next meeting/work session on February 12th. Commissioner Stein shared that Goal 1 initiative *Draft a Shoreland Ordinance* for recommendation was still in exploration stage. Commissioner McCaslin stated BWSR has an example he will look into. Committees were discussed. Goal 5: 1st Monday of the month at 4p.

8. Staff Announcements

Coordinator Spreiter announced that a Natural Resources Internship position has been proposed for approval by the City Council at the January 21st meeting. Coordinator Spreiter reminded the Commission that officer elections and well as Oak Awards will take place at the next regular meeting in March. Coordinator Spreiter announced that holiday light recycling is going on now through January 31st. Drop off is at City Hall.

9. Commission Comments

Commissioner McCaslin asked for an update on Valley Creek Stabilization. Vice Chair Knosalla asked for the intern posting to be shared with the Commission.

10. Committee Reports

Goal 1: In exploration stage for first initiative.

Goal 2: Discussed Oak Awards which will be awarded in March and community event.

Goal 3: Next meeting is tomorrow.

Goal 4: Have not met since last meeting.

Goal 5: Exploring Geothermal Grant for feasibility studies on municipalities.

11. Adjourn

Motion to Adjourn the meeting by Commissioner Husbands, second by Commissioner McCaslin.

Motion passed 6-0.

Vice Chair Knosalla adjourned the meeting at 6:51 p.m.



CITY OF MENDOTA HEIGHTS

NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION WORK SESSION MINUTES - DRAFT

6:00 PM

Wednesday, February 12, 2025

1101 Victoria Curve, Mendota Heights

1. Call to Order

Vice Chair Knosolla called the meeting to order at 6:04 p.m.

2. Roll Call

In attendance: Vice Chair Knosolla, Commissioners Daul, McCaslin, Sheets, Stein, Thuening, and Student Commissioner Trudeau.

Absent: Commissioner Husbands.

Staff in attendance: Natural Resources Coordinator Krista Spreiter and Community Development Manager Sarah Madden.

3. Discussion

Staff requested item 3.e. Shoreland Ordinance, be moved to 3.b. on the agenda.

a. Commissioner Resignation and Introduction of New Commissioners

Coordinator Spreiter relayed that Chair Swank had to resign due to increased career responsibilities. With the resignation of Commissioner Fahnhorst in December, there were two open positions on the commission. Both positions

were filled by new Commissioners Thuening and Daul, who were appointed by the City Council. New commissioners as well as standing commissioners and staff introduced themselves. The Commission discussed options to recognize former Commissioner Swank at a future meeting.

b. Shoreland Ordinance

Coordinator Spreiter gave an update on the Shoreland Ordinance development initiative of Goal 1 of the Commission's 2025 Work Plan. Coordinator Spreiter gave an overview of what is required to be contained in a Shoreland Ordinance through state statute. Coordinator Spreiter gave an overview of the surface water regulations and regulating agencies that have jurisdiction over surface waters within the city. Coordinator Spreiter also gave an overview of past and current city ordinances pertaining to surface waters in the city. Gaps in surface water regulation were then discussed.

Community Development Manager Madden stated that the current Title 15 Environmental Standards, contains a place holder that states that the city is currently deferring to state statutes until a shoreland ordinance is adopted. State statutes require a 75-foot structure setback for sewerred lots adjacent to Recreational Lakes (Rogers and Lake Augusta) and a 150-foot setback for Natural Environment Lakes (Lemay and Pickeral Lakes). The state statutes do not apply to non-public waters, such as large portions of Ivy Falls Creek and Interstate Valley Creek.

Vegetation standards were also discussed. Vegetation standards such as vegetation removal or buffer requirements are categorized as optional by state statutes.

Community Development Manager Madden stated that the ordinance requirements contain several zoning elements and will need to be approved and recommended to City Council by the Planning Commission. Madden will work with the Planning Commission and Coordinator Spreiter on next steps on how both commissions can work together on a draft of a shoreland ordinance for city council approval.

c. 2025 Workplan Committee Assignments

Coordinator Spreiter gave an overview of the Commission's 2025 workplan's goals, and their corresponding committees and current committee members. Committee preferences for each commissioner were discussed for committee members going forward. The commission agreed to come up with tentative committees and then adjust according to Commissioner Husband's preferences, as she was not in attendance. The proposed committees and members are:

Goal 1: Ordinance and Policy Development – Commissioners Knosalla, McCaslin, and Stein

Goal 2: Education and Outreach – Commissioners Daul, Sheets, Thuening, and Student Commissioner Trudeau

Goal 3: Urban Forestry and Restoration – Commissioners Daul, Husbands, and McCaslin

Goal 4: Strategic Planning – Commissioners Husbands, Sheets, and Thuening

Goal 5: Sustainability – Commissioners Knosalla, and Stein

d. 2024 Oak Award Recipients

Coordinator Spreiter gave an update and background on the city's Oak Awards program that recognizes individuals and organizations in the community that have made significant contributions to natural resources in the city. Spreiter then announced the 2024 recipients as follows:

Acorn Award – **Hannah Trudeau**. Hannah led and coordinated a pollinator planting in Valley Park as part of her Eagle Scout project. The project included the planting of a 330 square-foot plot that included planting of 16 different species of native pollinator plants. Hannah designed a sign for the project site that promotes education and awareness of the project. Hannah also co-authored an essay, entitled "Creating Pollinator Pathways in Your Own Backyard", which appeared in the May 24th, Mendota Heights City Newsletter. She has also served on the Natural Resources Commission as a Student Commissioner since 2023.

Leaf Award – **Kirsten Ramirez**. Kirsten worked with City Staff to implement the program 'Fresh Air Fridays' which encouraged residents to save energy and reduce greenhouse gas emissions on Fridays throughout the summer. She

provided content for social media, newsletters, and fliers educating residents on the benefits of reducing emissions and created incentives throughout the program to encourage participation.

Canopy Award - **Sue Light**. Sue is a Dakota County Master gardener and has spent countless hours volunteering and coordinating volunteers to create and maintain native planting and pollinator projects throughout the city. Some of these include the City Hall Pollinator garden and raingarden, the Par 3 Golf Course native planting and raingarden, and the Victoria Road Boulevard restoration. She also volunteers and works with staff to plan and plant the city's curb-cut raingardens. Sue has also led the initiative to create and maintain a raingarden in her own neighborhood to help treat stormwater runoff before it enters Rogers Lake. She co-chairs the Rogers Lake Improvement association and is also a MN Tree Steward.

Commissioner Stein added that Kirsten also helped create and coordinate the planting of an organic vegetable garden at Mendota Elementary.

Recipients will receive their awards at the March 12th regular commission meeting.

e. Partners in Energy Update

Coordinator Spreiter gave an update on the Partners in Energy program. The Energy Action Plan (EAP) implementation phase kick-off meeting was held on February 4th. Several members of city staff were in attendance along with Natural Resources Commission members from the Sustainability Committee that had also served on the Energy Action Team, which helped develop the plan. Commissioners Stein and Knosalla gave updates from the meeting and additional background on the process.

Coordinator Spreiter stated that a draft work plan had been developed that was included in the packet. During the kick-off meeting, it was discussed what role the Commission may have in carrying out the tactics and strategies included in the work plan. Some of these identified strategies were:

- Residential Energy Efficiency – Strategy 2: Showcase local residential energy efficiency projects
- Renewable Energy – Strategy 9: Explore residential and business funding opportunities for solar projects
- Beneficial Electrification – Strategy 14: Facilitate peer-to-peer learning from residents who have already implemented electrification measures

Commissioner Knosalla shared that hosting a workshop for community members that have implemented electrification measures to share their experience with others would be beneficial. Commissioner Stein stated that being able to share the details of the process is important, which would involve a possible presentation with photos, video, etc. Commissioner Thuening asked if a budget had been identified for PiE implementation. Coordinator Spreiter stated that there had not. Any specific implementation projects that required funds that the city had not yet budgeted for would have to be approved by City Council.

The Commission also discussed 'quick wins' of the program that the Commission may be able to help with. One suggestion was education and outreach on rebates offered by Xcel Energy to discontinue usage of second refrigerator/freezers in residential homes that are not being utilized. Xcel Energy currently has a haul away and recycle program for residents for old appliances. Minnesota residents also receive a rebate for the program.

Commissioner sheets brought up the subject of communication seen on social media, and how the commission and city can clearly communicate about the PiE program to avoid future confusion in communication. Also discussed residential negative reactions to door-to-door strategies.

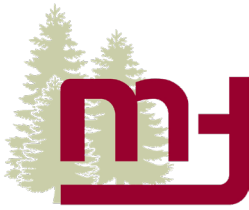
The Commission also discussed ways to list accurate resources for residents, including solar energy. The strategy of peer-to-peer communication regarding solar resources was also discussed.

Commissioner Stein asked about the Geothermal Planning Grant that the city is exploring. Coordinator Spreiter stated that staff had met with Darcy Solutions, a geothermal consultant and contractor, to find out more about the process.

Coordinator Spreiter relayed that the next Natural Resources Commission meeting will be held March 12, 2025 at 6:00PM in the Council Chambers. A new seating chart was given for 2025 regular commission meetings in the Council chambers; however this may be adjusted once new officer elections are held. Coordinator Spreiter relayed that officer elections will be held at the beginning of the March meeting.

4. Adjourn

Vice Chair Knosalla adjourned the meeting at 8:19pm.



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

Wednesday, June 12, 2024, 6:00 p.m.
Draft Meeting Minutes

The regular meeting of the Mendota Heights Natural Resources Commission was held on Wednesday, June 12, 2024, at Mendota Heights City Hall; 1101 Victoria Curve.

1. Call to Order

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

2. Roll Call

Natural Resources Coordinator Spreiter called the roll. Commissioners present: Chair Swank, Fahnhorst, Husbands, Knosalla, McCaslin, Sheets, Stein, Swank, and Student Commissioner Trudeau.

Commissioners Absent: Commissioners Fahnhorst and Knosalla.

Staff present: Natural Resources Coordinator Krista Spreiter and Public Works Director Ryan Ruzek.

Others present: Swanson Haskamp Consulting Representative Ms. Jennifer Haskamp

3. Adopt Agenda

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

Motion passed 5-0.

4. Approval of Minutes

a. Approval of May 8, 2024 Natural Resources Commission Meeting Minutes

Motion to approve the Regular Session Minutes by Sheets, second by McCaslin.

Motion passed 5-0.

b. Approval of May 8, 2024 Natural Resources Commission Work Session Meeting Minutes

Commissioner Husbands clarified although she was not present at the meeting, there is a date suggested for the tour on August 8. Natural Resources Coordinator Spreiter noted that is the correct date due to Night to Unite.

Motion to approve the Work Session Minutes by Sheets, second by Stein.

Motion passed 5-0.

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

No one appeared to address the Commission.

6. New Business

- a. Zoning Code Updates – proposed Chapter 15: Environmental Standards of the City Code.
Natural Resources Coordinator Spreiter introduced Ms. Jennifer Haskamp who will be presenting the proposed Code Updates.

Ms. Jennifer Haskamp representing Swanson Haskamp Consulting provided a presentation regarding the current process of updating Chapters 1,2,4, and 6 of the City's proposed Title 15: Environmental Standards of the City Code. The update is a part of the Planning Commission's current initiative to comprehensively update the City Code to be consistent with the adopted 2040 Comprehensive Plan in conformance with State Statute. The proposed chapters for review from Swanson Haskamp Consulting were provided for Commission's review. The additional chapters 1-7 were provided to the Commission.

Ms. Haskamp reviewed the purpose is to create an Environmental Title where standards and regulations are in one place within the City Code and adopt a framework and build on the regulations and standards through further study. The objective is to separate the environmental title from the Zoning Title but reinforce relationship through cross-references and adopt the Zoning Ordinance Title and Environmental Standards Title.

Ms. Haskamp reviewed the Chapters in detail outlining what was new.

Chapter 1 – Title, Purpose & Conformance (new)

Contains

- Intent and purpose of Title 15
- Application and Interpretation
- Separability

Chapter 2 – Administration, Roles and Responsibilities (new)

Administration and Enforcement Officials – The Environmental Standards Ordinance shall be administered and enforced by the Public Works Director, who may designate the Zoning Administrator, Natural Resources Coordinator or assigns as referenced throughout the Chapter. The following roles and responsibilities of the Public Works Director, or as may be assigned are established:

- Wetland Delineation Certification in accordance with the Wetland Conservation Act.
- Review and approval of any administrative permit for compliance.
- All applications for any permit required by the Environmental Standards Ordinance are received, dated and filed.
- Coordinate the renewal process.
- Issuance of any Administrative Permit or WCA Permit.
- Permanent and current records of the Environmental Standards Ordinance are maintained.
- Institute in the name of the City appropriate actions or proceedings against a violator of the Ordinance.

Natural Resources Commission – Meetings, Procedures, Records – The NRC shall:

- Be appointed by the City Council and serve a recommending body to the City Council and Planning Commission.
- Publish a monthly meeting schedule on an annual basis and meet to conduct their official business.
- Adopt rules for the transaction of business.

- Keep a record of its recommendations, transactions and findings, which shall be maintained as a public record.
- Submit to the City Council a true and correct copy of all its minutes, recommendations and other reports.

Natural Resources Commission Powers and Duties

- The NRC is a recommending body and shall not make any final determination or decisions, unless such decision-making is expressly granted by the City Code or directed by the City Council.
- The NRC shall be responsible for the review, amendment, or study of this Environmental Standards Ordinance when directed by the City Council. Authorization must be granted by the City Council.
- The NRC shall review and provide recommendations to the Planning Commission or City Council as required by this Environmental Standards Ordinance or as required by Title 12: Zoning of the City Code.
- The NRC shall provide recommendations on the following common applications:
 1. Deviations or variances from the Landscape Standards.
 2. Deviations or variances from the requirements established in Chapter 3: Urban Forest and Significant Trees.
 3. Deviations or variances from the Buffer requirements.
 4. Deviations or variances from MRCCA" Site Plan Requirements.
 5. As may be requested from the Planning Commission or City Council.

Appeal of Public Works Director

1. The City Council is designated as the Board of Appeals for any appeal of a decision made by either the Public Works Director or it is assigned.
2. An appeal to a decision made by the Public Works Director must be filed within 90 days.
3. The City Council may conduct a hearing as it determines is necessary and will determine what notice, if any, shall be given of such hearing.
4. If the City Council determines a hearing is necessary, the City Council shall set a date no earlier than seven days or more than 30 days after the determination is made.
5. Notice of the hearing before the City Council shall be mailed to all appellants.
6. The City Council shall take action to either uphold the decision of the Public Works Director or may overturn in full or with certain conditions the decision.

Chapter 3 – Urban Forest, Significant Trees & Tree Replacement (new)

Placeholder Chapter is provided until full ordinance that the NRC has been working on is adopted. Full repeal and replacement may occur.

- The City intends to adopt a tailored ordinance after it has studies specific characteristics of the City's urban forest and tree canopy.
- Any applicant, owner or developer shall be subject to the rules for vegetative removal, replacement and landscaping.
- Where any required landscape plan, vegetation removal or replacement is required, such replacement trees shall be identified as Native. Non-native trees shall not be an acceptable form of replacement or required landscaping.

Chapter 4 – Wetland Systems (new-ish)

Summary of Wetland Section Updates/Modifications:

- Incorporates by reference the WCA and any future amendments to the WCA. In the event that any requirements of this section are inconsistent with the WCA, the stricter provisions that provides the most protection for Wetlands shall apply.
- Minimum 25-foot setback from edge of delineated wetland.
- Buffer Setback requirements apply to all properties containing Wetlands in certain circumstances.
- Guidelines for Wetland Delineation Report or Wetland Boundary Determination.
- Any WCA required wetland banking or replacement plan shall be reviewed and approved by City Council.
- Vegetative performance standards for wetland buffer setbacks.
- Wetland and buffer setback mitigation.

Chapter 5 – Floodplain Management

No changes – Cross References Updated.

Chapter 6 – Shoreland/Surface Water Management (new)

Placeholder Chapter until a full ordinance is prepared. Repeal and replace in the future.

- The City intends to adopt a tailored ordinance after it has studied the specific characteristics of the City’s shoreland in coordination with other chapters.
- Until the City completes its study and adopts its regulations, it herein incorporates by reference the applicable standards and regulations established by Minnesota Rules Chapter 6120.
- Where any rule or regulations is in conflict with any other provision of this Environmental Standards ordinance, the more restrictive standard shall apply.

Chapter 7 – Performance Standards (miscellaneous)

Contains sections from other chapters (no changes) that may be updated in the future. Also references/addresses certain MS4 permit standards, such as:

- Chloride reduction standards.
- Temporary keeping of goals for prescribed grazing and invasive species removal.
- Shade tree program.
- Weeds and noxious vegetation.

Ms. Haskamp reviewed Next Steps including:

- Incorporate and recommend adjustments/changes.
- Present draft to City Council for comments and changes.
- DRAFT documents to be available as part of the remaining steps in the Zoning Ordinance Update Process.
- Potential Adoption of Title 15 concurrently to Zoning Ordinance Update.

Commissioner McCaslin referred to the definition of wetlands and noted the definition should match up with the Core of Engineers Delineation Methods. He also referred to the Chapter 4 the removal of non-native vegetation and noted digging of the roots can be considered a wetland impact. Removal of root structure will be subject to review.

Commissioner Stein asked if this is just moving the existing rules to this Chapter 15. Ms. Haskamp stated there is new content and better mirrors the Wetland Conservation Act.

Commissioner Husbands asked when looking at Title and Interpretation (A) is vague and we have the Natural Resources Management Plan. She suggested being more specific as to what is the natural character of the neighborhoods and what we are trying to preserve as a City. Ms. Haskamp suggested referencing the Natural Resources Management Plan.

Chair Swank stated she is not sure “neighborhoods” is the right word as non-residential areas may be included. Ms. Haskamp suggested removing #1 and referencing the NRM Plan. Chair Swank stated the Minnesota Wetlands Conservation Act is the baseline and that is referenced. She asked why there is more detail and that the MWCA isn’t just referenced. Ms. Kaskamp stated the Code adds to the MWCA and offers detail and clarification. Chair Swank asked in Chapter 2 where does it go after that. Ms. Kaskamp stated the 60 day timeline needs to be met and sometimes the Planning Commission may see it before NRC or after depending on the calendar.

Commissioner Stein suggested Commissioner McCaslin review the Wetland Conservation section due to his expertise.

Chair Swank thanked Ms. Kaskamp for her presentation.

7. Old Business

a. Pollinator Awareness Month Review

Natural Resources Coordinator Spreiter reviewed during the month of May, the City promoted pollinators through the second annual Pollinator Awareness Month. Education was provided to residents via social media, Friday News, and other means on how residents can protect native pollinators and their habitat. Highlights of the program included:

- Education on topics such as landscaping for pollinators, and simple ways to protect pollinators, and pollinator species.
- Tuesday Tips: Short tips on how residents can protect and benefit pollinators.
 - Leave the leaves
 - Plant native host and nectar plants
 - Avoid the use of herbicides, pesticides, and insecticides
 - Plant a variety of native plants with differing seasonal bloom times
- Forb Fridays: Native forbs (flowers) that are beneficial to pollinators
 - Butterfly Milkweed (*asclepias tuberosa*)
 - Wild Ginger (*Asarum canadense*)
 - Purple Prairie Closer (*Dalea purpurea*)
 - Smooth Blue Aster (*Aster laevis*)
- Topics such as pollinator beneficial landscapes and tips on protecting pollinators were showcased in Friday News.
- Pollinator Friendly Landscape Lawn signs were made available to residents.
- Residents were encouraged to submit a photo of a pollinator friendly landscape in Mendota Heights to be entered into a drawing to win a pollinator gift basket. Approximately 30 residents participated. Photographs were provided for Commission review.

Commissioner Stein stated he likes this approach much better than No Mow May. He saw most of the social media posts and said the information was useful.

b. Q1/Q2 Work Session Summary and Q3 Planning.

Natural Resources Coordinator Spreiter reviewed Work Sessions are informal meetings in which official action cannot be taken; they are used as a tool for City Commissions to allow for informal discussion focused on key areas or topics. In 2023, the Commission reached consensus that regular, quarterly work sessions could be scheduled as a way to work through the Commission's annual work plan, as well as provide a time for focused discussion on key tasks or goals as needed.

The first work session for 2024 was held Wednesday, May 8, immediately following the regular Commission meeting. Below is a summary of the discussion held during the first work session.

2024 City Events

- The Commission discussed City Events remaining in 2024 for Natural Resources Commission involvement: Music in the Park, Touch-a-Truck, Tree Sale Pick-up, the Cliff Timm Memorial Fishing Derby, the Parks Celebration, and Trick or Teeing event.
- The Commission decided on the following events and commissioners tentatively confirmed their availability for the following:
 - Fishing Derby on July 18th, from 4-7pm at Rogers Lake Park (Commissioners Knosalla and McCaslin).
 - Parks Celebration, August 9-11 (Chair Swank).
 - Trick-or-Teeing event on October 19th at the Par 3 Golf Course (Commissioners Knosalla, Sheets, and Chair Swank). A storm drain/stormwater education theme was suggested.

2024 Commission Site Tour

The Commission agreed that the Oheyaawahe/Pilot Knob Preservation Site would be of most interest to the Commission for a site tour. A date of August 8, after the regular meeting was tentatively given as a date for the tour.

2025 Preliminary Budget Discussion

- The Commission discussed breaking down the Tree Services line item into more specific categories, including removal, planting and tree care/pruning. A recommendation was made to increase the budget for removals, as the City has exceeded its removal budget in recent years due to EAB.
- It was recommended that the Maintenance line item be increased.
- The recently adopted Franchise fee was discussed. A suggestion was made to earmark funds, if possible, towards the Partners in Energy program, as funds may be needed in the future to implement the Partners in Energy "Energy Action Plan" that is currently being developed. The Commission discussed a request for a portion of franchise fee revenue be set aside for Natural Resources.
- A suggestion was made to reduce the amount the City subsidizes for the tree sale, in order to increase the number of trees available.

Ordinance Discussion

- The Commission discussed options for next ordinances to begin working on for recommendation of adoption. The Commission agreed that the draft of the Buffer/Wetland Ordinance that Commissioner Fahnhorst had drafted should be reviewed again by the whole Commission and considered as the next ordinance for recommendation.
- A request was made to send out the draft again to the entire Commission, as well as bringing the draft to the next work session for discussion.

A 3rd Quarter work session should be held in the months of July, August or September to finalize 2025 budget requests and discuss any other necessary topics. The following are proposed work session dates:

- July 10,29,31
- August 13,15,19,22
- September 11

The Commission is invited to discuss Work Session topics for the Quarter 3 Work Session and confirm availability for a proposed date.

The dates suggested for the 3rd Quarter work session was July 10, 2024 or August 19, 2024. A poll will be sent out to the Commissioners absent. The budget sheets need to be turned into Finance by the end of July. Public Works Director Ruzek stated the preliminary budget sheets will be provided at the work session. There is one budget sheet for the Natural Resources Commission. Commissioner Husbands requested the Commission see the whole picture. Mr. Ruzek stated he will provide all the budget sheets for the Commission. Due to the budget requirements the work session will be held on July 10, 2024. Commissioner Stein noted he is not available on July 10, 2024.

Topics suggested to be discussed were 2025 Budget, Revisions to the Tree Ordinance, Strategic Planning for Valley Park, and 2025 Work Plan.

C. Committee Reports – Workplan

- Ordinance and Policy Development – Commissioner Stein stated the Tree Preservation Ordinance went to a City Council work session for discussion. It then went to the Planning Commission and they had a number of comments and questions that will need a response.
- Education and Outreach – Commissioner Sheets stated the community events were discussed primarily. They also discussed the Pollinator Awareness Month. Ways to engage more of the community were also discussed. Student Rep Trudeau stated some of the requests she received was more information on birds and turtles and how to assist them, different plantings and state of plants between the trails and ways to get more people involved. Great River Greening is doing some projects within Mendota Heights and are looking for volunteers.
- Urban Forestry and Restoration – Commissioner McCaslin stated they met and discussed Murray Park Planning. They are having difficulty setting a date for a meeting. They discussed ways of increasing the forest canopy in public lands.
- Strategic Planning – Commissioner Sheets stated research needs for funding sources is being done but welcome any other Commissioner’s assistance. They have been looking at “Friends of” type organizations to support Valley Park.
- Sustainability – Commissioner Stein stated the 4th of the 5 workshops were held for the Partners in Energy. They reviewed goals. Discussed specific strategies that will continue in the 5th workshop.

8. Staff Announcements

Natural Resources Coordinator Spreiter shared information on plantings done within the City in front of City Hall. She thanked the volunteers that helped plant and worked on the rain gardens. Student Rep Trudeau and group planted for her Eagle Scout level in Valley Park. There are more volunteer opportunities available in June. On July 18, the fishing derby will be held and the NRC will be present. Outdoor Story Time (June 18) will be at Thompson County Park.

9. Commission Comments

Commissioner Stein acknowledged Student Rep Trudeau for organizing the volunteer event. There are

two students on the Partners in Energy Committee Lily and Jade who have great participation.

10. Adjourn

Motion to adjourn the meeting by Husbands, second by McCaslin.

Motion passed 5-0.

Chair Swank adjourned the meeting at 7:10 p.m.



Natural Resources Commission

Meeting Date: March 12, 2025

Agenda Item: Election of Officers

Item Type: Action Item

Department: Natural Resources

Contact: Krista Spreiter, Natural
Resources Coordinator

Action Request:

The Commission should approve the appointment of a chair and vice chair of the Natural Resources Commission for the remainder of the 2025 calendar year.

Background:

The Natural Resource Commission's bylaws set election of the roles of chair and vice chair at the annual meeting for the commission, which takes place in February of each year. Because the February meeting was a work session, action on this item was moved forward to the March regular meeting.

If a commissioner is interested in the position of either chair or vice chair, they are welcome to express their interest to the group as a whole during the discussion of this item. The chair and the vice chair elections will be separate items. The election of a chair will be the first order of business.

After a chair has been selected, the new chair will take over the meeting proceedings. The chair will then ask the commission for nominations for vice chair. Following nominations, the chair will then call the vote for the vice chair.

Requested Action

Approve the appointment of _____ to be chair of the Natural Resources Commission.

Approve the appointment of _____ to be vice chair of the Natural Resources Commission.

Fiscal and Resource Impact:

None.

Attachments:

None



Natural Resources Commission

Meeting Date: March 12, 2025

Agenda Item: Oak Awards Presentation

Item Type: Presentation

Department: Natural Resources

Contact: Krista Spreiter, Natural Resources Coordinator

Action Request:

The Commission should invite each recipient to come forward to receive their award, as well as to speak to their efforts in Natural Resources if they wish to do so.

Background:

The Mendota Heights Natural Resources Commission created the Oak Awards Program in 2023 to celebrate leadership, education and outreach, and project efforts that advance natural resources within the City. Recipients are recognized in the following categories:

- Acorn award: Recognizes exemplary youth leadership in the advancement of our city's natural resources. Eligible youth include individuals or groups 18 years of age and younger, or a current student in 12th grade or under.
- Leaf award: Recognizes the significant contributions of an individual, family, company or organization that has demonstrated substantial leadership in the stewardship of our city's natural resources.
- Canopy award: Recognizes the lifetime achievement of an individual, family, company or organization that has demonstrated extraordinary leadership for the stewardship of our city's natural resources.

Recipients for their achievements in Natural Resources within the City in 2024 for each category include:

Acorn Award – **Hannah Trudeau**. Hannah led and coordinated a pollinator planting in Valley Park as part of her Eagle Scout project. The project included the planting of a 330 square-foot plot that included the planting of 16 different species of native pollinator plants. Hannah designed

a sign for the project site that promotes education and awareness of the project. Hannah also co-authored an essay, entitled "Creating Pollinator Pathways in Your Own Backyard", which appeared in the May 24th, Mendota Heights City Newsletter. She has also served on the Natural Resources Commission as a Student Commissioner since 2023.

Leaf Award – **Kirsten Ramirez**. Kirsten worked with City Staff to implement the program 'Fresh Air Fridays' which encouraged residents to save energy and reduce greenhouse gas emissions on Fridays throughout the summer. She provided content for social media, newsletters, and fliers educating residents on the benefits of reducing emissions and created incentives throughout the program to encourage participation. Kirsten also helped create and coordinate the planting of an organic vegetable garden at Mendota Elementary.

Canopy Award - **Sue Light**. Sue is a Dakota County Master gardener and has spent countless hours volunteering and coordinating volunteers to create and maintain native planting and pollinator projects throughout the city. Some of these include the City Hall Pollinator garden and raingarden, the Par 3 Golf Course native planting and raingarden, and the Victoria Road Boulevard restoration. She also volunteers and works with staff to plan and plant the city's curb-cut raingardens. Sue has also led the initiative to create and maintain a raingarden in her own neighborhood to help treat stormwater runoff before it enters Rogers Lake. She co-chairs the Rogers Lake Improvement association and is also a MN Tree Care Advocate.

Fiscal and Resource Impact:

None.

Attachments:

None



Natural Resources Commission

Meeting Date: March 12, 2025

Agenda Item: Geothermal Planning Grant Update

Item Type: Presentation

Department: Natural Resources

Contact:

Krista Spreiter, Natural
Resources Coordinator

Action Request:

None. Information only.

Background:

The Minnesota Department of Commerce is seeking proposals from local government units for geothermal project planning throughout Minnesota for the Geothermal Planning Grant Program. The intent of the program is to provide financial assistance to local government units to examine the technical and economic feasibility for installation of geothermal energy systems.

The Sustainability Committee of the City's Natural Resources Commission recently began conversations regarding the program and how it fits with their goal of achieving sustainable initiatives for the city. The city is in the process of implementing its Energy Action Plan as part of its partnership with Xcel Energy through the Partners in Energy program. The Energy Action Plan was developed in partnership with Xcel Energy and the city's Energy Action Team, consisting of residents, business owners, students, Natural Resources Commission members, and city staff. Exploring the possibility of implementing a geothermal system at one or more of the city's public facilities fits well with the goals of the city's recently adopted Energy Action Plan. The city is requesting \$130,000 from the MN Department of Commerce as part of its geothermal planning grant application.

City staff met with Darcy Solutions, a geothermal system installer, to learn more about geothermal energy and details of installation. Darcy Solutions completed a preliminary assessment of the city's Public Works facility and determined that a geothermal project would be feasible at this facility. The city has also reached out to other municipalities and government

agencies that have had experience with installing geothermal systems.

The City Council approved and Mayor Levine signed a letter of authorization in support of the Geothermal Planning Grant application at its March 4th regular meeting. The application was submitted online as required before the March 10th deadline. If accepted into the grant program, project implementation would be assessed after findings of the investigation are reported to and discussed with City Council and the Natural Resources Commission.

Fiscal and Resource Impact:

None.

Attachments:

None



Natural Resources Commission

Meeting Date: March 12, 2025

Agenda Item: Earth and Arbor Week Update

Item Type: Presentation

Department: Natural Resources

Contact: Krista Spreiter, Natural Resources Coordinator
Willow Eisfeldt, Recreation Program Coordinator

Action Request:

The Commission is asked to hear an update on the planning of Earth and Arbor Week

Background:

The 2025 Mendota Heights Earth and Arbor Day Celebration will be held Monday, April 21st through Saturday, April 26th. The purpose of the celebration is to gain awareness and educate the community on natural resources issues and topics, as well as to encourage participation and connect with residents, businesses, and other community groups in Mendota Heights. The following events and programs are included in the week-long celebration:

Events Include:

- Monday, April 21st
 - Kick-Off to Lily, Find the Frog
 - Participants can email their photo and riddle answer until 8:00 AM Monday, April 28th or send us a Facebook message
 - Participants who find Lily will be entered to win an Earth Week basket
- Tuesday, April 22nd
 - Learn to Fish with Fishing For All at Roger's Lake Park
 - 5:00-7:00 PM

- Wednesday, April 23rd
 - Yoga in the Park at Market Square Park (Tentative - TBD)
 - 5:00-6:00 PM
- Thursday, April 24th
 - Eco Elsa Biologist Explorer Class at Valley Park
 - 3:00-5:00 PM
- Friday, April 25th
 - Raptor Show at Mendakota Park
 - 1:00-2:00 PM
- Saturday, April 26th
 - 10:00 AM-Noon: Kids Garage Sale - National Guard Gym - 8055 Barbara Ave, Inver Grove Heights
 - 1:00-3:00 PM: Earth and Arbor Day Celebration event – Booths, giveaways, educational activities, possible business participation

Earth and Arbor Day Celebration

Saturday, April 26th

1p-3p

Market Square Park

720 Main Street

Mendota Heights, MN 55118

FREE EVENT! ALL AGES ARE WELCOME.

Fiscal and Resource Impact:

TBD. The city is awaiting notification from the No Child Left Inside grant program.

Attachments:

None



Natural Resources Commission

Meeting Date: March 12, 2025

Agenda Item: 2025 Committee Assignments

Item Type: Action Item

Department: Natural Resources

Contact:

Krista Spreiter, Natural
Resources Coordinator

Action Request:

The Commission should confirm committee assignments for the 2025 Work Plan.

Background:

The Commission uses an annual work plan to accomplish its goals, as well as aid in accountability, resource allocation, and proceed through commission priorities. The 2025 Work plan has identified five goals for the Commission:

- Goal 1: Ordinance and Policy Development
- Goal 2: Education and Outreach
- Goal 3: Urban Forestry and Restoration
- Goal 4: Strategic Planning
- Goal 5: Sustainability

The Commission establishes committees for each goal as a way to focus on and accomplish the initiatives for each goal of the work plan. Committees are limited to three voting members in order to comply with open-meeting law. A committee may have four members if one of the members is a student commissioner. The Commission discussed committee assignments at its February 12th Work Session to establish the following committee members for each goal:

- Goal 1: Commissioners Knosalla, McCaslin, and Stein
- Goal 2: Commissioners Daul, Sheets, Thuening, and Student Commissioner Trudeau
- Goal 3: Commissioners Daul, Husbands, and McCaslin
- Goal 4: Commissioners Husbands, Sheets, and Thuening
- Goal 5: Commissioners Husbands, Knosalla and Stein

Commissioners should confirm or suggest changes to which committee(s) they would like to serve on and come to a consensus on committee assignments.

Fiscal and Resource Impact:

None.

Attachments:

None