

ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION MEETING
Inver Grove Heights City Hall – Council Chambers
March 28, 2019

1. Call to Order

Meeting called to order at 7:00 PM by Chair Trenzeluk

2. Pledge of Allegiance

3. Roll Call

Commissioners Present: Chair Ted Trenzeluk, Sarah Brass, Patricia Todd, Robert Heidenreich

Commissioners Absent: Joan Gabriel (resigned 9/27/18); Ken Johnson, Aditya Jayam,
Lauren DiGidio (excused), Nichole Boehmke

Staff Present: Ally Hillstrom, Environmental Specialist

4. Approval of Minutes

Minutes from February 28, 2019 are not approved as a quorum is not present.

5. Applicant Requests

6. Other Business

Chair Trenzeluk stated a quorum was not present by the Environmental Commission; the Commission will still hold a meeting to discuss the items in front of them, but official recommendations will not be presented.

a) Proposed Compost Initiative in Inver Grove Heights; Christina Rademacher, Inver Grove Heights Resident & UMN Student

Christina Rademacher, 6560 Arlene Avenue, prepared a presentation for the Environmental Commission to share her study abroad experiences from a college course in Germany. She noted aspects of what she learned can be shared with Inver Grove Heights residents to raise awareness of environmental initiatives.

Ms. Rademacher shared that compost and organic bins were utilized throughout the towns she visited in Germany. Based on the environmental benefit of composting, she suggested that the City implement composting programs to promote collection within the community and lead by example. She suggested that the City collect organics within city facilities. She noted that education campaigns help raise community awareness. In Germany, that when a community is well educated the information is widely shared with one another. This helps encourage community members to become their own experts.

Ms. Rademacher suggested that awareness of composting initiatives can be expanded through social media, mailing and community meetings. She also noted that food waste is an important issue that needs to be addressed through composting to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from landfills.

Ms. Rademacher stated the residents can participate by creating their own compost bin or joining the organics drop-off sites. She suggested that the City create a compost site to create

compost for city projects. She noted that in Germany they have developed bio-gas plants which utilize organic material to create clean energy and divert the waste from a landfill. She noted that renewable energy infrastructure and compost facilities were located in one city complex.

Ms. Rademacher shared a video featuring a town in Germany with an energy complex.

Ms. Rademacher invited the Environmental Commission to a documentary viewing and discussion on climate with Minnesota Senators. The meeting is at the University of Minnesota Twins Cities Campus on April 16. Ms. Hillstrom will send more information to the Commission by email.

Chair Trenzeluk thanked Ms. Rademacher for presenting. He encouraged her to contact the City Council and provide a summary of the presentation. He also noted that becoming an Environmental Commissioner is a great way to get involved in the community.

Chair Trenzeluk asked Ms. Rademacher to explain the West St. Paul composting initiative. Ms. Rademacher replied that residents receive compostable bags from the drop-site and bring their organics to the site for no charge. Ms. Hillstrom stated that Dakota County has funded the two drop-sites. A waste hauler collects the organics and bring it to an industrial compost facility located in Empire Township.

Ms. Hillstrom stated that she has received feedback from Inver Grove Heights residents that use the Thompson Park drop-site. She believes our community benefits from these locations. She noted the community may benefit from having an additional location within Inver Grove Heights.

Chair Trenzeluk asked Ms. Hillstrom which government entity funds the compostable bags at the drop-sites. Ms. Hillstrom replied that the County currently funds the program, although there has been discussion that future sites may be jointly funded by the County and the partner city.

Chair Trenzeluk asked if the sign-up information for the program is on the City website. Ms. Hillstrom responded in the affirmative. She noted that education is also provided at event education booths.

Ms. Rademacher noted that Minneapolis has residential organics hauling services.

Commissioner Heidenreich noted that Dakota County is focused on these initiatives which are prioritized in their updated Solid Waste Management Plan approved in September 2018. He stated the County also provide recycling and composting assistance to businesses because they generate a large amount of waste. Cities will also be involved in implementation of the master plan priorities.

Ms. Hillstrom noted that the Master Recyclers/Composters program is an education and volunteer opportunity for residents to get involved. Volunteers complete an education course and then volunteer throughout the County to help education residents and assist with recycling and composting projects.

Chair Trenzuluk asked if these initiatives will be completed through the Greenstep Cities program. Ms. Hillstrom replied that no waste haulers provide residential organics recycling in Dakota County. She noted that organics will be collected in City Hall with support of the County community funding grant. Organics collection will be added to other facilities as

funding allows. Ms. Hillstrom stated that currently residents can utilize Dakota County drop-sites or create their own backyard compost bin.

Commissioner Brass explained that Dakota County offers compost bins at a subsidized rate to community members. Ms. Hillstrom stated we can share this opportunity.

Ms. Rademacher stated that other communities in Minnesota have sister cities in Germany. These cities can be a role model for Inver Grove Heights. Morris and Saerbeck are sister cities. These cities are moving towards 100% renewable energy.

Chair Trenzeluk noted the City is completing some of steps recommended by Ms. Rademacher, and that the Environmental Specialist is now on board and dedicated to these initiatives.

Ms. Hillstrom stated that creating a community organic drop-site is not a requirement of the Dakota County community funding program, however if the City determines this is a priority more research can be done on the topic. For example, developing a yard waste drop-site. This may be a GreenStep Cities action.

b) GreenStep Cities Best Practice #15: Sustainable Purchasing. Review progress and discuss feedback.

Ms. Hillstrom included an updated draft of the Sustainable Purchasing Policy in the agenda packet. The Environmental Commission did not review this item because a quorum was not present. It will be reviewed at the next Environmental Commission meeting.

c) Miscellaneous

Ms. Hillstrom explained the Commission had advised that City Commission meetings become paperless. She noted that Commission packets will now be displayed on the monitors for the Commission to reduce the amount of paper printed. Only two copies will be printed for each meeting going forward; one public copy and one backup copy for staff. She will share this method with other Commissions to encourage less printing at those meetings. She noted that City Council agendas are not printed. Instead iPads are used to display their agenda packets.

Ms. Hillstrom noted an Environmental Commission Special Session is proposed for Thursday, April 11. Commissioner Todd replied she can attend. Four Commissioners are available but five are needed for a quorum. Ms. Hillstrom indicated Thursday, April 18 is the Commission Appreciation Dinner.

Chair Trenzeluk reminded the Commission that the 2019 Environmental Commission Conference will be held on Saturday, April 13. He recommends the Commissions attend. Admission is free.

Ms. Hillstrom shared that she attended the Cities Charging Ahead Annual Conference today focused on electric vehicles. She learned what other cities have successfully completed and additional resources that will be released in the next few months. She will share the resources with the Commission when they are released.

7. Adjourn

The Commission meeting adjourned at 7:43 pm. Motion approved unanimously.