

Inver Grove Heights Environmental Advisory Commission
8150 Barbara Avenue
Thursday, March 28, 2024, at 7:00 p.m.

Meeting Minutes

1. Call to Order

The Environmental Advisory Commission of Inver Grove Heights met in City Council Chambers on Thursday, March 28, 2024. Chair Goodman called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

2. Roll Call

Present: Chair Sara Goodman; Commissioners: Nichole Boehmke, Ted Trenzeluk, Patti Mikulski, Marjorie Savage, Nick Ruiz, Kevin Sethre, Brian Barner
Absent: Vacancy

3. Presentations

None.

4. Approval of Minutes

None.

5. Regular Agenda

A. Ally Sutherland, Environmental Specialist, presented on 2023 EAC Work Plan progress.

The PowerPoint presentation reviewed the following topics:

2023 EAC Work Plan Progress

#1) Extend Xcel Energy Partners in Energy MOU through 2023 to achieve Energy Action Plan goals

- Status: Complete
- 01/2023: EAC recommended City Council approval
- 02/2023: City Council approved MOU
- 01/2023-12/2023: Energy Action Plan implementation
- Energy Action Plan Purpose: Reduce community energy costs and emissions related to buildings and transportation.
- Residential outreach included: 50 Free Home Energy Squad visits, Green Living Series presentation and event table, Earth Day Renewable Energy Challenge, IGH Days event table, Free LED light bulb kits and education, Shared payment assistance, tax credits, rebates, utility programs Lots of residential outreach, including Home Energy Squad visits and presentations at events.
- Developed Sustainable IGH Community Recognition Program for residents and businesses.

#2) Support development of a Dakota County Organics Drop-Off located in IGH

- Status: Complete
- 05/2023: City Council approved JPA for Inver Glen Library Organics Drop-Off
- 07/2023-09/2023: County and city promotions
- 08/2023: Inver Glen Library Organics Drop-Off opened
- 2 cubic-yard dumpsters are picked up 3 times a week at Inver Glen Library (one of 11 Dakota County sites)
- At the end of 2023 (first year of the program), 934 households in Inver Grove Heights had registered for organics drop-off with Dakota County, exceeding expectations.

#3) Support solar development in IGH by joining SolSmart

- Status: In progress
- 04/2023: EAC recommended City Council approval
- 05/2023: City Council approved joining SolSmart
- 07/2023: Program liaison assigned to the city
- Present: Working to achieve bronze certification. Update zoning code and permit processes to support solar development.

#4) Recognize IGH residents and businesses taking environmentally friendly actions by developing a recognition program

- Status: In progress
- 06/2023: EAC recommended City Council approval
- 07/2023: City Council approved development of Sustainable IGH
- Present: 2024 EAC Work Plan includes launching program. Actions types include Energy, Landscaping, Water, Waste, and Community. Program is now launched and applications open for IGH residents and businesses on www.ighmn.gov/SustainableIGH.

#5) Explore how the city can support electric vehicle readiness

- 02/2023: City Council approved joining EV Smart
- 07/2023: EAC recommended EECBG be used towards a fleet electric vehicle
- 08/2023: City Council selected different use for EECBG funds
- Present: City staff have been working on creating educational materials for installing EV chargers, doing outreach at events, and including EV communications in newsletters.

Commissioner Ruiz mentioned that raising organics drop-off participation would decrease landfill needs.

Commissioner Sethre added that increased organics drop-off would also help reduce methane generated in landfills.

2024 EAC Work Plan

2024 EAC Work Plan - Purpose

- Expand on City Code language that currently includes "...advise the city council on environmental issues" and "...promote public awareness and understanding of local environmental issues"
- High-level overview, specifies EAC's focus-items for calendar year
- City Council weigh-in on and pre-approve focus-items
- 2024 is the 2nd work plan. Opportunity for the EAC to expand on work plan goals/purpose.
- In Nov. 2023, EAC recommended developing annual agenda calendar.

Review of 2024 EAC Work Plan

- Support Energy Action Plan Implementation
 - 2024 Xcel Energy Partners In Energy MOU. \$2,000 of funding available for outreach and no-cost to the city
 - Residential outreach including energy burdened households, multifamily property owners and renters, and renewable energy
 - Business outreach including collaborating with Chamber of Commerce and promoting energy efficiency and renewable energy.
 - Electric vehicle charger installation and incentives
 - Track Federal and State incentives
 - Implement Sustainable IGH, SolSmart, and EV SmartCollaboration with Chamber of Commerce on business outreach, incentives, etc.
- Support Solid Waste Abatement Program
- Support new Sustainable IGH recognition program
- Support SolSmart implementation as related items arise
- Review landfill expansion applications related to the anticipated Pine Bend Landfill proposed expansion
- Incorporate stormwater and groundwater educational items into EAC agendas
- Incorporate natural resources-related educational items into EAC agendas
- Other business as usual items

Review of Tentative 2024 EAC Agenda Calendar

- April - Annual Water Pollution Prevention Presentation by City Engineering staff
- May - Sustainable IGH applications review and Energy Action Plan 2023 Data Review
- June - Commissioner appointments, 2025 EAC Work Plan Discussion
- July - 2025 EAC Work Plan Approval, Pine Bend Landfill Annual Gas Migration and Operations Update

Staff Recommendations

- EAC asked to provide comments and/or items for 2024 agenda calendar.

Commissioner Mikulski commended City staff and the EAC for the progress already achieved on the Work Plan.

Commissioner Savage mentioned she would like to work on City-subsidized ash tree removal. Ally Sutherland, Environmental Specialist, responded that right now she has been told by the Parks Department there is a lack of staff available to oversee these kinds of grant programs, but the EAC can invite the Brian Swoboda, Parks Superintendent, to present on the topic. Commissioner Sethre mentioned that Parks Superintendent Swoboda is knowledgeable about parks and boulevard tree removal and recommended him as a potential speaker about the City's emerald ash borer management plan and funding sources.

Commissioner Sethre asked if there will be additional energy squad visits from Xcel for 2024. Mrs. Sutherland said she anticipated some would continue to be available.

Commissioner Sethre mentioned that new commissioner applications are due May 1.

Chair Goodman seconded the idea of having Parks Superintendent Swoboda visit the EAC. She also mentioned her experience with removing an ash tree that was in the right-of-way and not being able to replace it with another tree. She asked if April's presentation will include information about landscaping for clean water. Mrs. Sutherland confirmed it will.

Commissioner Boehmke asked whether businesses are being encouraged to look at EV charging station grants. Mrs. Sutherland responded that engaging with more businesses about energy topics, including EV charging opportunities, is part of the 2024 Energy Action Plan work plan.

Commissioner Ruiz expressed interest in consulting with other cities on how they expanded participation in organics recycling. He also raised light pollution as an EAC topic for future meetings. He shared ideas for using sand or chicken grit, which are recyclable, as salt replacements.

Commissioner Boehmke mentioned cherry stone grit as another environmentally-friendly alternative.

Mrs. Sutherland mentioned that she welcomes Commissioner input regarding a potential light pollution 2025 Work Plan item during the discussions planned for the June 2024 EAC meeting.

Commissioner Trenzeluk commended Mrs. Sutherland's presentation and asked about EAC involvement in No-Mow May. Mrs. Sutherland mentioned that research supporting No-Mow May has been retracted due to data quality concerns and said that the City is focusing on promoting managed natural landscapes to increase pollinator habitat and raising awareness that the 8-inch turf height limit does not apply to these (bee lawns, pollinator gardens, rain gardens.) She shared the City website's new Yard and Garden page with information about creating these (www.ighmn.gov/YardandGarden). Commissioner Ruiz mentioned buffalo grass as a sustainable option for low-maintenance turf, naming Prairie Moon and Prairie Restorations as Minnesota sources.

Commissioner Trenzeluk is interested in finding out more about EVs' lifespan environmental impact, including battery creation and disposal, and mentioned the potential future impact on parking structures due to increased weight of electric vehicles. Mrs. Sutherland mentioned that she is open to speaker suggestions but pointed out that EVs are not a focus item for the 2024 EAC Work Plan and additional research on these questions has been shared with the EAC via email.

Commissioner Sethre suggested that the EAC attend a Park and Recreation Advisory Commission meeting in the future. Mrs. Sutherland said the calendars are set for the year, so a joint session is not possible, but the Commissioners are welcome to attend and/or watch a meeting. Commissioner Sethre offered to keep an eye on agendas and keep the Commission posted about upcoming relevant topics.

Motion by Commissioner Savage, second by Commissioner Sethre, to invite Parks Superintendent Swoboda to present to the EAC about topics such as EAB and the City's tree nursery.

Ayes: 8

Nays: 0 Motion carried.

6. Public Comment

None.

7. Commissioner and Staff Comments

Chair Goodman announced the launch of the IGH Sustainable Recognition Program to reward IGH residents and businesses who have taken actions that promote energy efficiency, renewable energy, native landscaping, waste reduction, water conservation, strong community, and more.

The application is now open at IGHmn.gov/SustainableIGH. All awardees will receive a printed certificate, digital awards, and recognition from City Council, with a limited number of yard signs also available. One resident and one business will receive special recognition for significant sustainable achievements.

Commissioner Ruiz mentioned Dakota Electric's efforts to promote homeowner battery storage and City efforts to reduce costs.

8. Adjourn

Motion by Commissioner Savage, second by Commissioner Ruiz, to adjourn the meeting at 8:12 p.m.

Ayes: 8

Nays: 0 Motion carried.