

**Inver Grove Heights Environmental Advisory Commission**  
**8150 Barbara Avenue**  
**Thursday, April 25, 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, April 25, 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, Nick Ruiz, Ted Trenzeluk, Marjorie Savage, Kevin Sethre, Brian Barner

Absent: Patti Mikulski (unexcused), Vacancy

**3. Presentations**

A. Annual Stormwater Pollution Prevention Presentation

Steve Dodge, Assistant City Engineer, presented on the City's Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) to educate the public and meet the annual requirements of the Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems (MS4) permit.

The PowerPoint presentation reviewed the following topics:

1. 2023 Achievements of Minimum Control Measures (MCMs)
  - a. Minimum Control Measures 1 and 2 (Public education and outreach, public participation and involvement)
    - i. Published four Insights newsletter articles on storm water management topics
    - ii. Offered Landscaping for Clean Water workshops (run through the Dakota County Soil and Water Conservation District, DCSWCD)
    - iii. Held annual public meeting on Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan
    - iv. Offered Garden Maintenance workshops (run through the Dakota County Watershed Conservation District, DCWCD)
    - v. Provided educational displays and giveaways at libraries and local events (with Eagan-Inver Grove Heights Watershed Management Organization, E-IGH WMO)
    - vi. Collaborated with local stormwater groups
      1. DCSWCD, DCWCD, E-IGH WMO, Lower Mississippi River Watershed Management Organization, Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources, Minnesota Cities Stormwater Coalition)
    - vii. Posted educational updates on social media
    - viii. Posted annual report to Minnesota Pollution Control Agency on the City's website
  - b. Minimum Control Measure 3 (Illicit discharge detection and elimination)
    - i. Updated storm sewer map on GIS (Geographic Information Systems) to assist with containment efforts
    - ii. Conducted annual stormwater inspections and responded to reports
    - iii. Reviewed illicit discharges and issued eight Notice of Violations
  - c. Minimum Control Measure 4 (Construction site stormwater runoff control)

- i. Monitored National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permits and issued 10 Erosion and Sediment Notice of Violations
  - d. Minimum Control Measure 5 (Post-construction storm water management)
    - i. Administered the City's Stormwater Management Plan (SWMP)
    - ii. Administered the Northwest Area SWMP, which has a higher storm volume requirement due to regional topography (glacially-formed basins)
    - iii. Updated Best Management Practices for the City's stormwater inventory (pipes, ponds, basins, aprons and pipe ends, control structures, manholes)
    - iv. Conducted three plan reviews; assisted with nine projects under construction and six development projects needing maintenance agreements
  - e. Minimum Control Measure 6 (Pollution prevention and good housekeeping for municipal operations)
    - i. Inspected stormwater inventory (Goal is to cover 20 percent of stormwater discharge points into ponds and all 280 control structures each year)
    - ii. Conducted maintenance and repair of facilities and structures as needed
    - iii. Swept streets using regenerative (vacuum-assisted) sweeper in spring, fall, and as needed
    - iv. Ensured proper storage of road salt and reduced road salt usage by pre-treating roads with salt brine as weather allows
- 2. Other 2023 Achievements
  - a. MS4 Permit Compliance
    - i. Updated the following:
      - 1. Educational materials priority list
      - 2. City-owned and -operated facilities pollutant monitoring priority list
      - 3. Enforcement Response Procedures (ERPs) for emergency work
      - 4. Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for standard work
- 3. 2024 MS4 Objectives
  - a. Construct stormwater quality improvements on City and County projects
  - b. Review private development agreements and construction
  - c. Provide annual training on Illicit Discharge Detection and Elimination (IDDE), MS4, and NPDES
  - d. Make annual updates to City facilities map on GIS
  - e. Develop annual televising program
  - f. Apply for stormwater grants to provide water quality devices
  - g. Update Stormwater Capital Improvement Plan to identify more funding and revenue for storm system improvements
  - h. Update City's website with information on rain gardens, smart salting, IDDE, SWPPP, and yard/household hazardous waste
  - i. Continue to administer Northwest Area standards with new developments
  - j. Attend various organization meetings (LMRWMO, E-IGH WMO, MCSC)
  - k. Maintain Northwest Area and City stormwater models
  - l. Contract out major repairs of stormwater facilities
  - m. Continue routine stormwater facility maintenance
- 4. Opportunities for Public Involvement
  - a. Adopt a storm drain

- b. Help with storm drain stenciling
- c. Take a Landscaping for Clean Water class
- d. Volunteer at outreach events
- e. Serve on a water management organization board or environmental commission
- f. Get informed via local organizations' websites

Commissioner Trenzeluk asked why rain gardens are not part of the City's inventory. Assistant City Engineer Dodge clarified that they are included in the "ponds and basins" category.

Commissioner Trenzeluk asked about further promotion of rain gardens. Assistant City Engineer Dodge clarified that only about 5 percent of Inver Grove Heights soils allow for enough infiltration to make rain garden creation an efficient use of stormwater management funds.

Commissioner Trenzeluk asked about whether stormwater ends up in the Mississippi or an aquifer. Assistant City Engineer Dodge responded that in the Northwest Area, stormwater collects in the glacial till basins and then enters the groundwater. In other parts of the City, water is either piped directly to the river, or goes through a series of ponds and then is pumped to the river.

Commissioner Ruiz asked about particulate disposal after street sweeping. Assistant City Engineer Dodge answered that the particulate material gets landfilled due to contaminants.

Commissioner Ruiz asked about the efficacy of the Engineering Department's educational outreach. Assistant City Engineer Dodge answered that the MS4 annual report to the MPCA contains data on the number of people reached.

Commissioner Boehmke asked about how many storm drains are currently adopted. Engineering Technician Nicole Portugal answered that 30 storm drains have been adopted over the last year and a half of the program, with more expected to follow due to promotion at upcoming local events. Assistant City Engineer Dodge added that storm drain adoption comes with naming rights and encouraged people to check out the program and spread the word.

Chair Goodman commented that she put rain gardens in her yard despite clayey soil and encouraged people to take the Landscaping for Clean Water classes. Assistant City Engineer Dodge commented that rain gardens can work in a variety of soil types on private land, but that for public projects, the Engineering Department must consider efficiency (amount of stormwater captured) to get the most utility out of limited stormwater funding.

Chair Goodman asked about whether there are publicly accessible maps of stormwater systems. Assistant City Engineer Dodge answered that this information is not publicly available.

Commissioner Barner asked why the stormwater fee is assessed to property owners who live on properties without paved surfaces. Assistant City Engineer Dodge answered that all area residents benefit from infrastructure that maintains natural resources and encouraged the Commissioner to contact the Utility Billing Department with any situation-specific questions.

Commissioner Sethre asked about the purpose of the stormwater utility fee and what it is used for. Assistant City Engineer Dodge answered that the stormwater utility fee helps support maintenance of the stormwater management system. However, the fee alone is not generating enough revenue to cover the cost of necessary projects, so other City funds are also used, e.g., the Host Community Fund. In the past, the Pavement Management Fund was used to cover maintenance of stormwater systems, but this is not ideal and reduced the money available for things like filling potholes. Also, with more development and more stormwater management structures, more staff are needed for inspection and maintenance.

Commissioner Sethre asked whether the glacial till basins recharge the aquifer. Assistant City Engineer Dodge answered yes, they do.

Commissioner Sethre asked about quantifying and publicizing the return on investment of the City's reduced salt usage since 2007. Assistant City Engineer Dodge said that the Street Superintendent annually tracks salt usage, so the reduction of City funding spent on salt is trackable.

Commissioner Sethre mentioned that leaves in the stormwater systems are problematic. Assistant City Engineer Dodge confirmed that leaves and grass clippings decay in storm systems and cause algal blooms. Therefore, they should be taken to a compost site.

Commissioner Savage thanked Assistant City Engineer Dodge for the presentation and asked how people can get involved. Assistant City Engineer Dodge suggested contacting [EngineeringInfo@ighmn.gov](mailto:EngineeringInfo@ighmn.gov) or calling 651-450-2570 and mentioned that City staff train volunteers.

Commissioner Savage asked about opportunities for youth group volunteering. Assistant City Engineer Dodge did not know of any off-hand.

Commissioner Savage asked about the biggest issues the stormwater system faces. Assistant City Engineer Dodge said more funding is needed. The Engineering Department is currently applying for a grant to help fund a multimillion-dollar project dealing with a large-scale pipe that's collapsing. There are many deferred maintenance needs - that's why getting funding for storm water maintenance is important. All citizens have an investment in the city infrastructure as a whole, and storm water is part of that infrastructure.

Commissioner Ruiz mentioned after taking a Landscaping for Clean Water class, he will be replacing his lawn with more native plants and asked about the impact of fertilizer use on storm water quality. Assistant City Engineer Dodge said that the Engineering Department's new Environmental Resources Technician is a native plants specialist and has been helpful with the new ordinance allowing native grasses and promoting fescues (grasses that grow shorter year-round and are more drought-tolerant). There are many other benefits to planting native grasses. They need less fertilizer. They have deeper roots which regenerate, creating porous areas in soil to help with water infiltration. They also provide pollination benefits for bees and insects. There are also natural ways to fertilize lawns that are less impactful. Assistant City Engineer Dodge mentioned the importance of not over-applying fertilizer and applying it at the right time.

Commissioner Ruiz expressed interest in replacing grass on public properties. Assistant City Engineer Dodge recommended reaching out to the native plant expert on staff.

Commissioner Sethre asked about the impact of federal rulemaking on local resources. Assistant City Engineer Dodge clarified that there are ongoing relationships with federal environmental agencies; for example, the City works with the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, which operates within the EPA.

Commissioner Sethre asked if there is municipal leaf drop-off in Inver Grove Heights. Environmental Specialist Ally Sutherland answered that the City does not own/operate a municipal drop site, but South St. Paul has one that is open to all Dakota County residents (leaves and grass only). There are also private companies with drop sites.

Environmental Specialist Ally Sutherland brought up a recently created resource, the Yard and Garden page on the City's website ([ighmn.gov/yardandgarden](http://ighmn.gov/yardandgarden)) and mentioned that it has lots of ideas and best practices for environmentally friendly yards and gardens. She also asked Commissioners if they had questions for Assistant City Engineer Dodge regarding Watershed Management Organizations (WMOs) as they have been raised by the Commission multiple times in the past. Assistant City Engineer Dodge mentioned he represents the city at the Eagan-IGH WMO, and another staff member represents the city at the Lower Mississippi WMO (LMRWMO).

Commissioner Sethre asked about what Watershed Management Organizations do. Assistant City Engineer Dodge answered that they promote environmental projects throughout the county and administer/run/teach classes. They also are responsible for protecting wetlands within the county and minimizing disturbance from developments. He also suggested visiting their websites for more information.

Commissioner Trenzeluk commented that it would be helpful to have representatives visit the Environmental Advisory Commission.

Chair Goodman mentioned that the Landscaping for Clean Water classes are open to anybody. She recommended them.

Lindsey Albright, 7105 Archer Trail, Inver Grove Heights resident and Water Resources Specialist with the Dakota County Soil and Water Conservation District at their Farmington office, said the City provides technical assistance with the Lower Mississippi WMO and the Eagan-IGH WMO on various stormwater projects and county partnership projects. She mentioned other Soil and Water Conservation District work including working with townships, churches, and landowners; maintaining water sediment control basins; running a prairie restoration program; and offering the Landscaping for Clean Water classes every spring. There is also a new pilot program this year - workshops on alternatives to turf grass (Apple Valley and Rosemount). These workshops are open to Inver Grove Heights residents.

Commissioner Sethre thanked Water Resources Specialist Albright for attending. Commissioner Trenzeluk seconded this.

Chair Goodman mentioned the DCSWCD's work on the Inver Glen Library rain garden project and Thompson Lake and Seidl's Lake - there are many DCSWCD collaborations with county and city parks.

Commissioner Ruiz asked about ways to improve outreach. Water Resources Specialist Albright responded that the question of how to reach people with environmental information and opportunities is a widespread problem that's actively being worked on.

Sandy Honerbrink, 2318 75th St E, asked about whether where water used on grass goes and the water quality of local lakes. Assistant City Engineer Dodge responded that there are different stormwater conveyances in different parts of the City. The east side has limited stormwater ponding - it's an older part of the City, so lots of pipes go straight to river. Dakota County and IGH have added ponds where possible, but they are small because the area is more developed, so there's less land available. 75<sup>th</sup> Street is a more central part of City, with a pond system to store water and collect sediment. Newer developments, such as those around 80<sup>th</sup> Street, have bioretention ponds with native vegetation and specially engineered soils. There is generally a stormwater detention section and a stormwater infiltration section in these ponds.

Sandy Honerbrink, 2318 75th St E, asked if the lakes are drinkable. Assistant City Engineer Dodge answered that the City does not test lakes for quality and has no data to share.

Sandy Honerbrink, 2318 75th St E, asked who tests the water quality of lakes and about water supply quality. Assistant City Engineer Dodge answered that the Public Works Department is available for answering specific questions on water supply quality.

Commissioner Boehmke clarified that MPCA tests lakes and streams on a 10-year cycle. Sandy Honerbrink, 2318 75th St E, said that she had asked MPCA about the testing schedule and expressed dissatisfaction with the lack of clarity in MPCA's response. She expressed that more regular testing and more transparency are needed to ensure the safety of the drinking water supply.

Todd Kruse, 8891 Broderick Blvd, thanked the Commissioners for their service and commented that when he served as an Adviser for the Friends of the Mississippi River, he realized no one knew who owned the shoreline and that this was an issue when it came to doing outreach. He also commented on the shortage of volunteers for the Adopt a Park Program and asked the EAC to help promote the program.

#### **4. Approval of Minutes**

A. Approval of Minutes from the Thursday, February 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2024 and Thursday, March 28<sup>th</sup>, 2024  
Environmental Advisory Commission Meetings

Motion by Commissioner Trenzeluk, second by Commissioner Ruiz, to approve both the minutes from Thursday, February 22<sup>nd</sup> meeting and the minutes from Thursday, March 28<sup>th</sup> meeting as submitted.

Ayes: 7

Nays: 0      Motion carried.

#### **5. Regular Agenda**

No items.

## **6. Public Comment**

No comments.

## **7. Commissioner and Staff Comments**

Chair Goodman mentioned the Sustainable IGH community recognition program to award those who have promoted energy efficiency, renewable energy, native landscaping, waste reduction, water conservation, strong community, and more. The application is open through April 30<sup>th</sup> on [ighmn.gov/SustainableIGH](http://ighmn.gov/SustainableIGH). The application takes about 10 minutes. Please have project details and photos ready to share.

Environmental Specialist Ally Sutherland wished everyone a happy Earth Week and encouraged people to apply to Sustainable IGH's recognition program, mentioning that the first 20 people to apply will be sent a free yard sign to help promote the program. There have been 15 applications so far. She also mentioned that the next Environmental Advisory Commission (EAC) meeting will be May 16<sup>th</sup> and that the City is accepting new Commissioner applications for the EAC, Planning Commission, and Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission at [ighmn.gov/CommissionerApp](http://ighmn.gov/CommissionerApp). The process includes an interview and City Council approval.

Commissioner Sethre shared a quote he found on the meeting agenda page of a 2012 Potable Water Working Group - "Water is the life blood of all living things."

Commissioner Ruiz mentioned that he met with two students from a local high school's environmental studies program and said he would contact the program's faculty about potentially getting more students involved with the EAC's work.

## **8. Adjourn**

Motion by Commissioner Savage, second by Commissioner Boehmke, to adjourn the meeting at 9:02 p.m.

Ayes: 7

Nays: 0      Motion carried.