

Inver Grove Heights Environmental Advisory Commission
8150 Barbara Avenue
Thursday, June 27, 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, June 27, 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: Marjorie Savage, Patti Mikulski, Tracie Killion, Jon Wallerick, Nick Ruiz, Ted Trenzeluk, Nicole Boehmke
Absent: Kevin Sethre

3. Presentations

A. New Commissioner Introductions and Oath of Office

Environmental Specialist Ally Sutherland administered the Oath of Office to newly appointed Environmental Advisory Commissioners Tracie Killion, Jon Wallerick, Ted Trenzeluk and Patti Mikulski.

B. Pine Bend Landfill Annual Operations and Gas Migration Update

Pine Bend Landfill Environmental Manager Aaron Janusz presented an annual update on gas migration monitoring/collection efforts.

The site began to be used as an unlined pit landfill in 1971. It was later capped, but methane gas continues to migrate out of the area. Landfill gas is 50% methane, and Minnesota rules dictate that at the property boundary, the concentration of methane must not exceed the lower explosive limit (LEL), which is 5%.

Gas extraction wells (drilled vertically) draw the landfill gas up for collection. There are also 39 probes, monitored quarterly, to measure the methane concentration of the gas. Any probes with exceedances are monitored monthly. The probes are nested to check gas concentration at different depths. In total, there are 242 collection points.

Continuing efforts to address gas migration include additional liner to cover the unlined area and additional gas wells. Historically, there have been exceedances on the east, south, and west sides of the landfill.

The landfill handles 1,600 tons per day of municipal solid waste. The landfill generates 2,700 cubic feet per minute of landfill gas, which is collected on site and turned into natural gas. Each year, the landfill pumps and collects 10 million gallons of leachate, which is then hauled to Metropolitan Council Environmental Services for treatment and subsequently discharged into the Mississippi River.

The City is included in the landfill's progress on gas migration via work plans and reports. In 2018, the City set addressing exceedances as a priority for the landfill. Subsequent efforts to mitigate gas migration have included geoprobe investigation of neighboring areas, probe evacuations, passive vent installation, turbines, and radon fans. As a result, the number of probes with exceedances has dropped from 15 probes in 2019 to 3 probes in 2024.

Potential future efforts include wellfield tuning and soil vapor extraction. In areas with exceedances, a more robust passive vent system is probably appropriate.

Environmental Specialist Ally Sutherland stated that Pine Bend Landfill submitted a request for vertical expansion, which is still under review. It will be considered at the July Environmental Advisory Commission meeting.

Commissioner Mikulski asked about the location of the probes with exceedances. Environmental Manager Aaron Janusz responded that there's some on the north side, and there's also a challenging area on the east side.

Commissioner Mikulski asked about what might be causing the issues in those areas and whether the grading of the gravel pit that preceded the landfill plays a role. Environmental Manager Aaron Janusz responded that he's not aware of what the slope of the unlined landfill looked like. He stated that there are gas wells drilled into that older waste. He noted that gas production decreases over time.

Commissioner Killion asked about the composition of gases in the collection wells. Environmental Manager Aaron Janusz responded that landfill gas is 50 percent methane. There is some oxygen, which they try to minimize due to combustion risk, and some non-methane organic compounds.

Commissioner Killion asked about using nitrogen to push the natural gas out. Environmental Manager Aaron Janusz responded that he is open to investigating; the fact that the gas is continuously being generated presents an issue.

Commissioner Killion asked about long-term management plans. Environmental Manager Aaron Janusz said 2042 is the anticipated end date for the landfill, and the gas plant would run for 10-20 years beyond that.

Commissioner Wallerick asked whether other landfills have been consulted for gas management ideas. Environmental Manager Aaron Janusz responded that most landfills have more buffer area; Pine Bend is bounded by railroad tracks. However, probe evacuation and radon fans were ideas that came up in consultation with other landfills.

Commissioner Ruiz asked about the timing of Phase 1 and 2. Environmental Manager Aaron Janusz said Phase 1 is mostly the northern part of the landfill, and that it is now sealed off.

Commissioner Trenzeluk thanked Environmental Manager Aaron Janusz for the presentation and asked about the specific concentration of methane gas in probes with exceedances. Environmental Manager

Aaron Janusz said in the area with ongoing issues, there are spikes to 20-30% methane. Other probes generally have smaller exceedances.

C. Review of Commissioner Guidelines

Environmental Specialist Ally Sutherland presented a summary of the Commissioner Guidelines, which were created to help maintain respectful, efficient, and orderly meetings. She reviewed the purpose of commissioner guidelines, responsibilities of commissioners, responsibilities of the Chair, and the agenda order.

4. Approval of Minutes

A. Approval of Minutes from the Thursday, May 16, 2024 Environmental Advisory Commission Meeting

Motion by Commissioner Boehmke, second by Commissioner Mikulski to approve the minutes from Thursday, May 16, 2024, as submitted.

Ayes: 8

Nays: 0 Motion carried.

5. Regular Agenda

A. Discussion on the Draft 2025 EAC Work Plan

Environmental Specialist Ally Sutherland reviewed progress on the 2024 Environmental Advisory Commission Work Plan:

1. Support the City's Energy Action Plan (completed)
2. Support the City's Solid Waste Abatement Program (as items arise)
3. Support the new Sustainable IGH Recognition Program (completed)
4. Support SolSmart implementation (in progress)
5. Review landfill expansion applications related to the anticipated Pine Bend Landfill proposed expansion (in progress)
6. Incorporate stormwater and groundwater educational items into EAC agendas (stormwater complete, groundwater in progress)
7. Incorporate natural resources-related educational items into the EAC agendas (in progress)
8. Process other business as usual items related to landfills, wetlands, airport noise, and other assigned duties of the Environmental Advisory Commission per City Code 2-4-2 (in progress)

Environmental Specialist Ally Sutherland presented the 2025 Work Plan with the Commission's annual priorities:

1. Support City's Energy Action Plan

- a. Extend the Xcel Energy Partners in Energy Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) through 2025
 - b. Provide business outreach related to building energy audits, electric vehicle charger installation opportunities, renewable energy, and available energy tax credits and rebates
 - c. Provide residential outreach related to home energy audits, assistance for energy-burdened households, renewable energy, and available energy tax credits and rebates
 - d. Provide multifamily property outreach related to building energy audits and available energy tax credits and rebates
2. Support Sustainable IGH Awards program
 - a. Help promote the program by hosting information tables at City events
 - b. Review applications and make recommendations to the City Council for bronze, silver, gold, and special recognition awardees
3. Host Annual Stormwater Pollution Prevention Meeting in partnership with the City's Engineering division
4. Support existing City environmental programming
 - a. Solid waste abatement programming related to waste reduction, recycling, and organics initiatives
 - b. Minnesota GreenStep Cities
 - c. SolSmart
5. Increase the Commission's awareness of local environmental issues by inviting speakers to EAC meetings
6. Process other business as usual items related to landfills, wetlands, airport noise, and other assigned duties of the Environmental Advisory Commission

Commissioner Boehmke said she appreciates the flexibility in inviting speakers as issues arise.

Commissioner Trenzeluk agreed.

Commissioner Ruiz asked about business outreach. He suggested asking Sustainable IGH award winners about the most effective ways to approach businesses. Environmental Specialist Ally Sutherland said that she could add fostering local partnerships as bullet point 1E.

Commissioner Wallerick asked about sustainability initiatives in City facilities. Environmental Specialist Ally Sutherland answered that City facilities fall under Parks and Recreation who have larger facilities management plans. There are some goals for City facilities in the City's Energy Action Plan (e.g., improving energy efficiency), but EAC has so far prioritized outreach. The EAC could request the Facilities Department to present on how the EAC could be involvement with City Facilities. Environmental Specialist Ally Sutherland also noted that the Facilities Manager position has been unfilled for several month but a new staff member as recently been onboarded.

Chair Goodman suggested adding "grants" under 1B, 1C, 1D to name that funding source explicitly. Environmental Specialist Ally Sutherland agreed to do that.

Commissioner Killion asked about adding an item for presenting data to the public. Environmental Specialist Ally Sutherland asked what data is in question. She is open to adding an item to indicate the EAC's interest in holding this type of meeting if the EAC provides more clarification.

Commissioner Savage asked that visiting speakers tie into public interest as well as Commissioners' interest. Environmental Specialist Ally Sutherland agreed that visiting speakers are an opportunity for public education and suggested that presentations could be scheduled earlier to allow for promotion to the public.

Chair Goodman suggested adding "and increase the public's awareness" to item 5.

Commissioner Killion asked about restarting the volunteer Wetland Health Evaluation Program as another means of public involvement. Environmental Specialist Ally Sutherland said that the Wetland Health Evaluation Program is run through Dakota County, but the City's role could be to help promote it (e.g., by including it in the Insights newsletter or posting it on social media.)

Commissioner Killion asked whether it might be possible for the Commission to get a report from the program on the City's wetlands' health. Environmental Specialist Ally Sutherland said that this sounded more like staff tasks versus something that would generally be added into an EAC Work Plan. Instead, Environmental Specialist Ally Sutherland suggested the EAC invite WEP to be a speaker.

Commissioner Savage said that the Commission could encourage that some wetlands within Inver Grove Heights be included in the Wetland Health Evaluation Program, as they have not been included for volunteer testing in the past. Commissioner Savage said that the EAC could encourage participation in WHEP, regardless. Environmental Specialist Ally Sutherland said she would ask Engineering if IGH is involved in WHEP and if residents can be involved.

Commissioner Savage also asked about guidelines and/or expectations for responding to people outside of meetings (e.g., people contacting her directly to ask about PFAS). Environmental Specialist Ally Sutherland said it's generally a best practice to encourage people to come to a public meeting to share concerns and/or bring questions to City staff.

B. EAC Appointments for Chair and Vice Chair

Environmental Specialist Ally Sutherland reviewed the Chair and Vice Chair's roles per City code.

Motion by Commissioner Trenzeluk, second by Commissioner Ruiz, to appoint Sara Goodman as Chair.

Ayes: 8

Nays: 0 Motion carried.

Motion by Commissioner Trenzeluk, second by Commissioner Boehmke, to appoint Nick Ruiz as Vice Chair.

Ayes: 8

Nays: 0 Motion carried.

6. Public Comment

There were none.

7. Commissioner and Staff Comments

Commissioner Ruiz said that the Commission should have access to environmental data, e.g., how much solid waste is reduced by organics recycling, how much water and/or fertilizer is saved through County programs like Lawns Reimagined, etc. He suggested asking Dakota County to run pilot studies or otherwise collect and share data for their environmental programs.

Environmental Specialist Ally Sutherland responded in the affirmative that agencies should have information to share; in the case of the landfill, Dakota County is studying the impacts of collecting and diverting organics on landfill capacity.

8. Adjourn

Motion by Commissioner Savage, second by Commissioner Trenzeluk, to adjourn the meeting at 8:28 p.m.

Ayes: 8
Nays: 0 Motion carried.