

**ENVIRONMENTAL ADVISORY COMMISSION MINUTES
CITY OF INVER GROVE HEIGHTS**

City Council Chambers - 8150 Barbara Avenue
Thursday, May 22, 2025 - 7:00 p.m.

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Goodman called the Environmental Advisory Commission Meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

2. ROLL CALL

Commissioners Present: Sara Goodman (Chair)
Marjorie Savage
Tracie Killion
Nick Ruiz
Jon Wallerick
Kevin Sethre
Patti Mikulski

Commissioners Absent: Ted Trenzeluk - *excused*
Nichole Boehmke - *excused*

Staff Present: Stacy Bodsberg, Community Development Specialist
Paul Merchlewicz, City Engineer
Nicole Portugal, Senior Engineering Technician

3. CONSENT AGENDA

A. Minutes of the April 24, 2025, Environmental Advisory Commission Meeting.

Motion by Sethre, Second by Savage, to Approve Minutes as Submitted.

Ayes: 7

Nays: 0 Motion carried.

4. REGULAR BUSINESS

A. Annual Local Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan Presentation.

Program Management Supervisor Joe Barten with the Dakota County Soil & Water Conservation District (DCSWCD) and Lower Mississippi River Watershed Management Organization (LMRWMO) presented on the Local Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) to provide background information on Minimum Control Measures (MCMs) and Best Management Practices (BMPs), gather citizen input on the SWPPP, and meet the requirements of the Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems (MS4) permit.

• **Why Storm Water Matters**

- Urbanization and development create more compacted surfaces and more impervious surfaces, which cause increased runoff
- As this runoff enters the storm water system, it picks up oil, chemicals, nutrients, sediment, litter, heavy metals, disease-causing organisms (collectively: gunk)
- Gunk leads to turbidity and nutrient impairment of water resources

- Managing storm water is necessary for maintaining a clean, safe drinking water supply; desirable recreation areas; and natural ecological functioning.
- **History of Local Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) and National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES)**
 - The Industrial Revolution and increased agricultural production led to increased pollution and erosion impacts
 - The severity of these issues led to federal Clean Water Act in 1972
 - The Clean Water Act helped reduce large discharges/point-source issues
 - The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) created guidelines and a system for regulating pollution -- National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES)
 - The EPA gives states the authority to enforce pollution regulation at the state level via the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA).
 - MPCA created the Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) permit
 - Sanitary and storm sewers used to be combined (no longer common)
 - MS4 gives cities minimum requirements to enforce via city code
 - MS4 regulates the system of conveyances (pipes, streets, ditches, storm drains)
 - The last update to MS4 was in 2020
 - Different regulations apply to large cities versus small cities
 - Inver Grove Heights is considered a small city under MS4
 - Other Water Resource Public Organizations
 - Dakota County Soil & Water Conservation District (DCSWCD)
 - Eagan-Inver Grove Heights Watershed Management Organization (E-IGH WMO)
 - Lower Mississippi River Watershed Management Organization (LMRWMO)
 - Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (MN BWSR)
 - Minnesota Cities Stormwater Coalition (MCSC)
- **Six Minimum Control Measures**
 - 1. Public Education and Outreach
 - 2. Public Participation and Involvement
 - 3. Illicit Discharge Detection and Elimination
 - Examples of illicit discharge sources:
 - Household cleaning services
 - Trenchless boring slurry discharge
 - Improper disposal of oil or household chemicals
 - Failing septic systems
 - Illegal dumping
 - Spills from accidents or gas stations
 - 4. Construction Site Stormwater Runoff Control
 - 5. Post-Construction Stormwater Management
 - 6. Pollution Prevention and Good Housekeeping for Municipal Operations
- **2024 Accomplishments**
 - (MCM 1) Publicized storm water-related information and programs to City residents via Insights newsletter (Adopt a drain, pet waste, illicit discharge detection, yard waste, salt use, chemical disposal)

- (MCM 1 and MCM 2) Supported the Landscaping for Clean Water program to improve water quality via engaging the public in designing, implementing, and maintaining shoreline restoration projects and native gardens
- (MCM 1) Held SWPPP annual public meeting
- (MCM 2) Trained select City staff to be alert for illicit discharges and storm water issues
- (MCM 1 and MCM 2) Coordinated storm water management work between the DCSWCD and both WMOs in the area (E-IGHWMO and LMRWMO)
 - Storm water educational displays at events
 - Clean water educational bags at libraries
 - Inver Glen Library Salt Week
 - Salt Smart program
 - Salt Smart cups
 - Rain barrel program
 - Storm drain stenciling
 - Adopt a drain
- (MCM 3) Updated the storm sewer map GIS to help track source of illicit discharge
- (MCM 3) Completed annual storm sewer inspections
- (MCM 3) Issued three notices of violation for illicit discharges
- (MCM 4) Oversaw and enforced construction site storm water runoff control
 - All construction sites over one acre need both state and city permits, which require having a Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan
 - Contractors have to designate someone to check sites after rainfall, etc.
 - Erosion/sediment control requirements apply to all permits in Inver Grove Heights
- (MCM 5) Oversaw and enforced requirements for landowners to implement permanent stormwater management practices
 - Conducted 7 plan reviews
 - Managed 17 major projects currently under construction
 - Created permanent storm water facilities maintenance agreements for six development projects
 - Maintained hundreds of Best Management Practices and maintenance agreements for privately owned storm water ponds, infiltration basins, underground treatment chambers, stormwater reuse systems, etc.
 - Requires inspections to ensure systems are functioning
- (MCM 5) Enforced the 1-inch infiltration requirement
 - When the first inch of rain can infiltrate, most storm water pollution issues are addressed
- (MCM 5) Administered Storm Water Management Plan (SWMP) and Northwest Area SWMP
- (MCM 5) Updated City enforcement procedures and policies
- (MCM 5) Updated City-wide Best Management Practices (BMPs) for stormwater inventory
 - Over 120 miles of stormwater piping
 - Over 600 ponds and basins
 - Over 4,000 catch basins and drains
 - Over 1,500 aprons and pipe ends

- (MCM 6) Over 450 environmental manholes and control structures
- (MCM 6) Staff conducted inspections on public stormwater facilities
 - 20% of discharge points and ponds
 - 100% of environmental structures
 - Major and minor maintenance and repairs
- (MCM 6) Swept all City streets and parking lots in Spring and Fall
 - Additional sweeping also completed as necessary
- (MCM 6) Continued efforts to reduce chloride in water bodies (55% reduction since 2007)
 - Methods to reduce road salt:
 - Store on impervious surfaces and reduce transfer loss
 - Cover salt storage areas
 - Implement salt saver sanders with pre-wet tanks
 - Utilize salt brine to pretreat roads
- **2025 Goals**
 - Construct storm water quality improvements on City and County projects
 - Review private development agreements and construction permits as they come in
 - Provide training to all City staff on Illicit Discharge Detection and Elimination (IDDE) and Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems (MS4)
 - Complete annual update to facilities/infrastructure GIS maps
 - Develop televising program
 - Update the storm water Capital Improvement Plan
 - Identify more funding and revenue for storm system improvements and apply for grants
 - Update the city's website with current storm water information (raingardens, smart salting, etc.)
 - Administer Northwest Area standards with new developments
 - Attend various organization meetings (WMOs, MCSC)
 - Update City-wide storm water models
 - Update Water Resources Management Plan
 - Major repairs to stormwater facilities
 - Routine maintenance to storm water facilities
- **Public Involvement Opportunities**
 - Salt Smart
 - Be aware of how much is too much salt to use
 - Adopt a Storm Drain
 - Sign up to help clear a local drain of leaves, trash, and debris to reduce water pollution
 - Scoop the Poop
 - Keep pet waste out of storm water system
 - Storm Drain Stenciling
 - 41 drains stenciled in 2024
 - Educational Boxes
 - Can be brought to events to help educate public on storm water management issues
 - Take a Landscaping for Clean Water, Lawns Reimagined, or Shoreline Restoration class

- Seek appointment on a local Water Management Organization as board member
- Publicize the recently-created video on illicit discharge detection and elimination to help the public know what to look for

Commissioner Wallerick inquired as to whose responsibility it is for managing and maintaining private storm water ponds. Mr. Barten stated that the tracking is a City responsibility. City Engineer Merchlewicz added that reporting and maintenance are the responsibility of the property owner under the storm water facility maintenance agreement (SWFMA).

Mr. Barten stated that maintenance is usually related to growth of invasive vegetation, but this is more of an aesthetic concern, as it does not impact infiltration/functioning.

City Engineer Merchlewicz stated that trash and phosphates from fertilizer were also issues for maintenance.

Commissioner Ruiz inquired about the notices of violation issued. City Engineer Merchlewicz stated that one was a local business dumping cleaning water; another was a fuel spill; he is not sure about the third notice but said it may have been construction-site related.

Commissioner Killion inquired about the possibility of increasing the frequency of cleaning for control structures. City Engineer Merchlewicz stated that he could not estimate the cost of increasing cleanings. One to two Streets employees vacuum out sediments at control structures and selected hotspots at frequencies ranging from yearly to semi-yearly. These hotspots are tracked as potential future places to add control structures.

Commissioner Killion inquired if evaluating the needed frequency of cleaning was part of the inspection process for an area. City Engineer Merchlewicz responded yes; annual inspection of storm structures is used to set the routine for cleanings.

Commissioner Killion inquired about lower-impact options for street reconstruction. Mr. Barten stated that cost is a factor; lower-impact methods can be more expensive than trench methods. The age and condition of the existing system can also limit lower-impact options. City Engineer Merchlewicz stated that's possible, trench boxes are used to minimize excavation areas. Work phasing also helps reduce the amount of area that is exposed at one time. He confirmed that the MPCA did not find any issues in their inspection of Groveland Park's street reconstruction project.

Commissioner Savage inquired about the legality of emptying swimming pools into street drains. Senior Engineering Technician Nicole Portugal stated that City Code requires the water to dechlorinate for seven days before discharge.

Commissioner Sethre inquired about semi-pervious surfaces. Mr. Barten stated that permeable pavement (permeable pavers, concrete, and asphalt) was one tool in the toolbox, but that it was more worthwhile in large urban areas with little to no green space. With Minnesota freeze-thaw conditions lead to significant wear and tear on permeable pavement systems. He suggested bioretention methods for longer-lasting, more self-sufficient storm water management. City Engineer Merchlewicz stated that

the use of permeable pavement is encouraged in the City Code, but it is treated as impervious because regular maintenance is needed to maintain permeability over time. Mr. Barten stated that a layer of organic debris can form an impermeable layer on top of permeable pavers.

Commissioner Killion inquired about storm water management requirements for projects under one acre (e.g., directional bore pits). Mr. Barten stated that under City Code, any building permit, land alteration permit, or plat triggers erosion and sediment control requirements. Utilities and road projects sometimes have exceptions. Senior Engineering Technician Portugal added that 5,000 square feet is the threshold for a Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan being required. City Engineer Merchlewicz added that there were different thresholds for shoreline projects (50 cubic yards or more being disturbed).

Chair Goodman inquired how rain gardens might be added to when street projects happen. City Engineer Merchlewicz stated that the City typically did not suggest rain gardens but could connect homeowners to other organizations. Mr. Barten stated that grant funds might be available through the WMOs.

5. PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

6. COMMISSIONER AND STAFF COMMENTS

Commissioner Ruiz mentioned the upcoming Environment Commissioners Spring Conference Tour and Social Hour. Mr. Ruiz inquired about light pollution and suggested researching what other cities in Dakota County are doing about it.

City Engineer Merchlewicz stated that staff would look for direction from the Council to initiate that. He stated that the City's current practice is to light major intersections or changes in traffic direction and to not over light.

Chair Goodman suggested reviewing the City Code for existing and potential ways to reduce light pollution.

Commissioner Sethre commended everyone for their questions this evening.

7. ADJOURN

Motion by Wallerick, Second by Savage, to adjourn the meeting at 8:09 p.m.

Ayes: 7

Nays: 0 Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted by Will Clashe, Recording Secretary