

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

City Council Chambers – 8150 Barbara Avenue
Thursday, August 28, 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)
Nick Ruiz (Vice-Chair)
Jon Wallerick
Marjorie Savage
Tracie Killion
Ted Trenzeluk
Nichole Boehmke

Commissioners Absent: Patti Mikulski
Kevin Sethre

Staff Present: Liz Kramer, Environmental Specialist

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion by Savage, Second by Killion; to Approve the Agenda as Published.

Ayes: 7

Nays: 0 Motion Carried.

4. CONSENT AGENDA

A. Minutes of the July 24, 2025 Environmental Advisory Commission Meetings

Commissioner Trenzeluk made one correction: he was not requesting a more informal process for sharing information among the Commissioners. Instead, he was asking how to share information between meetings.

Environmental Specialist Kramer answered that Commissioners can email her with items to share with the Commission.

Motion by Ruiz, Second by Savage, to Approve the Minutes with that correction.

Ayes: 7

Nays: 0 Motion carried.

5. REGULAR BUSINESS

A. Partners in Energy Update Presentation

Megan Weck (Senior Community Energy Planner with the Center for Energy and Environment) and Sofia Troutman (Program Manager for Partners in Energy with Xcel Energy) presented on the City's ongoing collaboration with Xcel to engage stakeholders (residents, businesses, schools, nonprofits, and municipal leadership) in conserving natural and financial resources via energy choices.

The Energy Action Plan was developed in 2020 and approved in 2021. Implementation has been continuing since then towards the following goals:

2025 Community Goals and Progress (data through December 2024 and from Xcel Energy only)

- Save stakeholders \$2.6 million
 - \$2.54 million saved by Inver Grove Heights stakeholders via energy efficiency improvements
- Save 20 million kWh of electricity
 - 24.9 million kWh saved (Dakota Electric energy savings not included)
 - Goal has been met and exceeded
- Save 1.3 million therms of natural gas
 - 522,000 therms saved
 - Not on track to meet goal by 2025
- Avoid an estimated 16,000 metric tons of CO₂ equivalent (greenhouse gas emissions)
 - 10,400 MTCO₂e avoided
 - On track to meet goal by 2025

The Energy Action Plan also contains the following 2030 Community Goals:

- Save stakeholders \$5 million
- Save 39 million kWh of electricity
- Save 2.5 million therms of natural gas
- Avoid an estimated 28,000 metric tons of CO₂ equivalent (greenhouse gas emissions)

Implementation Highlights since 2021

- Website, flyers, social media
 - Past informational flyers can be updated for future use
- Environmental E-news listserv (launched in 2022)
- Tabling presence at events (Healthy Living Fair, Food Truck Fair, IGH Days, Farmers Markets, Winter Clothing Swap, etc.)
- Partnership with Inver Hills Community College (students as well as facilities staff)
- Multi-family building owner outreach
- GreenStep Cities and SolSmart activities
- IGH Sustainable Recognition Program Awards

Xcel Energy Residential Programs

- Building and Home Assessments
 - Help small (<4 units) multifamily building managers and homeowners review and understand their energy use
 - Home Energy Squad program is offered by CenterPoint Energy and Xcel Energy and delivered by CEE and ICF
- Equipment Rebates
 - Reduce upfront costs for high-efficiency gas/electric equipment (e.g. heat pumps, refrigerators, furnaces)
- Building and Remodeling energy efficiency guidance and rebates
- Demand Management and Rate Options
 - Reduce/shift energy demand via incentives (e.g. smart thermostats) and special rates
- Renewable Energy

- Install on-site equipment (e.g. solar panels) or offer subscriptions to access renewable energy
- Electric Vehicles
 - Help customers install charging stations and access special rate options (e.g. for charging at night)

Xcel Energy Commercial and Industrial Programs

- New Construction and Renovation
 - Energy Design Assistance
 - Energy Efficient Buildings
- Lighting Efficiency
 - One-Stop Efficiency Shop (bonus rebates available through Xcel)
 - Energy assessments for small and medium businesses (lighting, HVAC, smart thermostats)
- HVAC + R Rebates
 - Rebates for small businesses on high-efficiency heating, ventilation, air conditioning, and refrigeration equipment (rooftop units, chillers, heat pumps, water heaters, etc.)
- Business Energy Assessments
 - Program available to businesses of all sizes
- Multi-Family Building Assessments (5+ unit buildings)
 - Multi-Family Building Efficiency Program (MFBE) - for all market rate units
 - Free energy assessment
 - On-the-spot LED installation in common areas
 - 30% bonus for energy efficient equipment (water heater, e.g.)
 - Low-income MFBE program – bonus rebates for low-income units
 - 200% bonus for energy efficient equipment

2025 Work Plan

- Business Outreach – more of a focus for this year due to larger energy impacts
 - Energy efficiency
 - Renewable energy
 - EVs
- Residential Outreach – historically more of a focus; lots of successful outreach
 - Energy efficiency
 - Renewable energy
 - EVs
- Multi-Family Outreach
 - Energy efficiency
- Data
 - Xcel Energy data reports
 - GreenStep Cities data report
- Sustainable IGH Awards Program
- SolSmart

Ms. Weck asked the Commission for their feedback, questions, and priorities.

Commissioner Wallerick inquired as to why the natural gas goal is not on target.

Ms. Troutman stated that electricity is the low-hanging fruit for conservation because there are much lower costs involved (e.g., changing lightbulbs versus purchasing new heating equipment or changing a factory's industrial processes). However, recent state legislation is helping make heat pumps (which use electricity rather than natural gas for heating/cooling) a more viable option in Minnesota. In the past, Minnesota had a fuel-switching prohibition, so customers replacing a furnace could not switch to electric equipment unless it was more efficient; now, the energy efficiency of combinations of fuels (e.g., a heat pump with a backup gas heater) can be considered together. Under the new law, there are opportunities for more progress on the therm reduction goal.

Commissioner Wallerick stated that focusing more on businesses for 2025 and 2026 made sense.

Commissioner Killion asked whether there were incentives for businesses to install solar panels over their parking lots.

Ms. Troutman stated that the Partners in Energy program could provide businesses with case studies and guidance.

Commissioner Killion asked whether part of the reason for the natural gas goal not being on target is that more people are installing gas generators.

Ms. Troutman stated that it was possible, but because Xcel's Partners in Energy data sources only capture energy savings from people participating in Partners in Energy programs, there isn't a way to assess it.

Commissioner Savage asked about youth engagement efforts.

Ms. Weck mentioned the 2021 efforts to reach Inver Hills Community College students, but acknowledged that due to the pandemic, many students were living at home rather than in the dorms, so the impact of that outreach was somewhat limited. She expressed interest in connecting to more schools and neighborhoods via events.

Commissioner Savage stated that getting kids engaged is a great way to engage parents.

Commissioner Trenzeluk expressed gratitude for the updates and asked about the future of the collaboration.

Ms. Troutman stated that there was no set end date; she mentioned that some communities have been successfully collaborating for 10 years (since the start of the Partners in Energy program).

Commissioner Trenzeluk commended the results in both energy conservation and monetary savings. He echoed that businesses should be the priority for outreach efforts.

Commissioner Boehmke asked whether increasing development in Inver Grove Heights was factored into the metrics.

Ms. Weck answered that the baseline for measuring progress towards goals uses data from the three years prior to 2021. She said that energy consumption does rise with development, but the data Xcel

Energy collects as part of this collaboration is only measuring energy savings due to participation in programs.

Chair Goodman said she agreed with other commissioners about the importance of engaging businesses and youth and said she hopes to see more tabling at community events.

B. Pine Bend Landfill Annual Gas Migration and Operations Update

Aaron Janusz (Environmental Manager for Republic Services) presented updates related to landfill operations and gas management. (Megan Goldstein, Environmental Specialist, and Ethan Ketelsen of Stantec were also present.)

Site History

Pine Bend Landfill, operated by Republic Services, is a Municipal Solid Waste Landfill located at 2495 117th Street East in Inver Grove Heights. It has operated in the following phases:

- Phase 1 and Phase 2 – 1971 - Northern Portion of site was unlined in a former gravel pit; the area has since been covered with a lining to help reduce gas migration
- Phase 3 – 1986 – Engineered Landfill (lined on bottom, liquid and gas collected)
- Phase 4 – 1999
- Phase 5 – 2005 (Vertical Expansion)
- Phase 6 – 2019 (Vertical Expansion)
- Phase 7 – 2025 (Vertical Expansion)

The landfill is currently operating under the following permits:

- MPCA Permit SW-45
- Dakota County License and Host Agreement
- Inver Grove Heights Conditional Use Permit (CUP), Non-Conforming Use Certificate (NCUC), and Community Host Agreement

The landfill most recently received City approvals in 2025 for continued operation and vertical expansion and is permitted to operate through December 31, 2042, or when the permitted airspace capacity is reached (whichever occurs first).

Landfill Site Information

- Total Area – 358.7 acres
 - Permitted landfill - 192.1 acres
 - Current footprint - 188.9 acres
 - The remaining few acres of permitted landfill will be constructed at the southern end of the site in the next few years
 - The final cover area will be 23 acres
- Takes in 1,200 tons of municipal solid waste (MSW) per day
- Collects 2,700 cubic feet per minute of landfill gas, which is sent to the Renewable Natural Gas plant
- Removes 12,000,000 gallons of leachate per year
 - Leachate trickles through the waste column to the bottom liner, where it is pumped out and then hauled by tanks to Metropolitan Council Environmental Services (MCES) for treatment and disposal

- A sanitary sewer direct connect is in progress as part of the 117th Street construction project

Gas Migration Activities

Per Minnesota Rule 7035.2815, Subp. 11, “the concentration of any explosive gas must not exceed its lower explosion limit at the property boundary or 25 percent of its lower explosion limit in and around facility structures or any other on-site monitoring point.”

- Landfill gas (LFG) is 50% methane
- The lower explosive limit (LEL) of methane is 5%

Pipes suction gas from the landfill (vertical gas wells) and take it to the natural gas plant (horizontals). Some gas gets into the leachate collection system, where it is collected via leachate risers. There are also monitoring probes around the perimeter of the landfill.

Active Gas Collection

- 242 collection points (gas wells, horizontals, leachate risers)
 - As part of the Phase 6 Side Slope Expansion, an additional liner, cover, and gas wells were added to the northern (unlined) portion of the site
- 39 probes are monitored quarterly
 - Any probes detecting exceedances are monitored monthly until there are two “clean” months (under exceedance limits)
 - Historically, there were exceedances on the east, south, and west sides of the landfill

Mr. Janusz noted that Pine Bend Landfill has a narrow buffer area due to railroad tracks and the closed landfill nearby, which compounds the gas migration issue. However, he noted that there are no off-site impacts – monitors in on-site buildings are not detecting gas, and there is an additional building monitor at the adjacent Recycling Center that is also not detecting gas.

Mr. Janusz showed a diagram of a probe and described the various probe depths. Efforts to address gas migration have been ongoing with the MPCA and the City.

Condition 13 in the recently approved Conditional Use Permit contains the following requirements:

- Compliance with Minnesota Rule 7035.2815 for six consecutive months prior to January 1, 2029
- Annual updates to the Environmental Advisory Commission
- Progress reports included in MPCA Annual and Mid-year Reports
- Share work plans and reports with the City for review and comment

Past efforts have included:

- Geoprobe investigation (2006, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2021, 2022, 2024)
 - Smaller holes drilled to 40-foot depth to better understand gas locations
- Probe Evacuation (2012)
 - Vacuum out stagnant air to determine if that was the source of exceedances
 - Not found to be the case – gas levels dropped after evacuation but rose to prior levels after a day or so
- Passive Vent Installation (2017, 2018, 2024)
 - Idea recommended by MPCA – intercept and release gas via vents on property

- Wind Turbines added to Passive Vents (2018-2020)
 - Helped draw out some gas to be released via vents
 - Limited success
- Radon fans (2022-2025)
 - Idea recommended by MPCA – draw out more gas via same system used for radon mitigation
 - Some success
- Permanent solar powered fans, a temporary blower system, and additional vents were installed at select sites in 2023 and 2024
 - More success

Data Review

Number of probes with exceedances (out of 39 total):

- July 2020: 9
- July 2024: 8
- July 2025: 1
- August 2025: 0

Future Plans

Mr. Janusz noted that one site that had previously not had exceedances (MMP-21) had an exceedance in July. Additional passive vents and radon fans may be installed at this site in the future. About 60% of probes currently have vents, so more vents could be added.

As barometric pressure and temperature change, the wells need to be tuned monthly to optimize gas collection – Republic Services plans to continue to work with Wellfield Tuning for this.

Monitoring and reporting will continue.

Commissioner Trenzeluk stated that he was happy to see progress on addressing the gas migration issue.

Commissioner Killion asked about pumping in nitrogen gas to evacuate the landfill gas.

Mr. Janusz stated that the issue has probably been present since the 1980s, and he is not sure whether it is an ongoing plume release or whether there is trapped gas present under the liner. Some data suggest that it is the latter. Soil vapor extraction is a possibility, but the depth presents a challenge. He said he did not know how pumping in nitrogen gas would work in a landfill context.

Commissioner Killion mentioned ZEVAC (Zero Emission Vacuum and Compressor) systems as another option to prevent gas from reaching the atmosphere.

Mr. Janusz stated that he was concerned about atmospheric gas release, but he said that it has not been a problem at the passive vents.

Commissioner Wallerick asked about what happens in 2029 if the landfill has not been compliant with Minnesota Rule 7035.2815.

Mr. Janusz stated that the landfill would have to cease operations.

C. Review of Commissioner's Guidelines

Environmental Specialist Kramer presented the annual review of the Commission's duties, Robert's Rules of Order, and the responsibilities of Commissioners and the Chair.

Per City Code, the duties and functions of the Environmental Advisory Commission are as follows:

- Review and advise City Council on environmental issues
- Review land alteration permits and wetland replacement applications
- Review and advise City Council on matters related to the landfills located within the City
- Monitor, review, and make recommendations to City Council on aircraft noise
- Monitor and review developments at the Minneapolis-St. Paul airport that adversely affect citizens of Inver Grove Heights
- Promote public awareness and understanding of local environmental issues

Robert's Rules of Order are used to:

- Facilitate group discussions and decision-making
- Help meetings be fair, efficient, productive, democratic, and orderly
- Respect the time of all volunteer Commissioners, staff, applicants and the public

Chair's and Commissioner's Responsibilities:

- Review the item packet in full prior to the meeting, unless otherwise noted.
- Be respectful to all Commissioners, staff, applicants, and the public

Chair's Responsibilities:

- Facilitate the meeting:
 - Call the meeting to order
 - Facilitate discussions
 - Request motions
- Move the Commission towards its goals
- Facilitate public and commissioner comments and discussion time
- Help reiterate staff requests

Regular Agenda Items will include the following:

- Staff report
- Opportunity for clarifying questions for staff
- Applicant comments or presentation
- Opportunity for public comments
- Commissioner comments
- Commissioner motions (as appropriate)
- Commissioner final comments
- Roll call vote

The Chair will:

- Follow the seating chart
- Ensure all members speak once before anyone speaks a second time
- Summarize perspectives and find consensus
- Guide the group back to the agenda (when off-track)

- Request Commissioners to make and second motions
- Call a 5-minute recess as needed between items

Commissioners will:

- Make comments focused on the staff request
- State comments and questions clearly by specifying:
 - In favor: "I would recommend the action as stated." or "I would recommend the action as stated in the packet because..."
 - Not in favor: "I would not recommend the action as stated because..."
 - Clarification/Change requested: "This action should be updated to include/remove/etc..." or "I have a question regarding..."
- Present thoughts clearly and precisely during item discussion
- Summarize and prioritize in a comment limited to 3-5 minutes
- Let all members speak once before requesting to speak a second time during the item discussion
- Raise hand to pose second comment or question
- Raise hand to make a motion
 - When granted, state "I move to..."
- Second a motion by stating, "I second the motion"
- Request the Chair calls a 5-minute recess (as needed)

Open meeting laws and best practices:

- Share non-agenda comments during the Commissioner Comments agenda item
- Direct all emails to the staff liaison without replying or copying other Commissioners
- Staff liaison will share the information with the full commission via email as requested

Commissioner Savage asked for flexibility with the seating chart when commissioners are absent in order to allow commissioners to sit closer to the center.

Environmental Specialist Kramer said she would look into this.

Commissioner Trenzeluk asked whether commissioners can modify the Guidelines and/or Duties and Functions of the Commission.

Environmental Specialist Kramer stated that the Duties and Functions are laid out in the City Code, so those would require an Amendment of the Code to modify. She said that there could be discussion about the guidelines.

Commissioner Boehmke clarified that the specific language for making and seconding motions in the guidelines is an example, not a requirement.

Environmental Specialist Kramer confirmed that.

Commissioner Killion inquired about scheduling work sessions.

Environmental Specialist Kramer stated that she would comment on this later in the meeting.

6. PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

7. COMMISSIONER AND STAFF COMMENTS

Commissioner Wallerick commented that he is interested in the environmental review process for the new City maintenance facility project and requested that environmental best practices be considered.

Commissioner Killion stated that recent rains led to erosion issues at the construction site near where she lives, and the project supervisor added sediment control measures in response to concerns she raised. She suggested that the City send advisory notices to construction companies during similar weather events in the future to ensure more proactive mitigation erosion issues.

Commissioner Trenzeluk commended Environmental Specialist Kramer for her work.

Environmental Specialist Kramer asked whether commissioners were interested in attending work sessions for more informal discussion on the 2025 Work Plan, the 2026 Work Plan, future presentations/meeting topics, etc.

All commissioners present expressed openness to work sessions.

Commissioner Boehmke inquired as to whether attendance at these work sessions would be required.

Environmental Specialist Kramer stated that she believed work sessions did not require a quorum, but she said she would look into it.

Commissioner Trenzeluk asked whether work sessions could be set up just for those interested in a particular topic, as has happened in the past.

Environmental Specialist Kramer said she would look into it.

Commissioner Ruiz asked whether public notification was necessary for work sessions.

Environmental Specialist Kramer said she would look into it.

Chair Goodman suggested creating polls to determine which dates work best.

Commissioner Wallerick said he is interested as long as there is a clear goal for the work session.

Chair Goodman added that having adequate notice in order to research/prepare would be helpful.

Environmental Specialist Kramer announced some upcoming events:

- IGH Days - September 3rd – 7th
 - Community Development Support Specialist Bodsberg and Environmental Specialist Kramer will be tabling at the Business Expo Sunday, September 7th.
- Cleanup Day - September 27th, 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. (extended due to interest!) at Public Works Facility.
- Pumpkin Composting - November 1st and 2nd dumpster will be in the VMCC parking lot.
- Winter Clothing Swap - November 8th at the VMCC (clothing reuse event).

8. ADJOURN

Motion by Savage, Second by Killion; to adjourn the meeting at 8:20 p.m.

Environmental Advisory Commission Minutes
August 28, 2025

Ayes: 7

Nays: 0 Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted by Will Cl Ashe, Recording Secretary