

**ENVIRONMENTAL ADVISORY COMMISSION
CITY OF INVER GROVE HEIGHTS
FEBRUARY 26, 2026 – 8150 BARBARA AVENUE**

1. CALL TO ORDER

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

The Pledge of Allegiance was cited.

2. ROLL CALL

Commissioners Present: Sara Goodman (Chair)
Nick Ruiz (Vice Chair)
Nichole Boehmke
Patti Mikulski
Jon Wallerick
Tracie Killion

Commissioners Absent: Marjorie Savage
Kevin Sethre
Ted Trenzeluk

Staff Present: Liz Kramer, Environmental Specialist and Paul Merchlewicz, City Engineer

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion by Killion, second by Mikulski to Approve the Agenda as Published

Ayes: 6

Nays: 0 Motion carried.

4. CONSENT AGENDA

A. Minutes of the January 22, 2026, Environmental Advisory Commission Meeting

Motion by Mikulski second by Ruiz to Approve the Minutes as Published

Ayes: 6

Nays: 0 Motion carried.

5. REGULAR BUSINESS

A. Wetland Replacement – Nord Sixty One Degree Development Project

City Engineer Merchlewicz explained that the development is located west of Argenta Trail and south of 65th Street in the Northwest area. The project followed the required process of completing wetland delineations to determine potential wetland impacts. The developer completed a delineation report, which was reviewed by City staff and the Conservation District, and staff agreed with the wetlands identified so the project could move forward with design. If impacts occur, the developer must either avoid the wetlands or complete wetland replacement, and in this case the developer is proposing replacement. The wetland replacement report was reviewed by staff and the Water Conservation District, which agreed with the findings, and the application will ultimately go before the Council.

Dave Stoffer, Executive Director of Development for MV Ventures, provided an overview of the Nord 61° multi-family residential development, which includes 119 townhome and rowhome units, a clubhouse, public roads,

site amenities, and stormwater facilities. The project is located at 6480 Argenta Trail, County PIN 200060052011, bordered by Argenta Trail to the west, 65th Street West to the north, and CSAH 63 (Argenta Boulevard) to the east. The site is within the City's Northwest Area Overlay District, where the City does not maintain stormwater infrastructure and requires that all stormwater runoff be managed on-site. Dakota County recently completed major road projects, including the CSAH 63 (Argenta Boulevard) extension between Highway 55 and 65th Street and the extension of 65th Street to the West connecting with Delaware Avenue.

The Wetland Mitigation Plan identifies Wetland 7, one of three wetlands on the site, for impact, measuring 0.19 acres and located in the project's east central area. The wetland is classified as a Type 1 wetland that was previously farmed and provides minimal ecological function. The original water source that drained to this location was severed during construction of 65th Street, and the area is not recognized as a wetland community by the National Wetlands Inventory. The proposal includes filling Wetland 7 and replacing it with a stormwater facility to manage runoff. Total avoidance was considered but would limit development potential for residential use and reduce usable land for grading and stormwater management. The proposal includes 8,654 sq. ft. (0.1987 acres) of permanent impact, requiring a 2:1 replacement ratio.

Mitigation measures include implementation of a stormwater management plan and best management practices (BMPs) for runoff control, including treatment and detention ponds. The developer will purchase wetland bank credits from Wetland Bank 1689 Sibley Meadows to mitigate Wetland 7. The proposal demonstrates that the replacement wetland would provide a higher public function and value than Wetland 7 in its current state.

Additional considerations note that Wetland 7 was farmed from year to year through 2021 and 2022 and is highly degraded from both a vegetative and soils perspective. The current condition of the wetland has been degraded to the point where mitigation through the purchase of wetland banking credits would result in a gain in function and public value. Due to past farming practices, the wetland currently provides very little function and value. Farming practices prior to 2022 negatively impacted the vegetation of this wetland by eliminating the ability of non-crop vegetation to establish and persist each year. Since farming practices have ceased, the wetland is becoming established with reed canary grass, a non-native invasive species.

Commissioner Killion asked whether the proposed design connects the smaller wetland to the larger wetland through the stormwater system and confirmed that runoff would eventually flow into the wetland. She also asked whether there would be any controls near the retention pond, particularly regarding parking.

Dave Stoffer stated there will be no parking around the pond, noting the area will remain uninterrupted, with guest parking located on the streets and in front of the clubhouse.

Commissioner Killion raised a question about how snow storage and rainwater runoff will be handled on the site.

Dave Stoffer explained that the newly created wetland is intended to capture some of the runoff and that a stormwater reuse plan is currently being developed as part of the project's treatment and mitigation efforts. He noted that a filtration system is anticipated between the stormwater area and the wetlands.

Commissioner Mikulski stated that she had a similar concern regarding runoff, emphasizing the importance of having filtration in place before the water reaches the wetland.

City Engineer Merchlewicz explained that stormwater from the development will flow to a central pond where it will be treated and slowed before leaving the site. The developer must manage and treat all stormwater on site and demonstrate through modeling that any discharge will occur at or below existing rates, so additional flow does not impact the larger wetland or basin. The central pond is intended to provide most of the treatment and infiltration, with overflow only expected during extreme events.

The project also includes a private stormwater reuse system managed by the HOA or another private entity. This system would reuse water for irrigation on lawns and landscaped areas, allowing it to return to the pond and promote evaporation and infiltration. The City typically prefers reuse systems remain privately managed due to the ongoing maintenance and operational responsibilities involved.

Commissioner Ruiz asked about the plan for plantings and grasses around the wetlands that will remain on the site and around the proposed pond. While referencing the site plan, he noted the wetland area near the right side of the new retention pond and sought clarification on how vegetation and restoration would be addressed around those areas.

Dave Stoffer responded that a landscape plan and tree replacement plan have been prepared for the site. He noted that much of the vegetation around the perimeter is currently dead and will be cleared, with new trees and landscaping to be replanted around the site as part of the project.

Commissioner Ruiz suggested the developer consider consulting with the Dakota County Soil and Water Conservation District regarding native plantings. He noted the District has provided workshops in the past and could offer guidance on appropriate native vegetation and plantings for stabilizing and enhancing the wetland and pond banks.

City Engineer Merchlewicz noted that when vegetation around the ponds is designed, the City reviews those plans as part of the overall project review process.

City Engineer Merchlewicz explained that vegetation plans around the ponds are reviewed by the City as part of the project review process, although the final design is determined by the developer depending on how they want the development to appear. The central wetland replacement area will function primarily as a stormwater facility, so the vegetation selected must be appropriate for fluctuating water levels and conditions that could impact plant survival.

He also clarified that the wetland replacement credits are being taken from two different banks. A priority system determines where credits are obtained, beginning with the closest available bank within the same County or watershed before moving to other locations. In this case, the selected banks are the closest available options, which City staff determined to be appropriate based on type and proximity.

Commissioner Wallerick asked for clarification on the wetland banking system, questioning whether the process involves removing a wetland on the site and replacing it by purchasing credits from an existing wetland bank. He asked if this means the replacement wetlands are already established and are being protected to ensure they remain preserved as wetlands.

Dave Stoffer stated that the area proposed for removal does not currently function as a true wetland, explaining that there is no clear or discernible wetland feature present today. This condition is part of the reasoning for pursuing replacement through the wetland banking process.

City Engineer Merchlewicz explained that the City's environmental specialist reviewed the site and determined that replacement of Wetland 7 is justified to help protect Wetlands 6 and 8 located to the west and south. The review also found there is no feasible way to avoid impacts to Wetland 7 if the northwest parcel is developed.

Replacement credits will come from the Sibley Meadows Wetland Bank, which is within the same bank area and watershed. Dakota County currently has no available credits for a seasonally flooded basin in this watershed, so the next appropriate bank is used. Wetland banks allow property owners who preserve wetlands on their land to sell credits for mitigation on other development sites.

Commissioner Wallerick asked whether the wetland banking process differs from simply replacing a resource in the same location, noting that it is not like removing a tree and planting another tree. He questioned whether

the process instead involves shifting the protection from Wetland 7 to an existing wetland located elsewhere through the purchase of mitigation credits.

City Engineer Merchlewicz explained that the intent of the wetland banking process is to ensure wetlands are preserved within the same general area whenever possible. The goal is to maintain wetland resources while keeping the replacement as close to the impacted property as feasible.

Commissioner Boehmke stated that the 2:1 wetland replacement ratio is a positive approach. She also noted that Wetland 7 had been farmed for many years prior to 2022 and was not well established as a wetland. Using the area for stormwater retention while replacing the wetland at a 2:1 ratio was viewed as a reasonable solution.

Chair Goodman asked for clarification on the location of the wetland bank providing the 2:1 replacement credit. She asked where the Sibley Meadows Wetland Bank is in relation to the development site and where it is situated geographically in practical terms.

Environmental Specialist Kramer responded that the wetland bank providing the credits is in Belle Plaine.

Commissioner Killion asked whether elevation information was included in the plans and whether the site is graded so stormwater will flow toward the retention pond rather than into the existing wetland. She also referenced the retaining wall on the east side of the site and questioned whether the overall slope of the property directs runoff toward the pond.

Dave Stoffer responded that the site generally slopes toward the retention pond. Most of the townhomes shown on the plan will include walkout basements, creating backyard areas that extend down toward the pond. The grading includes a noticeable change in elevation that directs drainage toward the pond.

Chair Goodman stated that there may not be many wetland bank credits remaining in the Twin Cities metro area. She then asked what action the Commission was being asked to take at this point and whether the request was for a recommendation to City Council.

Environmental Specialist Kramer explained that under City code, the role of the Environmental Advisory Commission is to review land alteration and wetland replacement applications. She clarified that the Commission is not required to make a formal recommendation to City Council regarding approval of the wetland replacement application.

Commissioner Mikulski stated that using the center area as a retention pond, rather than maintaining Wetland 7, appears to be a reasonable approach. She added that the ponds on the other side of the townhomes should remain as natural as possible, with native vegetation and plantings.

Commissioner Killion stated that she agreed with the Commissioner Mikulski's comments.

Chair Goodman stated that if the plan is to develop the area, the proposed approach appears to be the best path forward based on the work completed.

Commissioner Ruiz encouraged consideration of native plants where feasible in the landscaping plan, noting that native vegetation could be beneficial depending on site conditions.

Commissioner Boehmke expressed support for moving forward with the plan, noting the area had been farmed for many years.

Commissioner Mikulski stated that the plan appeared thorough and well considered, noting the applicant addressed the required elements without seeking shortcuts. She added that she hopes the remaining natural pond area can be maintained, improved, and supported with appropriate plant species.

Commissioner Killion stated that the loss of wetlands over time is unfortunate and expressed hope that the City can continue protecting the remaining wetlands on the site moving forward.

6. PUBLIC COMMENT: None

7. COMMISSION AND STAFF COMMENTS

Environmental Specialist Kramer reminded the Commission that three commissioner terms will expire in May 2026. Current commissioners who wish to continue serving must apply through the City Clerk for the next term. Applications are due in May, with interviews scheduled for May 18. She also noted that members of the public interested in serving on the Commission are welcome to apply, and that the same process applies to other City commissions.

8. ADJOURN

Motion by Mikulski second by Wallerick to Adjourn the Meeting at 7:24 p.m.

Ayes: 6

Nays: 0 Motion carried.

Minutes prepared by City Recording Secretary Tammy Greenlee.