

**ENVIRONMENTAL ADVISORY COMMISSION
CITY OF INVER GROVE HEIGHTS
MAY 28, 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

Commissioner(s) Present: Sara Goodman (Chair)
Nick Ruiz (Vice-Chair)
Kevin Sethre
Jon Wallerick
Ted Trenzeluk
Nichole Boehmke

Commissioner(s) Absent: Tracie Killion - *excused*
Patti Mikulski - *excused*
Marjorie Savage - *excused*

Staff Present: Elizabeth Kramer, Environmental Specialist

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion by Ruiz, Second by Wallerick, to Approve the Agenda as Published.

Ayes: 6

Nays: 0 Motion Carried.

4. CONSENT AGENDA

A. Minutes of the April 23, 2026, Environmental Advisory Commission Meeting.

Motion by Boehmke, Second by Ruiz, to Approve the Minutes as Published.

Ayes: 6

Nays: 0 Motion Carried.

5. PRESENTATIONS

6. REGULAR BUSINESS

A. Consider Award Recommendation for Sustainable IGH Awards Nominees.

Environmental Specialist Kramer stated that one of the goals for 2026 was to restart the Sustainable IGH Awards program. The submittal for applications is open and will remain open for about a month and a half. The submitted applications would be reviewed, the actions completed by each applicant would be evaluated, and recommendations for award recognition would be forwarded to City Council.

The Official Recognition Ceremony, including presentation of certificates and signs, is planned for the June 8th City Council meeting and has been added to that agenda.

The Sustainable IGH Award applications are based on the completion of five required actions:

1. Practicing energy efficiency.
2. Practicing water conservation.
3. Following community recycling requirements.
4. Volunteering or donating to benefit the Inver Grove Heights community.
5. Supporting pollinators or planting native vegetation for property owners.

The Silver level recognition requires completion of all required actions plus five additional actions, while the Gold level recognition requires completion of all required actions plus ten additional actions.

In addition to those recognition levels, there is an option to present Special Recognition awards to a residential applicant, a business applicant, or both.

Special Recognition may be awarded to applicants who go above and beyond and demonstrate significant achievements in sustainability and environmental work within Inver Grove Heights. Presenting either or both Special Recognition awards is optional each year and may be considered if an applicant's accomplishments warrant additional recognition.

A total of three applications were received during the award cycle, including two residential applications and one business application. The residential applications would be reviewed first, followed by the business application. After all applications have been reviewed and recognition levels determined, Chair Goodman could invite motions regarding any Special Recognition awards.

The first application reviewed was submitted by residential applicant Donald Fischer. The application documented completion of the five required actions along with 29 additional actions, resulting in a recommendation for Gold level recognition pending Commission approval following review of the application.

Energy-related actions included using LED bulbs throughout the property, programmable thermostats, Energy Star appliances, and upgrades to more energy-efficient appliances. Participation in an Energy Savings program through Xcel Energy or Dakota Electric, utilization of rebates on energy-efficient or renewable energy-powered products, renewable energy generation through solar, wind, or geothermal systems, ownership of an electric vehicle, installation of an electric vehicle charging station, and use of energy benchmarking software to monitor building energy usage were also included.

Landscaping and Water Conservation efforts included planting a replacement native tree, removing invasive vegetation and diseased or infested trees, treating trees to mitigate emerald ash borer infestations, oak wilt, and other tree diseases, purchasing locally grown produce or growing food, installing bird or bat houses, leaving grass taller during hot weather to promote deep root growth and shade for grass crowns, replacing older toilets with Water Sense-labeled high-efficiency models, replacing faucets and showerheads with Water Sense-labeled fixtures, selecting an Energy Star approved washing machine, waiting until dishwashers and washing machines were fully loaded before operation, and taking shorter showers.

Waste Reduction actions included preventing unwanted mail, obtaining free secondhand products from locations such as the Reuse Zone at the Recycling Zone, renting tools, gear, or event supplies instead of purchasing them, using reusable bags, mugs, to-go containers, utensils, and napkins,

utilizing the City's online recycling guide to determine disposal options for unwanted items, attending special collection events to recycle unwanted materials, and using the Recycling Zone for disposal of hazardous waste, small electronics, recyclables, and other materials.

Community actions included donating to or volunteering with a local organization that provides free or low-cost community assistance services.

Additional sustainability efforts included replacing a gas-powered lawn tractor and snowblower with electric models recharged through solar energy generated at the residence and barn. The four-level split home was divided into four heating and cooling zones using separate thermostats, two culverts were installed to prevent roadway washouts and maintain water quality, 25 dead ash trees were removed, 75 new trees were planted, two-thirds of an acre of buckthorn, poison ivy, and box elder were cleared, native prairie vegetation was planted, a waterfall was installed for birds, and a weather station was added that uploads data to Weather Underground to improve local forecasting accuracy.

Further improvements included installing a coil on the home's cold air return system that circulates water while the lawn is being watered to help cool the house simultaneously. A 100-foot wind generator installed in 1982 operated for 25 years before being replaced with solar energy in 2016, with additional solar capacity added in 2025. An energy monitoring system and charger were also installed to charge an electric vehicle exclusively with excess solar power generated on the property. The application also highlighted the impact of these efforts. From March through September, the property operates entirely on solar energy, including vehicle charging, and gasoline purchases have been reduced by approximately 90%. The solar installation and electric vehicle ownership also create opportunities to share information with others about the benefits and experiences associated with those investments.

Commissioner Trenzeluk questioned whether multiple recipients could receive recognition within the same award level.

Environmental Specialist Kramer confirmed that multiple recipients could be recognized within the same category and that there is no limit on the number of awards that may be presented at a particular recognition level.

Motion by Sethre, Second by Ruiz, to Approve Gold Recognition for the residential application submitted by Donald Fisher.

Ayes: 6

Nays: 0 Motion Carried.

The second residential application reviewed was submitted by residential applicant Nick Ruiz. The application documented completion of the five required actions along with 33 additional actions, resulting in a recommendation for Gold level recognition.

Energy-related actions included using LED light bulbs, a programmable thermostat, Energy Star or other energy-efficient appliances, participating in an energy savings program, utilizing rebates on energy-efficient or renewable energy products, powering the property with renewable energy, subscribing to Xcel Energy's Renewable Connect or Dakota Electric's Wellspring Renewable Energy program, and participating in a Community Solar Garden.

Landscaping and Water Conservation efforts included planting or replacing a native tree, establishing a low-maintenance turf lawn using species such as fine fescue, buffalo grass, and blue grama, removing invasive vegetation and diseased or infested trees, purchasing locally grown produce or growing food, using locally made compost in gardens and landscaping, attending landscaping for clean water classes, maintaining grass at a height of 2.5 to 3.5 inches during hot weather to promote deep root growth, following the City's smart salting guidelines during winter, selecting an Energy Star approved washing machine, waiting until dishwashers and washing machines were fully loaded before operation, and taking shorter showers.

Waste Reduction actions included recycling at home in accordance with County recycling rules, reducing food waste through meal planning and proper food storage, preventing unwanted mail by unsubscribing from mailing lists, using homemade green cleaners or Safer Choice cleaning products, participating in community swaps, renting equipment, gear, or event supplies instead of purchasing them, shopping secondhand through retail stores and online outlets, selling gently used goods through donation centers, online marketplaces, or garage sales, using reusable bags, mugs, and to-go containers, utilizing the online recycling guide to determine disposal options for unwanted items, and using the Recycling Zone to dispose of hazardous waste, small electronics, recyclables, and other materials.

Community actions included teaching Inver Grove Heights residents and businesses about completed sustainability efforts and serving on a local community board.

Additional actions highlighted included working with the Dakota County Soil and Water Conservation District to restore 1.6 acres of land to native prairies. Volunteer activities included serving as a Friend of the Inver Glen Library and participating as a Dakota County volunteer supporting activities such as craft and clothing exchanges.

The application also noted the personal impact of these efforts, indicating that the installation of a low-maintenance lawn has helped maintain an active lifestyle while reducing the workload associated with lawn maintenance.

Commissioner Sethre observed that a common theme among the first two applications was use of the Recycling Zone and the reuse of materials available there. Sethre stated that he recently treated a 64-square-foot deck with urethane obtained from the Recycling Zone rather than purchasing new products and noted that it can be a valuable resource for residents, particularly those working within a budget.

Commissioner Wallerick questioned whether the 33 additional actions included only the checklist items or also the additional actions that had been highlighted. Regardless of the total, the application reflected an impressive amount of work and accomplishment.

Commissioner Trenzeluk noted that the applicant had also attended Above and Beyond events and participated in stormwater education activities that were not included in the application.

Commissioner Boehmke asked what recognition level was being considered for the application.

Environmental Specialist Kramer replied that the recommendation was for Gold level recognition.

Commissioner Sethre asked whether the five required actions could be included within the various additional action categories listed in the application.

Environmental Specialist Kramer confirmed that they could and noted that completion of the five required actions is necessary before applicants are eligible for any higher recognition levels.

Motion by Boehmke, Second by Trenzeluk, to Approve Gold Recognition for the residential application submitted by Nick Ruiz.

Ayes: 6

Nays: 0 Motion carried.

The business application reviewed was submitted by Gramercy Park Cooperative. The application documented completion of the five required actions along with 27 additional actions, resulting in a recommendation for Gold level recognition.

Energy-related actions included using LED light bulbs throughout the property, implementing recommendations from an energy audit, using programmable thermostats, utilizing Energy Star or other energy-efficient appliances, and taking advantage of rebates for energy-efficient or renewable energy-powered products.

Landscaping and Clean Water actions included planting or replacing native trees, removing invasive vegetation and diseased or infested trees, treating trees to prevent or mitigate emerald ash borer, oak wilt, and other tree diseases when recommended by an arborist, purchasing locally grown produce or growing food, maintaining taller grass during hot weather to promote deep root growth, replacing older toilets with high-efficiency models, and participating in the Adopt-a-Drain program.

Waste Reduction efforts included preventing unwanted mail by unsubscribing from mailing lists, obtaining free or secondhand items from the Reuse Zone, participating in community swaps, renting equipment such as tools, outdoor gear, and event supplies, shopping through secondhand stores and online outlets, selling gently used items through donation centers, offering or using reusable dishware and utensils, utilizing the online recycling guide, and using the Recycling Zone to dispose of hazardous waste, small electronics, recyclables, and other materials.

Community actions included organizing local community groups and projects, donating to, volunteering with, or operating organizations that provide free or low-cost community assistance, hosting employee appreciation events and activities, maintaining an internal wellness committee focused on employee well-being initiatives, and offering employee volunteer service opportunities.

Additional sustainability and community initiatives included the ongoing Gramercy Shares program in partnership with Neighbors Inc., a paper shredding service for residents, a give-and-take table that helps keep usable items out of landfills, installation of a filtered drinking water bottle refill station in the lobby, and a 2.5-acre prairie and wetland restoration project. Residents also participate in stretch and balance classes, create plastic yarn from recycled bags to make sleeping mats for

unhoused individuals, prepare sandwiches for those in need, make tie blankets for children's hospitals, collect bedding for Sleep in Heavenly Peace, and volunteer with Feed My Starving Children.

The application noted several measurable impacts. Insulating the attic reduced heating and cooling usage by 12 percent. Group activities provide opportunities for residents to meet and engage with one another an average of 80 times per month, supporting mental and social well-being. An annual volunteer appreciation luncheon is held for volunteers, and water conservation is emphasized through prompt repair of toilet and faucet leaks, often within hours of detection.

Chair Goodman asked whether Gramercy Park Cooperative had applied for the award two years earlier and whether it had received a recognition level lower than Gold, prompting the new application.

Environmental Specialist Kramer responded that Gramercy Park Cooperative received Gold recognition in 2024 and 2025 and reapplied to highlight the additional sustainability and environmental initiatives completed since that time and to demonstrate its continued commitment to those efforts.

Commissioner Sethre shared that he was familiar with Gramercy Park and commented that the building and grounds are well maintained. Maintenance issues are addressed quickly and credited by the residents for driving many of the property's community and sustainability efforts.

Motion by Ruiz, Second by Wallerick, to Approve Gold Recognition for the business application submitted by Gramercy Park Cooperative.

Ayes: 6

Nays: 0 Motion Carried.

Environmental Specialist Kramer explained that the Commission has the option to grant special recognition to one residential applicant and one business applicant. She noted that special recognition is not required and may be awarded to both categories, one category, or neither category, depending on the Commission's assessment of the applications. The additional recognition is awarded at the Commission's discretion based on the applications received.

Vice-Chair Ruiz stated that the first residential applicant, Donald Fischer, stood out as an exceptional candidate for special recognition and remarked that the accomplishments presented in the application would be difficult to surpass. He also expressed support for Gramercy Park Cooperative receiving special recognition.

Commissioner Wallerick stated that he shared a similar view, noting that Nick Ruiz had clearly demonstrated a strong commitment to sustainability through his actions. He added that Donald Fisher's application was particularly impressive and supported special recognition for Gramercy Park Cooperative because of the continued efforts and involvement of its residents.

Commissioner Trenzeluk stated that he agreed with the comments made by Commissioners Ruiz and Wallerick and supported their recommendations.

Commissioner Boehmke asked whether special recognition could be awarded to more than one applicant within a category.

Environmental Specialist Kramer replied that only one recipient may receive special recognition in each category.

Commissioner Boehmke expressed support for Gramercy Park Cooperative, noting that it has continued to expand its sustainability efforts since receiving recognition in the past and had highlighted additional accomplishments through the current application. She also supported special recognition for Donald Fisher, citing the decades of commitment to sustainability reflected in the application, while also recognizing the efforts of Nick Ruiz.

Chair Goodman stated that she agreed with the comments made by the Commission. She noted that all three applicants demonstrated significant dedication to sustainability and helping others in the community. She expressed support for special recognition for Gramercy Park Cooperative based on its continued commitment to sustainability initiatives and support for special recognition for Donald Fischer in recognition of his decades of work and dedication to sustainable living.

Motion by Boehmke, Second by Trenzeluk, to Approve the award of Special Recognition to Donald Fischer and Gramercy Park Cooperative.

Ayes: 6

Nays: 0 Motion carried.

Commissioner Sethre encouraged residents to consider applying for the Sustainable IGH Awards, noting that many people may already be completing a significant number of qualifying actions and that the application is not difficult to complete.

Chair Goodman stated that she had previously participated in the program and found the application process straightforward. She expressed hope that participation would continue to grow and noted that the program helps promote sustainability and encourages residents to adopt sustainable practices.

B. Departing Commissioner Recognition.

Environmental Specialist Kramer noted that several commissioners would be departing from the Commission and that newly appointed commissioners would take their Oath of Office and begin serving at the June meeting. The Commissioners play an important role in helping shape the City's future by providing guidance to Council and staff on projects, programs, and priorities. The Commission's input will be especially important as work begins on the City's 2050 Comprehensive Plan over the next few years, making Commissioner guidance particularly valuable during that process.

Kramer thanked the Commissioners for their service, dedication, and willingness to devote their time to sustainability and environmental initiatives. Special recognition to departing Commissioners Boehmke, Savage, and Wallerick for their contributions and commitment to the Commission's work. Appreciation was also expressed for the Commissioners' participation in meetings, work sessions, community outreach efforts, sustainability awards, and environmental initiatives, noting that those efforts help advance the Commission's priorities and environmental goals throughout the community.

Certificates of Appreciation were presented to departing commissioners. It was noted that Commissioner Savage was not present to receive her certificate.

Appreciation was also extended to everyone who applied to serve as a Commissioner, as well as the newly appointed commissioners who will begin their terms next month.

7. PUBLIC COMMENT: None.

8. COMMISSION AND STAFF COMMENTS:

Commissioner Sethre thanked current, former, and newly appointed commissioners for their service, stating that active citizens are essential to a strong community. Serving on the Commission demonstrates a commitment to staying engaged in local issues.

Chair Goodman thanked Environmental Specialist Kramer for her work with the Commission and highlighted the productivity of a recent Work Session. She encouraged preserving the notes and momentum from that meeting, particularly regarding the work plan and goals. She also noted the lower number of Sustainable IGH Award applications this year compared to 2024 and emphasized the importance of continuing outreach and promotion of Commission initiatives and upcoming educational events.

Commissioner Ruiz thanked Environmental Specialist Kramer for her responsiveness and follow-up on Commission matters. He asked whether a June meeting would be held and expressed concern about potential gaps in Commission activities during staffing transitions. He encouraged continuing work sessions and discussions on important topics, including data centers, to maintain progress.

Environmental Specialist Kramer confirmed that upcoming meetings had already been planned to avoid interruptions in the Commission's work and expressed confidence that significant gaps in the schedule would not occur again.

Commissioner Wallerick thanked Environmental Specialist Kramer for her support and stated that serving on the Commission had been a meaningful experience. He described the Commission as a dedicated group doing important work and expressed appreciation for those who will continue serving.

Commissioner Trenzeluk thanked Environmental Specialist Kramer for her service and noted that the Commission had developed a positive working rhythm. He also expressed appreciation to departing Commissioners Wallerick, Savage, and Boehmke for their years of service and support.

Commissioner Boehmke echoed the appreciation expressed by other commissioners and thanked Environmental Specialist Kramer for her service. She reflected on her time serving on the Commission since 2014, describing it as an inspirational experience and an opportunity to promote

sustainability within the community. She stated that she hopes to remain involved in some capacity but plans to spend more time with her family as her children become increasingly active.

Environmental Specialist Kramer stated that the meeting would be her last with the Commission and thanked members for their dedication, passion, and commitment to environmental stewardship and sustainability. She said she had greatly enjoyed her time with the City and working alongside the Commission and expressed appreciation for the members' investment in serving the community. She noted that recruitment for her position was underway, with applications being accepted through June 11, and encouraged interested individuals to apply. To ensure continuity, she outlined the upcoming meeting schedule, including a June presentation on stormwater pollution prevention featuring representatives from Dakota County and City Engineering staff, a July presentation from Partners in Energy on progress toward the City's energy goals, an August introduction to the 2050 Comprehensive Plan by the Community Development Department, and a tentative September presentation from the Metropolitan Airports Commission regarding airport-related matters.

Commissioner Sethre noted that information about the annual stormwater event is typically featured in the City's Insights publication and encouraged residents to read the material because it contains valuable information about water quality and related topics.

Environmental Specialist Kramer added that social media outreach was also planned in advance of the stormwater meeting to help raise awareness and encourage participation from residents who may not regularly follow the City's meeting schedule or publications.

9. ADJOURN:

Motion by Boehmke, Second by Wallerick, to Adjourn the meeting at 8:05 p.m.

Ayes: 6

Nays: 0 Motion carried.

Minutes prepared by City Recording Secretary Tammy Greenlee.