



## ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION AGENDA

PUBLIC MEETING ROOM

MONDAY, JANUARY 22, 2024

6:00 PM

1. Call to Order
2. Approval of the Minutes
3. Items for Discussion
  - A. Coordinating Environmental Efforts
  - B. 2024 Work Plan Development
  - C. RSDP Project Opportunity
4. Routine Business
  - A. Announcements and Updates
5. Adjournment



## ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION MINUTES

PUBLIC MEETING ROOM

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 27, 2023

6:00 PM

### Meeting Items

#### 1. Call to Order

A regular meeting of the Environmental Commission was called to order at 6:05 p.m. by Chair Sonny Wasilowski. In attendance were Martha Brown, Teresa DeMars, Dick Huston, Lee Nordmeyer and Chair Wasilowski. Also in attendance were Mathias Hughey, Community Development Coordinator, and Kari Casper, Recording Secretary.

#### 2. Approval of the Minutes of October 23, 2023

Motion by Dick Huston, seconded by Martha Brown to approve the meeting minutes of October, 23, 2023. Commissioner DeMars abstained from the vote since she hadn't had a chance to read them over. The motion passed on a 4/0 with one abstention.

#### 3. Items for Discussion

##### A. 2024 Work Plan Discussion

The final subject to be discussed was the work plan for 2024. Hughey started out stating that he's done some recent presentations at local churches on solar. He also mentioned pollinators. Commissioner Huston stated that he would like to see some focus on getting rid of parsnip and buckthorn. These are both present in the city and a safety issue. Hughey mentioned that we could focus on River Bend and Huston stated that River Bend has done a good job so far. Huston stated that he doesn't believe the city has tackled it yet. The only area that has had work done on was Crocker's Creek, which was done by Rotary. There may be a way to apply for a grant to help fund this project. There may be Legacy money for something like that.

Commissioner Brown talked about what has been talked about in the past that hasn't been done yet, like updating the building codes. Hughey stated that with the tree preservation, they had to wait for engagement after the busy season as well as other compounding issues like staffing. Nothing has been dropped, just pending. We are also working on the landscape ordinance. They are both in the works and still happening. Brown asked what the City's priorities are in this regard. She asked about a vision.

Hughey stated they should refer to the Comprehensive Plan that the city developed. He also mentioned the Energy Action Plan would be another good resource. Wasilowski mentioned that there seems to be a lack of coordination in efforts and discussed concerns about the new park and parking lot. Brown asked if they could draft a position statement and make a list of 10 things that they could do in 2024.

The main thing that seems to be a concern is the lack of staff, money and the return on investment (ROI) that drives what can be done. Huston gave an example of Ethanol - when it was developed, they now learned that it takes more to make it than what they get out of it. We need to keep in mind the end game.

Hughey mentioned that this is only for discussion at this time, and we will come back with more suggestions at the next meeting in December. No action was taken at that time.

B. Commissioner Steinkamp's Extended Absence

This was the next item up for discussion at the recommendation of Hughey following the approval of the minutes. With the announcement of Commissioner Steinkamp's request for an extended leave of absence through possibly May of the next year to travel abroad, Hughey wanted the board to weigh in on whether they should request that Steinkamp resign or wait for his return. By a unanimous decision, the board felt that it was in their best interest to request that Commissioner Steinkamp resign at this time and will have the ability to re-apply when he returns. Motion by Dick Huston, seconded by Martha Brown to approve a recommendation for Commissioner Steinkamp to resign his seat at this time. The motion passed unanimously.

4. Routine Business

A. Announcements and Updates

Commissioner Appointments

This was the next subject discussed. Both Commissioners Nordmeyer and Chair Wasilowski's seats are due to expire in January of next year. Chair Wasilowski stated that he will not re-apply for another term on this board but may consider a position on another board. He made the recommendation that when the Council makes their decision for someone to fill his seat, they will consider including someone from the deaf community or a person of color, and keep it diverse. No action was taken at that time.

5. Adjournment

Motion by Dick Huston, seconded by Lee Nordmeyer to adjourn at 7:17 p.m. The motion passed unanimously.

By: \_\_\_\_\_  
Kari Casper, Recording Secretary



## Environmental Commission Memorandum

**TO:** Environmental Commission  
**THROUGH:** David Wanberg, Community and Economic Development Director  
**FROM:** Mathias Hughey, Community Development Coordinator  
**MEETING DATE:** January 22, 2024  
**SUBJECT:** Coordinating Environmental Efforts

---

### **Background:**

Members of the Environmental Commission have often expressed a desire to offer input on projects other city departments, commissions, or community groups are working on. The opportunity to collaborate with other commissions and community groups could be an effective way to increase the impact of the Environmental Commission. With nearly 20 boards and commissions, and a significant number of additional community groups in the city, identifying such opportunities is beyond the capabilities of the staff liaison.

To that end, the Community Development Coordinator proposes that commissioners volunteer to provide relevant monthly updates on activities or opportunities to collaborate with others. Updates could be provided either in writing for inclusion in the packet or verbally at meetings. Commissioners can review commission agendas and packets via the City's website.

Examples of local groups could include Rotary, GROWS, River Bend Nature Center, ISAIAH, Paradise Center for the Arts, Elks, School Board, etc. Examples of commissions could include the Tree Board, Parks and Recreation Advisory Board, Housing and Redevelopment Authority, Planning Commission, Economic Development Authority, City Council, etc.

If commissioners identify projects they would like to support or items for collaboration, they should bring this to the attention of the Community Development Coordinator, who can help formulate a plan for productive engagement.

### **Recommendation:**

Commissioners should create a list of commissions, boards, community groups, and other organizations they would like to receive updates on. They should also determine how responsibility for updates should be

determined. If the commission is in favor of this process, then at February's Environmental Commission meeting, commissioners will determine responsibility for updates.

**Attachments:**



## Environmental Commission Memorandum

**TO:** Environmental Commission  
**THROUGH:** David Wanberg, Community and Economic Development Director  
**FROM:** Mathias Hughey, Community Development Coordinator  
**MEETING DATE:** January 22, 2024  
**SUBJECT:** 2024 Work Plan Development

---

### **Background:**

Each year the Environmental Commission puts together its work plan for the coming year. The previous year's work plan is attached and includes 5 goals.

1. Promote an understanding of environmental issues and opportunities.
2. Promote pollinators and natural landscaping and reduce noxious and invasive plants.
3. Promote efforts to address climate change.
4. Strengthen the City's actions in the GreenStep Cities program.
5. Respond to ongoing environmental issues and opportunities affecting the City.

The 2023 work plan identified two ordinances the group wanted to adopt or revise. The group researched, discussed, and approved a draft Tree Preservation Ordinance currently being reviewed and prepared for engagement by city staff. The group also wanted to revise the landscape ordinance, though working on ordinances has proven difficult, requiring a significant investment of time from City Staff and commissioners.

In 2023, the Commission also contributed to the development of an Energy Action Plan Update, recommended participation in the Wyland Mayor's Challenge for water conservation, promoted energy efficiency actions and pollinator-friendly planting at multiple community events, and supported the initiating of composting at City Facilities.

At the November Environmental Commission meeting, the Community Development Coordinator supplied the GreenStep Cities program action list and the Energy Action Plan action list. Both lists are extensive and include actions that may be beyond the scope of the Environmental Commission. To streamline developing a work plan, the Community

Development Coordinator has identified several projects (attached) for special consideration and requests commissioners hold an informal vote to identify their priorities.

Commissioners should consider their availability outside of commission meetings and areas of particular interest when considering which projects they would like to include in the work plan. Commissioners are also welcome to nominate projects they would like to include in the work plan for 2024.

**Recommendation:**

Once a short list of potential projects has been identified, commissioners should hold an informal vote to identify their priorities. Staff will present a work plan for adoption at the annual meeting in February.

**Attachments:**

1. Staffs Short List

# Staff's Short List for 2024 Work Plan

## Energy Action Plan Outreach –

- Topics: IRA/Utility incentives, Home Energy Squads, Community Solar, etc.
- Actions could include:
  - Taking flyers to local businesses
  - Hanging posters
  - Coordinating or providing presentations
  - Tabling at community events
  - Writing op-eds or newsletter updates, etc.

## Active Transportation –

- Topics: Walking, biking, safe routes to school, health & environment, etc.
- Actions could include:
  - Walk! Bike! Fun! Program promotion/facilitation (teaching young kids to ride bikes – hosting education events)
  - Bike bus or walking bus coordination & volunteering
  - Could include a request for funding/support from the city including training etc.
  - Adopt resolution in support of complete streets

## Energy efficiency tool library support/training –

- Actions could include:
  - Instruction on how to use tools
  - Available for calls or demonstrations
  - Promote availability
  - Assisting with next steps

## Environmental Restoration projects –

- Actions could include:
  - Identify & document invasive species on city property
  - Coordinate removal efforts or community efforts
  - Identify city-owned ash trees (boulevards and parks) and document status

## Removal of Parking Minimums –

- Actions would include:
  - Research – other municipalities, costs/benefits, local areas of excess parking, local parking regulations
  - Present findings and make recommendation
  - Adopt resolution – will go to planning commission then city council

## Adopt-a-drain program -

- Actions would include:
  - Research – other municipalities, costs/benefits, local areas of excess parking, local parking regulations
  - Present findings and make recommendation
  - Adopt resolution – will go to planning commission then city council



## Environmental Commission Memorandum

**TO:** Environmental Commission  
**THROUGH:** David Wanberg, Community and Economic Development Director  
**FROM:** Mathias Hughey, Community Development Coordinator  
**MEETING DATE:** January 22, 2024  
**SUBJECT:** RSDP Project Opportunity

---

### **Background:**

The Southeast Regional Sustainable Development Partnership (RSDP) is seeking project ideas from community partners interested in hosting a project in 2024. The RSDP is a University of Minnesota Extension program that leverages UofM resources in service of the residents of Minnesota. The Southeast region has identified four priority areas for their work including:

1. Agriculture and food systems
2. Clean energy
3. Natural resources
4. Resilient communities

Project ideas are due February 14<sup>th</sup>. Support provided by the University of Minnesota can vary depending on the nature of a project. Partners may be connected with the Community Assistantship Program or the Institute on the Environment.

More information can be found here: <https://extension.umn.edu/regional-partnerships/submit-idea-rsdg#benefits-of-partnering-with-us-808812>

### **Recommendation:**

The Community Development Coordinator requests that commissioners discuss and suggest any potential projects they feel could benefit from the support of the University of Minnesota. Any project application involving the City will likely require City Council approval. If commissioners have suggestions for projects at a later date, they may email or call the Community Development Coordinator.

### **Attachments:**

1. Southeast Regional Priorities 2024



# 2024

# Southeast Priorities

SOUTHEAST REGIONAL SUSTAINABLE  
DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP



**We seek to create a food system that is just and equitable and supports healthy peoples and ecosystems that are resilient to the impacts of climate change**

- Affordable, healthy, culturally relevant food for all
- Farming and processing practices to protect soil, water and climate
- Infrastructure for and education about local foods to advance their market potential
- Land access and other supports for a new generation of farmers, esp. BIPOC communities
- Reduce food waste and leverage technology and innovation for prevention and re-use



**We will align with Clean Energy Resource Teams' statewide mission of connecting individuals and communities to implement community-based clean energy projects**

- Support communities to utilize federal and state incentives, such as through project planning or workforce development
- Support underserved communities in engaging in and advancing clean energy
- Assist agricultural producers to advance clean-energy projects in that industry
- Reduce the energy burden for low-income households
- Reach out to and assist small businesses in the adoption of clean-energy solutions
- Empower local leaders and institutions to lead by example in clean energy work



**We seek to support a region where diverse peoples and ecosystems thrive in peace and our human impact on the Earth is a net positive for the natural world**

- Groundwater protection, safe drinking water and watershed protection and governance
- Sustainable land use and healthy soils
- Diversity, equity and inclusion
- Preservation and restoration of natural habitats
- Sustainability policies and legislation informed by community input
- Clean water, clean air and healthy ecosystems



**We seek to nurture thriving well-connected communities with strong social systems, robust infrastructure, dynamic economic opportunities, healthy environments and active and engaged residents now and into our changing future**

- Support the ability of all members of SE MN to survive and flourish, especially those who are currently marginalized
- Enable innovation and adaptation in support of a sustainable future
- Promote coordinated, engaged economic development efforts and entrepreneurship
- Nurture entrepreneurship, especially in sustainability and sustainable tourism
- Drive financial and technical resources to, and throughout, the region (incl. non-profit and for-profit sectors)
- Improve transportation access, accessibility and connectivity within communities and throughout the region

# Project Partnering Criteria

**Project proposals are reviewed based on the following criteria:**

- Project goals address a community-identified need or opportunity related to one or more of RSDP's focus areas: sustainable agriculture and food systems, clean energy, natural resources and resilient communities.
- The project supports environmental, social and economic sustainability for public purpose or benefit.
- The project involves meaningful leadership roles for both community members and University of Minnesota faculty, staff and/or students.
- The project expands community collaborations.
- Projects from, led by or that include meaningful participation of historically underrepresented communities, which includes but is not limited to Native communities, people of color, immigrants, people with low incomes, LGBTQ+, people with disabilities, women and geographically isolated communities, are welcomed and encouraged.
- Project proposals that include funds or contributions from other sources are encouraged.

## Checklist

The Idea Brief is the first step. *If you are invited to submit a Project Proposal, you will be asked to:*

- ☒ Meet with the Regional Executive Director to discuss your invitation and proposal development next steps
- ☒ Review Project Partnering Criteria ([z.umn.edu/RSDPcriteria](https://z.umn.edu/RSDPcriteria))
- ☒ Review Regional Focus Area Priorities ([z.umn.edu/RSDPpriorities](https://z.umn.edu/RSDPpriorities))
- ☒ Complete a Project Proposal (**\*\*\*Proposal stage only; by invitation\*\*\***)
- ☒ Complete a budget (**\*\*\*Proposal stage only; by invitation\*\*\***)

## Resources

**Submit a project  
idea:**

[z.umn.edu/RSDPideabrief](https://z.umn.edu/RSDPideabrief)

**Contact Southeast RSDP  
director Andi Sutton:**  
[sutto364@umn.edu](mailto:sutto364@umn.edu)  
857-928-4196

Southeast Regional Sustainable  
Development Partnership

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA  
**EXTENSION**