



SUSTAINABILITY COMMISSION

City Hall—Shared Vision Room, 3989 Central Ave NE

Wednesday, August 14, 2024

6:00 PM

APPROVED MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Ahmadvand at 6:01 p.m.

Members present: Commissioners Ahmadvand, Evenson, Finkelson, Groseth, Jensen Christen, Johnson, LaPlante, Leoni-Helbacka, Kurek

Members absent:

Staff present: Andrew Boucher, City Planner
Liam Genter, Urban Forestry Specialist
Sulmaan Khan, Assistant City Engineer

Staff absent: Corrine Hanson, Administrative Assistant

Council Liaison: Connie Buesgens

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion by Ahmadvand to approve the minutes of July 9, 2024 as presented. Motion passed unanimously.

OLD BUSINESS

1. Sustainable Purchasing Policy Update

- Put definition towards the top.
- Examples of how to apply policy language can be helpful for City staff to better understand how the policy can be implemented.
- Can there be an annual coordination meeting that is called by the Sustainability Coordinator with City staff who are responsible for purchasing?
- It would be beneficial to do a regular review of purchases to understand where improvements can be made related to Sustainable purchasing.
- A potential starting point to ensure the City is moving towards more sustainable purchases is to use Amazon filters to narrow down products that meet certain criteria.
- LaPlante volunteered to be champion of purchasing policy to help figure out next steps to move the policy forward.

2. Complete Streets Policy Update

- Khan gave an update on the Complete Streets Policy. The policy was being put on hold indefinitely.
- Finkelson asked for an explanation why the policy was being put on hold.
- Khan stated that he and Boucher had met with city staff and concerns about the policy had been raised.
- Finkelson asked who Khan and Boucher had met with, asking them to name those they had met with.
- Khan stated that one of the individuals who they met with was Kevin Hansen.
- Khan stated that some of the concerns were that some aspects of the policy were only related to state-level activities and are not done at a local city level.
- Finkelson stated that it would be a mistake to put the policy on hold. We need to have this policy in place before the large projects that are coming begin work. And cited a construction project on 49th Avenue where the sidewalks were closed without a detour or other safe alternative as an example of the city failing to have complete streets.
- Other members of the commission agreed that we should continue to pursue the policy and asked if Finkelson and Councilmember Buesgens could meet with Hansen to better understand his concerns.

3. Partners in Energy Update

- First workshop has been completed.
- Boucher would like a few more people to join. He would like 1-2 more people from the Commission to join the group. Boucher is planning to also reach out to the School District.
- Second and fourth workshop are anticipated to be held the same day as Sustainability Commission meetings in September and December.
- A mission statement has been created.

4. Sustainable Collaborations Sub-Committee Update

- Planning to do a walking tour between parks as community engagement event. Details are still being worked out and a gameplan will be shared in October.
- Had a meeting in past month with Institute on Environment from the U of M.
- Climate Corp is something that is being looked into.
- SolSmart is another good program to look into.

NEW BUSINESS

5. Commission Chair Position

- Commissioner Ahmadvand has recently purchased a new home and will be moving out of Columbia Heights. Because of this, he is resigning from his Chair position with the group.
- Jensen Christen will move from Vice Chair to Chair of Commission.
- Evenson volunteered to be new Vice Chair for the group. All Commission members voted unanimously to have Evenson as the new Vice Chair.

6. Round Robin

- A new newsletter article has been submitted.

- Invasive species subcommittee have done park walks. The next one will be on the 22nd.
- There will be a presentation from MWMO at the September 3rd Council work session.
Please attend if you are able to.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Ahmadvand, seconded by LaPlante to adjourn the meeting at 7:48 p.m. Motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Sulmaan Khan
Assistant City Engineer