



MINUTES

Parks, Recreation and Environmental Commission

April 6, 2022 City Hall

Council Chambers 6:30 p.m.

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m. by Chair Johnson.

II. Roll Call:

Members Present: Commissioners Pauline Alfors, Maren Hawkins, Kristin Hicks, Matt Johnson (Chair), Abe McEathron, Julia O'Rourke, Lara Sokol-Kraft, and Michael Spooner. Also present was Student Commissioner Zoey Tenebaum.

Members Absent: Commissioner Gary Bank.

Also Present: Director Jennifer Fink and Council Member Emily Dunsworth.

III. Approval of Agenda

Motion by Sokol-Kraft, seconded by Spooner to approve the agenda as amended adding Item A1 under New Business to allow for the Introduction of the New Commissioners. Motion carried 8-0.

IV. Approval of Minutes

Motion by Alfors, seconded by Sokol-Kraft to approve the March 2, 2022 minutes as presented. Motion carried 6-0-2 (Hawkins and McEathron abstained).

V. Business Items

A1. Introduction of Newly Appointed Commissioners

Director Fink introduced newly appointed Commissioners Abe McEathron, Maren Hawkins and Student Commissioner Zoey Tenebaum to the members.

Chair Johnson welcomed the new Commissioners to the group and thanked them for their willingness to serve the community.

A. No Mow May – Jennifer Fink, Director of Parks and Recreation

Director Fink stated in 2020, residents of Appleton, Wisconsin, an affiliate of Bee City USA, became energized about No Mow May and the City Council agreed to suspend their weed ordinance for the month of May. Over 435 registered property owners participated in the campaign, and Lawrence University, an affiliate of Bee Campus USA, partnered with Appleton to conduct research on the impact of No Mow May on pollinators. Researchers collected data on the abundance (the number of individuals) and species richness (the number of species) of flowers and bees found in unmown yards of a subset of the properties participating in No Mow May. They then compared those numbers to the abundance and richness of flowers and bees found in nearby urban parks that are regularly mowed. The findings were impressive. Not only were the abundance and richness of bees higher in the yards of properties participating in No Mow May, but they were way higher. Participating yards had three-times higher bee species richness and five-times higher bee abundance than nearby parks that had been mowed. This study was published in 2020 and is available for free download online. The City would like to encourage residents to participate in No Mow May, and will be suspended any enforcement of City ordinances regarding the length of the grass. The goal would be to create a social media campaign to promote this.

Discussion included:

- The Commission asked if this was about pollinators or the use of pesticides. Director Fink reported this initiative addressed both concerns, noting by not mowing in May, pollinators were protected.
- The Commission recommended signage be created by the City to allow residents to post a sign to inform their neighbors about this initiative.
- Councilmember Dunsworth questioned how complaints would be addressed by the City in May. Director Fink reported a list would be created for the properties that were participating in the program to assist with code enforcement concerns.
- The Commission suggested the City Council consider a Resolution be considered for the future to make No Mow May official.
- Further discussion ensued regarding how the City would register residents and advertise this program to the community.
- The Commission suggested the City provide other tips and tricks for residents on the City's website on how to protect pollinators.
- Councilmember Dunsworth recommended an article be included in the City newsletter next year to promote No Mow May.
- The Commission fully supported the City pursuing the No Mow May initiative.

B. Chair and Vice Chair Appointments - Jennifer Fink, Director of Parks and Recreation

Director Fink requested the Commission make a recommendation to the City Council for Chair and Vice Chair for PREC. She explained Vice Chair Spooner was willing to continue his service but noted the Commission would need to appoint a new Chair.

Commissioner O'Rourke indicated she would be willing to serve as the Chair.

Motion by Sokol-Kraft, seconded by Hicks to recommend the City Council appoint Julia O'Rourke Chair of PREC. Motion carried 8-0.

Motion by Sokol-Kraft, seconded by Hicks to recommend the City Council appoint Michael Spooner Vice Chair of PREC. Motion carried 8-0.

VI. Announcements

A. City Council Report – Council Member Emily Dunsworth

Councilmember Dunsworth provided the Commission with an update from the City Council. She explained the Council has been busy on its strategic plan for 2022 and 2023. She commented on how the priorities that were set included the environment and sustainability efforts. She provided an update on the services provided by Nine North and noted this organization was seeking a new Executive Director at this time.

B. PREC Chair Updates – Matt Johnson

Chair Johnson thanked the Commission for allowing him to serve as the Chair for the past year.

C. Department Happenings and Upcoming Events – City Staff

Director Fink stated spring/summer registration has been tremendous in the first three weeks. She discussed staffing changes that would be occurring within the Parks and Recreation Department. She commented further on the Council's five strategic priorities and noted a feasibility study for the NBCC renovations would be completed in order to assist with future park planning for the community. She stated the City was recently awarded its next step in the GreenSteps program and was named a Tree City USA for the 40th year in a row. She reported staff would begin working on the 2023 budget next week. She stated the golf course was in great condition and would be available for rounds once the weather permits.

VII. Adjournment

Motion by McEathron, seconded by Spooner to adjourn the meeting at 7:20 p.m. Motion carried 8-0.

Respectfully submitted,



Jennifer Fink
Director of Parks and Recreation