



August 2, 2021

Citizens Environmental Quality Committee
Winona, Minnesota 55987

Dear Committee Members:

The next meeting of the Citizens Environmental Quality Committee meeting will be held on **Thursday, August 5, 2021 at 4:30 p.m.** in the Misato Room at City Hall.

1. **Call to Order**
2. **Review of July Meeting Minutes**
3. **Discussion of CEQC role in Sustainability Plan (30 minutes)**
4. **Tree Planting Grants Update (5 minutes)**
5. **Water Related Grant proposals (10 minutes)**
6. **Other Business (5 minutes)**
7. **Adjournment**

Sincerely,

John Howard

Natural Resources Sustainability Coordinator

CITIZENS ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY COMMITTEE MEETING NOTES

DATE: Thursday July 1, 2021
TIME: Scheduled for 4:30 pm in the City Hall Misato Room
PRESENT: Dan Hall, David Ruff, Julie Fassbender, and Niki Ciulla
GUESTS: Paul Schmitt
STAFF: John Howard

1. **Call to Order:** Call to order at 4:31 PM by Dan Hall (Chair)
2. **Review and Approval of May 2021 Meeting Minutes:** Motion by Julie to approve the minutes, David seconded. Approval unanimously without alteration.

3. **Sustainability Plan Discussion:**

John provided a summary on engagement work. Over 700 people have taken the survey or participated in a conversation or engagement event. Total numbers greatly exceeded expectations. Respondents generally very supportive of sustainability focus. Community gardens were a popular topic.

John suggests it would be useful to have a discussion at the August meeting about how the CEQC is mentioned or assigned responsibility in the plan. Also, John would value the CEQC members' suggestions on strategies to improve the sustainability of the City.

David suggested there is a variety of expertise needed to address the wide variety of sustainability topics. Niki asked if more small and specialized groups would be more successful than a larger group responsible.

Niki brought up the last discussion of the steering committee about using strategies listed in existing plan vs. having strategies more compartmentalized to different plans. Discussion amongst members favored having overlap of goals in strategies

4. **Community Garden Update:**

John said the big news is that Minnesota State Southeast has a garden plot ready, and is open for planting. MN SE has a commercial kitchen and sustainable ag. program that can tie into the garden. Niki mentioned there is a substantial food pantry on campus too.

Julie does not think the SE Tech garden is the end solution, or that the subcommittee achieved the desired goal. Niki would have liked more discussion on a vision and mission for gardens. David cautioned about using the immediate solution as the end solution. Seemed there were two desires of attendees of the community garden discussion this spring: a new garden as soon as possible, and more gardens overall.

Niki suggested the YMCA youth could play a role in the garden. Niki feels that understanding the need for a garden will be important to the overall success of the garden program.

5. **Tree Planting:**

John noted that this year was one of the City's biggest tree planting years. The map included in the CEQC packet shows the boulevard trees planted this year, but does not include the 5 trees planted by the Friends of Winona Parks. Dan relayed his neighbors' experience with losing their boulevard trees, and how the City had a variety of replacement options.

John discussed how the City currently focuses our efforts on providing boulevard trees to those who ask for trees to ensure they are taken care of. The downside is that areas in need may not get trees, so the distribution of trees is sub-optimal. Currently the City lacks the staffing to water trees in the boulevard. There is also a request by some councilmembers to have a tree planting strategy. Niki and CEQC interested in helping with plan. Niki suggests outreach could be done by volunteers to find good tree planting areas.

John mentioned grants will keep bringing in trees, so Winona will have at least 100 trees for the next three years.

6. **Other Business:** David discussed the bird club's letter to the city council regarding Prairie Island Park, which was sent a couple months ago. The letter was precipitated by the establishment of two disc golf holes near bird and threatened frog habitat. David draws two conclusions from this experience: 1. There are interested and passionate groups about park use, and the more the city can tap into the interest and expertise of these groups, the better. 2. Currently a lack of proactive plans for habitat areas under City ownership.

David enquired about whether the City has NHIS access? John says no.

Dan asked about recycling and where it goes. John said he toured the facility and said plastics typically get downcycled to lumber and carpet. He is unsure where the metal and glass go. Dan relayed his experience in the plastics industry, and how some companies are willing to pay a premium for recycled plastic or "ocean bound" plastic for their products.

7. **Adjournment:** Meeting adjourned at 5:45 pm. Approval unanimous.

Notes prepared by John Howard.

CITIZENS ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY COMMITTEE

AGENDA ITEM: 3. Discussion of CEQC Role in Sustainability Plan

PREPARED BY: John Howard

DATE: August 5, 2021

The City's Sustainability Plan is at the stage where strategies are being created for implementation. One suggested strategy that is particularly relevant to the CEQC is to evaluate the role of the CEQC and the potential for its conversion into a commission.

A second question is whether the CEQC or a new entity should supervise implementation of the plan. Staff will be recommending that an environmental body beyond just staff be involved in plan implementation.

Particular items staff recommends including in the discussion:

- Does the CEQC as a whole support re-starting the attempt to be a stand-alone commission?
- What language should be used when describing the plan recommendation for an environmental commission? For instance, should the plan state the CEQC will be making a recommendation, or should the plan be more definitive by stating what the group decides at this meeting.
- What differences would exist between the current CEQC and a sustainability commission?
- How does the CEQC want to be involved in implementing the sustainability plan? Should this be the main priority of the group for the near term?

CITIZENS ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY COMMITTEE

AGENDA ITEM: 5. Water Related Grant Proposals

PREPARED BY: John Howard

DATE: August 5, 2021

City staff put together two recent water related grant projects:

1. We Are Water Exhibit: An interactive and localized set of displays describing and explaining water issues. The We Are Water exhibit was developed by multiple agencies at the State of Minnesota and the Minnesota Humanities Center. If the City is awarded the chance to run the exhibit, the CEQC could help with local programming and content. Additional info: <https://mnhum.org/we-are-water-mn/>
2. Clean Water Fund: Staff is seeking about \$485,000 for stormwater infiltration basins at the west lake, a wetland connection culvert, and carp management. The project would begin the work proposed by the Lake Winona Water Quality Improvement plan finalized in the summer of 2020. No immediate request for CEQC involvement, but potential for CEQC help if the grant is awarded.