

CITY OF MONONA
Sustainability Committee
Thursday, February 9, 2023
Meeting Minutes – FINAL

1. Call to Order

6:35 PM – Meeting called to order by Alder Teresa Radermacher.

2. Roll Call

Members Present: Alder Teresa Radermacher, Kristin Gunther, Sue Vogt, Sarah Smith, and Ashley Gries

Absent: Alder Patrick DePula, Dan Costello, and Ken Walz

Others Present: Assistant Planner Thor Jeppson

3. Approval of Minutes from the December 8, 2022 Sustainability Committee Meeting

A motion by Ms. Gries, seconded by Ms. Vogt, for approval of the minutes of December 8, 2022 carried with one correction.

4. Appearances

None

5. Unfinished Business

None

6. New Business

a. Smart Salting Practices project update

Kristin reported on the project team’s actions since the Committee met in December.

Ashley developed graphics for bookmarks, flyers, and window clings. 2,000 bookmarks were printed and distributed at municipal locations, MGSD schools, and business. Sal’s is placing them on pizza boxes. 50 window clings were printed and distributed to businesses that have committed to being salt wise. Flyers with salt wise talking points were also distributed.

The project team also recorded PSAs on WVMO and included content in the January and February MyMonona newsletters. Staff created a salt awareness webpage on the City website and posted on social media during Salt Awareness Week.

Alder Radermacher asked the group for how the project can be improved for next year. Ashley suggested businesses who are interested in salt reduction have an opportunity to share their story. She also said that a distribution list could be created and flyers could be more widely distributed.

Sue suggested other community groups beyond businesses be engaged. Alder Radermacher said that the relationship with MG21 School could be grown, and Kristin added that the Committee encourage school maintenance staff to get Salt Wise certified.

Alder Radermacher added the possibility of changing the City ordinance to allow for enforcement of salt use, with the intent to be informational rather than punitive.

Kristin closed the agenda item by saying that a summary of lessons learned would be shared with the group.

b. Natural Lawn Permits

Alder Radermacher introduced the agenda item. The City has received questions about keeping longer grass beyond No Mow May and the Committee previously discussed looking in to the Natural Lawn ordinance. Assistant Planner Jeppson shared that the Natural Lawn Permit has been available for at least 10 years, but only one has ever been submitted. It is not available on the City website and not publicized.

The Committee discussed potential changes to the ordinance to remove barriers and better define natural lawns. Assistant Planner Jeppson suggested that species native to Wisconsin be required. Ashley said that the University of Wisconsin has several resources related to native plantings and suggested a few books, such as *The Vegetation of Wisconsin* by John Curtis.

Ashley felt the ordinance should clarify that a permit is needed for a lawn, not for new landscaping or plantings, and that it should be defined by size. Sarah added that it should be based on the percentage of the lawn used as a natural lawn. She also felt that the 10 ft. setback from property lines were too restrictive. Assistant Planner Jeppson pointed out that the ordinance requires neighbors within 300 ft. be notified. The Planning Department only notifies neighbors within 200 ft. of proposed developments. A majority of neighbors can veto a permit, which is not included in other community's ordinances.

The Committee discussed how the ordinance relates to No Mow May and if it would allow a property owner to continue with No Mow May throughout the year if the received a permit. The Committee generally felt that "natural" was open to interpretation. Kristin felt that the ordinance should include a purpose statement and focus on increasing beneficial habitat for pollinators. The Committee generally felt that the purpose of natural lawns and of No Mow May were separate, where No Mow May intends to allow for longer grass during a critical window for pollinators, but beyond May it could lead to nuisance lawns. Natural lawns are intended to be ideal habitat year round. The Committee agreed that "natural" needed to be further defined.

Assistant Planner Jeppson added that Madison's natural lawn ordinance has a list of approved species, requires the lawn to be mowed at least once per year, requires a permit if the natural lawn is greater than a certain percentage of the overall lawn, and has a 5 ft. setback from property lines.

Alder Radermacher suggested she and staff work to create a draft ordinance that the Committee can review at a future meeting, and then refer it to City Council.

c. Upcoming Projects

Alder Radermacher shared the outreach calendar. She suggested it be revised to better reflect the Committee's capacity. She proposed that the Community festivals, Memorial Day Parade, and National Night Out events be removed, and instead be included as possible opportunities under the scope of other projects like Adopt-a-stormdrain. Sarah felt that the tabling opportunities at the Community festivals have been successful in previous years, especially for distributing information and advertising the sustainability dashboard. The Committee agreed to remove the Parade and National Night Out from the calendar, but keep the Community festivals.

Alder Radermacher suggested the Forestry Fund fundraiser be removed.

i. Earth Day E-cycling Event

Alder Radermacher asked if the contractor would publicize the event by sending mailers like the previous year. Assistant Planner Jeppson shared that the City's project manager at Resource Solutions left and it has been difficult to get in touch with the company since. He will reach out to ask about mailers and check in about the Traffic Flow Safety Plan.

ii. No Mow May

Alder Radermacher stated that Sarah is working on graphics for promotional materials and that she will check with Ken if he has availability to help lead the project. She felt that the purpose of the 2023 No Mow May project is raise awareness of the importance of pollinators and to increase participation in No Mow May.

For next steps, Alder Radermacher suggested the Committee decide how much to charge for yard signs, look into financial sponsors, publicize the event through community channels, and coordinate with MGSD, Public Works, and the Parks Department. She asked if other green yard care strategies, like rain gardens, should be promoted. The Committee was generally open to the idea.

Ashely suggested coordinating with schools for public art projects and Kristin suggested a window painting campaign.

Kristin asked if a speaker could be invited to the library. Sue is part of the EcoAction Tuesdays team, which is meeting soon to discuss upcoming events. She will ask if there is room on the schedule for a pollinator discussion.

iii. Adopt-a-Stormdrain and Leaf Management

Alder Radermacher stated that Dan will lead this project and Sue may have availability to help. She proposed similar outreach strategies used for other projects. She also felt that the team should work with Brad Bruun to understand how many stormdrains have been adopted, and reach out to those adopters with resources.

iv. Other

Alder Radermacher and Assistant Planner Jeppson met with Brad Bruun to discuss Sustainability Plan implementation. Brad shared that a lot of goals were accomplished shortly after it was published. He felt that city staff needs directives from City leadership to focus on sustainability. They will meet with the Mayor as a next step. They will also work with Brad to put together a rough plan for meeting the 100% renewable energy goal.

7. Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Discussion Items – Projects, Programs, Policies, or Budget Considerations for Council Advisement

Alder Radermacher shared that the newly formed Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging Implementation Committee had their first meeting. The Committee is working to identify implementation priorities from the DEI report.

8. Important Updates from Committee Members or Items to Consider for Future Agendas

None.

9. Actionable Items

None.

10. Adjournment

A motion by Ms. Vogt, seconded by Ms. Gunther, to adjourn carried (8:10 PM).

Submitted by,

Thor Jeppson, Assistant Planner