

CITY OF MONONA
Sustainability Committee
Tuesday, March 28, 2023
Meeting Minutes – FINAL

1. Call to Order

6:38 PM – Meeting called to order by Alder Teresa Radermacher.

2. Roll Call

Members Present: Alder Teresa Radermacher, Kristin Gunther, Sue Vogt, Dan Costello, Ken Walz, and Ashley Gries

Absent: Alder Patrick DePula and Sarah Smith

Others Present: Assistant Planner Thor Jeppson

3. Approval of Minutes from the February 9, 2023 Sustainability Committee Meeting

A motion by Ms. Gries, seconded by Ms. Vogt, for approval of the minutes of February 9, 2023 carried with one correction.

4. Appearances

None

5. Unfinished Business

a. Upcoming Projects

i. Discussion and Possible Action Regarding Earth Day E-Cycling Event

Thor shared updates on planning the annual Earth Day E-Cycling event on Saturday April 15th. Resource Solutions has expanded the amount of items they can accept, including full size appliances. Reynolds Urethane Recycling will provide cardboard and Styrofoam recycling. Thor created a webpage on the City's website, shared the event in the March My Monona newsletter, and Resource Solutions sent out 1,000 mailers to local households. Next steps are to issue press releases, record PSAs, and post the event on social media. Resource Solutions has also asked us to provide 2-3 volunteers. Thor and Alder Radermacher are planning to attend the event, so at least one more volunteer is needed. Thor also shared that the Committee can spread awareness of No Mow May at the event by distributing yard signs.

Alder Radermacher is working with Will Nimmow to record aerial footage of the event using a drone. Footage can be used to create a time-lapse that can be used to demonstrate the event's success and promote the event in future years.

Ken, Ashley, and Kristin said that they were available to volunteer at the event. Alder Radermacher said that she could take on the press releases, and Kristin and Sue said

that they would record the PSAs. Thor said that he could ask Public Works about safety vests for volunteers. Alder Radermacher asked if there were directional signs to help people locate the event. Sue and Kristin volunteered to create some if needed.

Kristin asked if the Committee had reached consensus on a suggested donation price for No Mow May yard signs. Thor said that 50 signs were printed for \$12.50 per sign, for a total of \$625. Ashley suggested a \$5-10 donation. Ken agreed that price shouldn't be a barrier but that giving away signs for free would not be a sustainable model. He felt that a suggested donation of \$5-10 was a good strategy. Alder Radermacher asked if signs should only be given to residents, as non-residents might attend the event. Kristin felt that it would be difficult to enforce and the Committee generally agreed that it would be okay if some signs went to non-residents.

ii. No Mow May and Pollinator Habitat

Alder Radermacher introduced the agenda item. She shared that the Committee has called the campaign "No Mow May" in the past, but that No Mow May is just one strategy in a larger effort to create healthy lawns and pollinator habitat. She suggested the Committee come to a consensus about a new name and broader goal for this project. She also shared that she had reached out to 6-8 previous Committee applicants to see if they were interested in providing volunteer work, and two had responded that they were.

The Committee discussed the objective and metrics for the project. Ken suggested that the Committee could track No Mow May signs distributed. He felt that the objective could include many aspects of a healthy lawn, such as reducing pesticide use, planting native plants, and planting trees. He felt that it would still be helpful to promote No Mow May because it is passive and simple to participate in. Sue agreed that sustainable yards is a good overarching project scope. Alder Radermacher added the possible metric of number of City departments participating. She said that Public Works will be putting up yard signs and won't mow a few small areas near City Hall, but that Parks can't participate because of the possibility for hazards and due to the challenge of mowing tall grass in June. The Committee discussed other ways to involve Parks, such as PSAs and replacing unnecessary areas of grass with native plants that require less maintenance.

Ashely suggested a bingo card challenge to engage residents. The card could have several strategies for healthy and natural lawns, and would allow for residents to get involved to the degree they are able to. The Committee could track sign ups. Sue felt that residents would need resources to learn how to implement healthy lawn strategies.

Alder Radermacher shared the project work plan to show what work has been accomplished and to assign volunteers to tasks. She shared that she and Thor have been working to rewrite the City's natural lawn ordinance, which would be posted online with guidance on how to plant a natural lawn.

Dan felt that the Committee should focus on starting small and pick a theme to focus on. He felt the focus should be on why increasing pollinator habitat is beneficial in order to build awareness. He liked the idea of having a sign-up list for residents interested in No Mow May and other healthy lawn efforts. Alder Radermacher suggested bees and pollinator habitat as a focus, with No Mow May and pollinator gardens being strategies. She added that the Committee could pursue the possibility of Monona becoming a Bee City. The Committee was generally open to the idea.

Sue announced that Eco-Action Tuesdays is hosting a pollinator habitat presentation with a hands-on bee house workshop on July 25th at Aldo Leopold Nature Center.

The Committee discussed the appropriateness of showcasing local businesses who can help create natural lawns. They generally agreed it might not be appropriate. Kristin said that the Committee could potentially have business owners on WVMO as a subject matter expert without promoting their business, or spread awareness of local businesses available to residents who can help provide these services. Alder Radermacher said that she would ask Mayor O'Connor about the possibility.

Kristin, Ashley, and Sue volunteered to help explore Bee City USA status and Ashley volunteered to explore research into the financial benefits of pollinator gardens. Ashley also volunteered to create informational materials such as bookmarks or flyers. Alder Radermacher said that she would work with the Parks Department and with Sue on the Eco-Action Tuesdays events. Ken volunteered to coordinate with the School District, and Kristin said that she would reach out to MG21.

Alder Radermacher reminded the Committee that there are also community volunteers to engage.

Mr. Walz was excused at 7:55PM

6. New Business

None.

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

Alder Radermacher shared that the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging Implementation Committee has had three meetings, and that they are tasked with bringing ideas to City Council.

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

Alder Radermacher shared that she and Thor met with Brad Bruun to explore ideas for how to bring the Sustainability Plan in front of other City committees and departments.

9. Actionable Items

None.

10. Adjournment

A motion by Ms. Gunther, seconded by Ms. Gries, to adjourn carried (8:02 PM).

Submitted by,

Thor Jeppson, Assistant Planner