

**REGULAR MEETING  
OAKDALE ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT COMMISSION  
JANUARY 9, 2023**

**CALL TO ORDER**

The Oakdale Environmental Management Commission (EMC) held a meeting on Monday, January 9, 2023 at Oakdale City Hall, 1584 Hadley Avenue North, Oakdale, Minnesota. The meeting began at 7:00 PM with the Pledge of Allegiance.

**CALL OF ROLL**

On a call of roll, the following were present:

Chairperson: Keith Miller, Chairperson

Commissioners: Noah Gerding, Vice Chairperson  
Bonnie Wilson

Also Present: Kevin Zabel, City Council Liaison  
Shannon Reidlinger, Sr. Community Development Specialist and City Staff Liaison

Absent: Connor Brown

Quorum Present: YES  NO

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**A MOTION WAS MADE BY COMMISSIONER GERDING, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER WILSON, TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF NOVEMBER 21, 2022 AS WRITTEN.**

**3 AYES  
0 NAYS**

**MOTION CARRIED**

**ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT COMMISSION REVIEW**

**a. OLD BUSINESS**

**i. 2023 Adopt-A-Drain schedule**

Chair Miller shared that the EMC has adopted three storm drains near Walton Park and has been clearing them of waste and organic buildup. He reminded the EMC that the cleaning schedule does not include the months of January and February.

In response to Commissioner Gerding's question regarding whether any data needs to be tracked by the Commissioners as they're cleaning the storm drains (like sediment type and pounds of waste collected), Ms. Reidlinger agreed that any information captured would be helpful for both the Adopt-A-Drain program and for the City's communication efforts regarding the initiative.

**ii. Review of initial community engagement results for the Bike and Pedestrian Plan update project**

Ms. Reidlinger gave a summary of community engagement efforts conducted to date as part of the Bike and Pedestrian Plan Update project. She shared that a majority of community engagement work has been completed and a draft report was presented to Oakdale City Council at the December 13, 2022 City Council workshop. She noted that the community engagement report will help the project consultant, Toole Design Group, craft recommendations (such as goals and strategies, and a network map) for prioritized bicycle and pedestrian projects. She explained that interactions during the community engagement phase of the project number in the hundreds, and shared that the project team is looking to increase that number of interactions in the coming weeks by continuing to promote the project's WikiMap. She summarized key initial findings from the draft community engagement report, including:

- More respondents who filled out the project questionnaire are walking than bicycling, and they walk and bicycle mostly for exercise/health/enjoyment
- A lack of facilities (i.e. linear, crossing) is the largest deterrent preventing questionnaire respondents from walking or bicycling more
- Questionnaire respondents would prefer separation from traffic, both for walking and for bicycling

Ms. Reidlinger informed the EMC of the draft goals and strategies identified as a result of community engagement work, and noted that the draft goals and strategies were presented during the December 13, 2022 City Council workshop for consideration and feedback. She highlighted project next steps, including finalizing the draft community engagement report by reviewing and synthesizing WikiMap and paper map comments, and identifying and prioritizing potential bicycle and pedestrian system projects. She suggested that a draft of the final deliverable may be shared with the EMC for review.

In response to Chair Miller's question regarding whether neighboring cities have been involved in the project, Ms. Reidlinger confirmed that analysis of local and regional Bicycle and Pedestrian System Plans was conducted during the first phase of the project, but that the project team is not speaking directly to communities bordering Oakdale.

Chair Miller commented that the draft community engagement support indicated an interest by the community in separating bicycle and pedestrian paths from the road.

In response to Chair Miller's question regarding whether current paths and trails in Oakdale could handle an influx of bicyclists if they were encourage to move off the road, Ms. Reidlinger affirmed the assumption that the consultant would provide the City with a variety of options to respond to the community's desire for path and trail separation. In response to Commissioner Wilson's question regarding whether the paths in the Nature Center will be included in the network recommendations, Ms. Reidlinger explained that Toole Design Group would incorporate the Nature Center trails into the network recommendation if community engagement revealed a need specific to those paths.

In response to Chair Miller's question regarding whether project analysis would consider how the Gold Line might impact the community's use and perception of the bicycle and pedestrian system in Oakdale, Ms. Reidlinger agreed that the city's existing transit options should be incorporated into the project's network recommendations alongside community feedback (recognizing that individuals who use the bicycle and pedestrian trails for more than just exercise or enjoyment might not be represented in the project's outreach efforts). She reminded the EMC that a current network analysis was conducted in the initial phase of the project to determine where bus stops and crosswalks already exist in the city. Chair Miller emphasized that having bicycling and walking infrastructure in place when the Gold Line is built might further encourage use of rapid transit.

Commissioner Gerding expressed satisfaction in the holistic approach to the number of interactions recorded during community engagement. In response to Commissioner Gerding's question regarding whether ideas and comments from the business community had been captured during the engagement portion of the project, Ms. Reidlinger responded that that the business community was not targeted for feedback in the same way as the residential population. She explained that the City's Community Development Department had spoken with several local businesses about the Bike and Pedestrian Plan Update project as part of the Business Retention, Expansion, and Attraction program, so anecdotal commentary from the business community on bicycling and walking in Oakdale exists.

## **b. NEW BUSINESS**

### **i. Election of Commission Chair and Vice Chair**

Chair Miller reminded the EMC that the annual election of the Commission's Chair and Vice Chair is mandated per Chapter Six of the Oakdale Code of Ordinances. He opened the floor for nominations for Chair of the EMC and explained that nominations for Chair do not require a second.

**A MOTION WAS MADE BY COMMISSIONER WILSON TO NOMINATE KEITH MILLER AS CHAIR OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT COMMISSION.**

Chair Miller called for any additional nominations and then invited a motion to close nominations for the position of Chair.

**A MOTION WAS MADE BY COMMISSIONER GERDING TO CLOSE NOMINATIONS FOR THE POSITION OF CHAIR.**

**A MOTION WAS MADE BY CHAIR MILLER TO REELECT THE CURRENT CHAIR AS CHAIR OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT COMMISSION.**

**2 AYES  
0 NAYS**

**MOTION CARRIED**

Chair Miller opened the floor for nominations for Vice Chair of the EMC and explained that nominations for Vice Chair do not require a second.

**A MOTION WAS MADE BY COMMISSIONER WILSON, SECONDED BY CHAIR MILLER, TO NOMINATE NOAH GERDING AS VICE CHAIR OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT COMMISSION.**

**A MOTION WAS MADE BY CHAIR MILLER TO CLOSE NOMINATIONS FOR THE POSITION OF VICE CHAIR.**

**A MOTION WAS MADE BY CHAIR MILLER, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER WILSON, TO ELECT COMMISSIONER GERDING FOR THE POSITION OF VICE CHAIR OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT COMMISSION FOR 2023.**

**2 AYES  
0 NAYS**

**MOTION CARRIED**

**ii. Review of draft 2023 environmental communications strategy**

Chair Miller opened discussion of the draft 2023 environmental communications strategy.

Ms. Reidlinger explained that the overall strategy for environmental communications remains the same as in previous years, but that specific content for the 2023 editorial calendar should be reviewed and edited by the EMC. She noted that that the draft editorial calendar includes proposed content and messaging, and encouraged the EMC to identify themes within the draft calendar that are repetitive; messages that are missing entirely from the draft calendar; whether the draft calendar reflects the goals and priorities of the 2023 EMC Work Plan;

how EMC Commissioners can be more engaged in communication activities throughout the year; and what communication outlets should be leveraged to spread messaging and awareness of the monthly themes.

In response to Commissioner Wilson's question regarding where any pictures taken by the EMC should be sent, Ms. Reidlinger instructed that all pictures be sent to her.

Commissioner Gerding and Chair Miller expressed enthusiasm for incorporating Commissioner and staff engagement into the communications strategy. Chair Miller noted that the focus of the editorial calendar in January is energy efficiency, and he commented that because energy costs and utilities bills have gone up, stressing energy reduction strategies is important. He extolled the value in conducting a home energy audit. Ms. Reidlinger suggested that sharing stories of how Commissioners engage with resources like a home energy audit on the City's website is one way to push environmental messaging without relying solely on social media.

Chair Miller recommended that the theme for October be changed from renewable energy to energy efficiency so that individuals can take action before winter temperatures set in. He also advocated for having a representative from the Ramsey-Washington Metro Watershed District present at the EMC meeting during the month of August to promote water conservation programs.

Commissioner Gerding proposed that the theme for March focus more heavily on water conservation instead of recycling, especially as spring temperatures prompt snow and ice thaw and individuals think about cleaning out and watering their garden beds. Chair Miller agreed and suggested that Commissioner Gerding share his experience with applying for the Ramsey-Washington Metro Watershed District Stewardship Grant to help fund water quality improvement projects at his home.

Chair Miller reminded the EMC that the editorial calendar can be changed throughout the year as necessary so that relevant resources and messages are reaching individuals in Oakdale. He supported the idea of hosting an environmental fair at the Discovery Center in June, especially because the fair could be conducted in conjunction with the kickoff for the 2023 Grow Solar Twin Cities solar group buy program. He observed that it would be good to talk with Oakdale residents and business owners in person at events like the environmental fair, rather than exclusively over a virtual platform like Zoom.

Commissioner Gerding recommended that a plug for Washington County's food scraps drop-off program, and for composting in general, be made in December to promote low waste activities over the holiday season.

**c. OTHER ITEMS**

**a. Commissioner update(s)**

Commissioner Wilson shared that Oakdale Wellness 50+ is starting a new series in February called 'Reducing Your Waste Stream', a three-part series on reducing household waste streams. The first part of the series is a presentation at the Oakdale Discovery Center on February 16, 2023, from 6-7:30; a representative from Washington County will present about recycling, composting food scraps, and other ways to reduce waste. The second part of the series is a guided tour of the Washington County Environmental Center on February 28, 2023. The third part of the series is a guided tour of the Recycling & Energy Center on March 2, 2023. Commissioner Wilson noted that information about the series can be found on the City of Oakdale's website, and encouraged interested individuals to make a reservation for one or both tours.

Commissioner Gerding encouraged residents and business owners to help clear snow and ice away from storm drains, if possible. He also shared that he is continuing to work with the Ramsey-Washington Metro Watershed District on water quality improvement projects at his home, made possible with funds from the Stewardship Grant.

Chair Miller noted that there will be a conference for area environmental commissions in April 2023. He committed to emailing the information about the conference to the other Commissioners.

**b. Council liaison update(s)**

Oakdale Mayor Zabel shared that the property tax levy was adopted, and the City's budget finalized, at the end of 2022. He thanked City staff for preparing all the materials necessary to help City Council make informed decisions about the property tax levy and the City budget.

Mayor Zabel mentioned that the first City Council meeting of the year is on January 10, 2023. He explained that he would be sworn into office during the meeting, in addition to reelected Council Member Susan Olsen and incoming Council Member Andy Morcomb. He shared that the City Council would also consider a few development items presented for consideration by the Oakdale Planning Commission during the January 10 meeting.

**NEXT MEETING DATE**

Chair Miller reminded the Commission that the next meeting of the EMC will be Monday, February 13, 2023 in the City Council Chambers.

**ADJOURNMENT**

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**A MOTION WAS MADE BY COMMISSIONER WILSON, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER GERDING, TO ADJOURN THE JANUARY 9, 2023 REGULAR MEETING OF THE OAKDALE ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT COMMISSION AT 7:48 P.M.**

**3 AYES  
0 NAYS**

**MOTION CARRIED**

**Meeting Adjourned**

Respectfully submitted,

Shannon Reidlinger  
Sr. Community Development Specialist