



CITY OF MENDOTA HEIGHTS

NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION WORK SESSION MINUTES

6:00 PM

Wednesday, January 14, 2026

1101 Victoria Curve, Mendota Heights

1. Call to Order

Chair Knosalla called the meeting to order at 6:12 p.m.

2. Roll Call

In attendance: Chair Knosalla, Vice Chair Stein, Student Commissioners Bisanz and Alizadeh, Commissioners Husbands, Daul and Sheets. Absent: Commissioners McCaslin and Thuening.

Staff in attendance: Natural Resources Manager Krista Spreiter.

3. Discussion

a. 2025 Oak Awards

Manager Spreiter gave an overview of the Oak Awards recognition program. The Oak Awards program was created in 2023 by the Mendota Heights Natural Resources Commission to celebrate leadership, education/outreach, and project efforts that advance natural resources within the City. It includes three categories:

- Acorn award – recognizes exemplary youth leadership in the advancement of our city's natural resources. For example, a youth-led native planting project or

education event. Eligible youth include individuals or groups 18 years of age and younger, or a current student in 12th grade or under.

- Leaf award – recognizes significant contributions of an individual, family, company or organization that has demonstrated substantial leadership for the stewardship of our city’s natural resources. For example, a community native planting effort or coordination of a neighborhood-wide Adopt-a-Drain effort.
- Canopy award – recognizes lifetime achievement of an individual, family, company or organization that has demonstrated extraordinary leadership for the stewardship of our city’s natural resources. For example, an individual who has initiated several or successive natural resource stewardship efforts or an organization that leads by example and has worked overtime to cultivate natural resource stewardship in the community.

Nominations are accepted until January 31st, 2026. Manager Spreiter noted that there have not been any nominations received. The Commission discussed ways to promote the program and encourage the public to submit nominations, as well as possible nominees.

b. **Sustainable Mendota Heights Update**

Manager Spreiter gave an overview of the *Sustainable Mendota Heights* efforts and goals. The program includes three focus areas:

Energy: Efforts to source energy from renewables and reduce usage.

Waste: Practices like recycling, composting, and reducing waste when we can.

Nature: Preservation and enhancement of the City's natural resources.

As part of these efforts, the city is also launching a sustainable business recognition program. Businesses will have the opportunity to participate in a variety of activities that align with the three focus areas to become a sustainable Mendota Heights business. Once recognized, the business will be added to a list of sustainable businesses on the city’s website and will receive a window cling.

As part of the program, the city will also be hosting three business breakfasts, featuring speakers that provide information to businesses that align with the three focus areas. A light breakfast will be provided for participants. Business Breakfasts will be held at City Hall from 8a-9a on the following dates: February 10th (Energy), March 12th (Nature), and April 14th (Waste).

The Commission discussed additional topics and speakers for the March 12th breakfast, that focuses on nature. A suggestion was made to incorporate stormwater/surface water education and programs, including how to reduce de-icing salt in winter maintenance. A suggestion was also made to include the topic of groundwater conservation.

c. Shoreland Management Ordinance Update

Manager Spreiter gave an update on the ordinance development process and the current draft of the Shoreland Management ordinance. A meeting was held on January 13th with the MN Department of Natural Resources, and included Goal 1 Committee members, as well as Community Development Manager Madden and the city attorney. Manager Spreiter and Vice Chair Stein gave an overview of the meeting and provided takeaways from the conversation, including:

- Regarding non-public water tributaries, it was the DNR's opinion that it may be more appropriate to address non-PW tributaries in a separate ordinance if requiring buffers only to avoid confusion.
- Only tributaries with drainage areas of 2 sq mi or greater are considered public waters. Manager Spreiter will look into the drainage area of Valley Creek, as this Creek may meet the standard.
- It was communicated that water levels continue to rise above the established OHW for Augusta, with the possible installation of a controlled outlet unknown. The DNR had indicated that they are looking into adjusting the OHW.
- In regards to flexibility for re-development, it was suggested that an exchange for allowing variances, restoration and buffer establishment could be required.
- Setbacks are seen as more important than lot standards such as building height. DNR is open to approving an ordinance without building height standards.

d. Town Square Talk Recap

The Natural Resources Commission received an invitation for two commission members to be guests on the Town Square Talk show *Town Square Talk*. Town Square Talk airs once a month, featuring leaders from nonprofits, the arts and community-based initiatives.

Chair Knosalla and Commissioner Thuening were guests on Town Square Talk in December, and spoke regarding several Natural Resources Commission topics including:

- Partners in Energy

- Oaks Awards Program
- Earth and Arbor Day Celebration
- The Mendota Heights Annual Tree Sale and Tree Canopy Program
- Urban Forestry Ordinance
- Valley Park Restoration and Collaboration
- Ways Residents can get Involved and Take Action (Adopt-a-Drain Program, Partners in Energy Programs, Curb-cut Raingarden Program, etc.)
- Upcoming Programs and Events

Chair Knosalla gave an overview of the experience and information shared.

The Town Square Talk episode is now available on Vimeo:

<https://vimeo.com/1148682912?share=copy&fl=sv&fe=ci>. It is also posted to Facebook, Instagram, and Podcast platforms, and playing on Ch. 799.

Staff Announcements:

Manager Spreiter gave an update on the Geothermal Grant and Feasibility Study. A kick-off meeting was held today with the consultant, HGA.

Manager Spreiter communicated that this is Commissioner Husband's last meeting. Her term has ended, and she chose not to request re-appointment. Staff and commissioners expressed their gratitude to Commissioner Husbands for her service on the commission. A new commissioner has been appointed and will join the commission for its February meeting. Manager Spreiter also reminded the commission that officer elections will occur at the February meeting. Chair Knosalla shared that she will be stepping away as Chair.

Chair Knosalla adjourned the meeting at 7:30 p.m.