



Meeting Minutes: Dakota County Planning Commission Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes-Final

Date: 9/28/2023

Minutes prepared by Liz Hansen

Location: Western Service Center

Attendance

Members Present

- Jerry Rich
- Amy Hunting
- Mike Cahn
- Barry Graham
- James Guttman
- Nate Reitz
- Tony Nelson
- Kelly Kausel
- Dennis Peine
- Brady Folkestad
- Lori Hansen
- Jill Smith

Dakota County staff members attending:

- Kurt Chatfield, Planning Manager
- Nikki Stewart, Environmental Resources Director
- Liz Hansen, Administrative Coordinator
- Renee Burman, Environmental Initiatives Supervisor
- Gena Gerard, Sr. Environmental Specialist

Member(s) Absent:

- Michael Esch

Meeting Called to Order

- Time: 7:00 p.m.
- By: Planning Commission Chair, Amy Hunting
- Commissioner Kausel joined the meeting at 7:02 p.m.
- Commissioner Reitz joined the meeting at 7:05 p.m.

Pledge of Allegiance

- The Planning Commission opened the meeting by reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

Public Comments

- Comments/Notes: No audience member wished to address an item not on the agenda.

Approval of Agenda

Chair Hunting asked if there were any changes to the agenda.

The Planning Commission advised no changes, additions, or deletions.

MOTION: Commissioner Graham moved, seconded by Commissioner Hansen, approving the agenda. Voice vote: Ayes – 10 – Nays – 0 – Unanimously Approved

Approval of Minutes (from August 24, 2023)

Chair Hunting asked if there were any changes to the previous meeting's minutes.

The Planning Commission advised no changes, additions, or deletions.

MOTION: Commissioner Guttman moved, seconded by Commissioner Folkestad, approving the previous meeting's minutes. Voice vote: Ayes – 10 – Nays – 0 – Unanimously Approved

Item VI. Dakota County Solid Waste Management Plan – Information

(Renee Burman, Environmental Initiatives Supervisor, and Gena Gerard, Sr. Environmental Specialist)

Renee Burman, Environmental Initiatives Supervisor, and Gena Gerard, Sr. Environmental Specialist, presented this item. The Planning Commission received an overview of the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency's (MPCA) requirements for updating the County's Solid Waste Management Plan.

Questions and comments by the Commissioners, along with responses from staff (*italics*):

Are recycling best practices taught to kids in our area schools? *Staff responded that there is a robust program for schools, including grant funding and student education.*

Does Dakota County work with the cities regarding managing grass clippings? *Staff responded that Dakota County does work closely with the cities. Cities have varying schedules for managing grass clippings.*

Dakota County's adopted ordinance seems more restrictive than other area counties. With respect to paired waste bins, has Dakota County seen a decrease in the availability of waste bins because cities have repurposed some waste bins to be used as recycling containers? *Staff responded that they are unaware of a reduction in the number of waste bins since the adoption of the ordinance. Dakota County has made grant funding available to cities and businesses to help with the new requirements, such as funding for additional bins and labels to be placed on bins for recycled materials. Staff will follow up on this particular issue and circulate information about available grant funds and resources to help meet the new requirements.*

The State's plan appears to have some recycling goals that will be very difficult to reach. Does the waste stream have enough recyclables in it to meet those goals? Do we know how many recyclables are in the overall waste stream? *Staff responded that the state legislature identified the goal that is being used in the new plan. Waste sorts may provide a better understanding of the percentage of recyclables in the overall waste stream and the practicality of meeting the State's goal. It is also challenging to measure waste reduction, and sometimes, collecting the data needed to determine if strategies are successful takes years.*

For the waste-to-energy goals in the plan, will a new waste-to-energy facility be constructed in Dakota County? *Staff responded that they are not aware of any plans on the books for new waste-to-energy facilities that would serve Dakota County. Given that the Hennepin County facility already has long-term contracts, it is unlikely that Dakota County's waste stream will be directed into waste-to-energy facilities.*

In terms of reducing organic waste, are the foods that miss their sell-by date made use of at local food banks? *Staff responded that food banks like Second Harvest Heartland collect food rescue. Reducing the amount of organic waste that is headed to landfills will need to be a significant discussion topic in the upcoming plan.*

How are grocery stores incentivized to participate in food waste rescue? *Staff responded that some grocery stores use donating food as a tax write-off. An additional incentive is that grocery stores may be able to reduce their waste disposal fees if food can be donated or reused.*

Could Dakota County work with the Minnesota Department of Public Health, nursing homes, assisted living, and schools in education regarding best-date and use-by dates for food waste? *Staff responded that there had been discussions at the federal level to more accurately label food expiration dates to differentiate food that is no longer at the peak of freshness from food that is older but still safe to consume. More work is needed in this area to reduce food waste.*

The Planning Commission discussed the costs and benefits of waste management strategies. Since the plan that was put in place in 2018, do we see the environmental benefits from those efforts, and how do they compare to the costs that waste haulers have incurred, and ultimately, residents and businesses? An example would be whether the cost associated with weekly recycling provides enough additional benefit to warrant this requirement. *Staff responded that because the waste collection and management system is private, the County doesn't have access to detailed cost data. Staff recognize the importance of understanding the relationship between costs and benefits and will try to provide this information to the Planning Commission when new initiatives are being considered.*

Under the goal of reuse, how will Dakota County encourage more reuse, such as the reuse of construction materials? Will Dakota County be able to provide incentives for moving buildings instead of tearing down buildings, many of which may have historic significance? *Staff responded that there are reuse opportunities for construction materials and that this would be a good discussion topic during the stakeholder engagement phase*

of the plan. Staff are familiar with Minneapolis and St. Paul companies that salvage and reuse construction waste.

Does Dakota County work with school districts, local farmers, or the Minnesota Zoo to pick up food scraps and repurpose them for animal use? *Staff responded that the County works directly with school districts but not with farmers now. Staff knows there is a program in the north metro where farmers gather food scraps from schools to be reused as animal food. While there is work to be done in this area, food waste is also generated from homes.*

It isn't easy to know what is recyclable or compostable. *Staff are aware that labeling can be confusing. Some of this confusion will be reduced because the state legislature passed a law that items that meet certain compostability standards can be labeled "compostable" by 2025.*

The Planning Commission discussed the pros and cons of organized waste collection. Several comments were made about how organized collection reduces vehicle emissions wear and tear on streets, and reduces the number of large trucks in neighborhoods. Comments were also made about the need to retain competitive waste collection rates and consider the flexibility of households to select a waste hauler of their choice. *Staff responded that organized collection might be a topic of discussion in the draft plan if the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency includes it in their Policy Plan for counties to incorporate.*

What is the best way to dispose of pet waste? *Staff responded that pet waste cannot be composted and that the best way to dispose of pet waste is in the trash.*

How do we gather data about what waste is delivered to landfills? How do counties know if they are meeting recycling targets? *Staff responded that periodic waste sorts at the landfill are the best data source. However, even data gathered from waste sorts is somewhat limited because they do not tell us the level at which people are reducing or reusing waste.*

How do you change personal behavior and that recycling is the right thing to do for the environment? *Staff responded that this is a major challenge and that the best opportunity to change behavior is through education and communications efforts.*

The Planning Commission discussed the challenges of recycling appliances, mattresses, furniture, and other bulky items. Several comments were made about the benefits of city clean-up days. Planning Commission members also discussed the usefulness of the Dakota County Recycling Guide as a one-stop-shop publication to help residents recycle.

The Planning Commission concluded with a general discussion about balancing waste management fees and regulations with the need to protect the environment and the overall public good. Planning Commissioners discussed Dakota County's level of waste regulation compared to other locations in the metro area. There were various responses and comments provided by Planning Commission members, some supporting Dakota County's efforts and others expressing concerns about the need to hold down waste management fees. There was a consensus that more information will be needed moving forward to begin to make informed decisions about reaching this balance between costs and benefits.

Planning Manager Update and County Board Actions

Comments/Notes: Kurt Chatfield, Planning Manager, provided the Planning Commission with an update on the following County Board Actions:

- Progress toward Planning Commission 2023 Work Plan
- County Board authorized release of draft Miesville Park Reserve Long-Range Plan and Natural Resource Management Plan for public review

A commissioner asked about the County Road 42 corridor study, particularly the pedestrian tunnel by the Redwood pool. *Staff responded that they would seek an update from the Project Manager and provide the information following the meeting.*

Upcoming Public Meetings – Community Outreach

Dakota County Crisis and Recovery Center Ground Breaking	October 3, 5 p.m. Dakota County Northern Service Center Northeast parking lot
Vermillion River Watershed Plan Public meeting	October 12, 4pm-6pm Farmington Extension Building
Solid Waste Management Plan Public intercept (booth with staff)	October 13, 8am-noon West St. Paul Farmers Market (to be confirmed)
Miesville Park Reserve Long Range Plan and Natural Resources Management Plan Open House	October TBD (details available at future date)

Topics for next meeting (Thursday, October 26, 2023)

Kurt Chatfield, Planning Manager, let the Planning Commission know that there is one item on the schedule for next month’s meeting:

- Vermillion River Greenway Natural Resource Management Plan

Planning Commissioner Announcements/Updates:

Commissioner Nelson gave the Planning Commission an update on Trout Unlimited’s restoration at Miesville Ravine. They have restored 2,600 of 3,500 feet of the brook and should complete work by the end of next week. In the restoration process, a threatened wildflower (Snowy Campion) was discovered, and they are working with the MN Landscape Arboretum to collect seeds to start plants that can be reintroduced to the area.

Adjournment

Chair Hunting asked for a motion to adjourn.

MOTION: Commissioner Graham moved, seconded by Commissioner Reitz, to adjourn the meeting at 8:53 p.m. Voice Vote: Ayes – 12 – Nays – 0 – Unanimously Approved.

Next Regular Meeting: Thursday, October 26, 2023, at 7:00 p.m., Dakota County Western Service Center, Apple Valley

Respectfully submitted,

Liz Hansen, Administrative Coordinator