

**Dakota County Planning Commission
Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes**

Date: 01/27/2022

Time: 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

Members Present		Staff Present		Others Present	
John Ross	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Nate Reitz	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Kurt Chatfield	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Jerry Rich	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Jim Guttman	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Liz Hansen	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Barry Graham	<input type="checkbox"/>	Tony Nelson	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Niki Geisler	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Lori Hansen	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Donald Post	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Valerie Nepl	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Jill Smith	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Anna Boroff	<input type="checkbox"/>	Jill Trescott	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Greg Oxley	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Dennis Peine	<input type="checkbox"/>	Ben Rutter	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Amy Hunting	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Robert Timmerman	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Mary Jackson	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
				Georg Fischer	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
				BJ Battig	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
					Ashley Gallagher, Dakota County Soil and Water Conservation <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Meeting Called to Order

Time: 7:00 p.m.

By: Kurt Chatfield

Audience items not on the agenda

Comments/Notes: No one present in the audience wished to address an item, not on the agenda.

Approval of agenda

Motion by: Commissioner Oxley

Second: Commissioner Smith

Vote: Unanimously approved.

Approval of minutes (from October 28, 2021 meeting)

Motion by: Commissioner Post

Second: Commissioner Oxley

Vote: Unanimously approved.

A question was raised about whether the minutes from the November 18, 2021 meeting should also be adopted, even though a quorum was not reached for that meeting. *Staff responded that the County Attorney's office would need to be consulted, and staff would return with an answer.*

Welcome new Planning Commissioner

Commissioner Amy Hunting welcomed new Planning Commissioner John Ross from District 2.

Item #1: Election of 2022 Planning Commission Officers

Action / Information

Comments/Notes: The Planning Commission held their election.

Election of Chair

Commissioner Oxley, nominated by: Commissioner Timmerman

A unanimous vote elected Greg Oxley as the Chair for 2022.

Election of Vice-Chair

Commissioner Hunting, nominated by: Commissioner Hansen

A unanimous vote elected Amy Hunting as the Vice-Chair for 2022.

Election of Secretary

Commissioner Guttman, nominated by: Commissioner Post

A unanimous vote elected Guttman as Secretary for 2022.

Item #2: Establishment of Planning Commission Meeting Dates – 2022

Action / Information

Planning Manager, Kurt Chatfield, outlined the proposed 2022 Planning Commission meeting dates. The Planning Commission voted to approve the meeting dates.

Motion by: Commissioner Post

Second: Commissioner Nelson

Vote: Unanimously approved.

Item #3: Planning Commission Administrative Forms

Action / Information

Administrative Coordinator, Liz Hansen, spoke about two forms that need to be filled out and returned.

The two forms are: "Consent to Release Private Data" and "Citizen Advisory Committee Member

Statement of Representation." Emailing or mailing in the forms is acceptable.

Item #4: 2022 Planning Commission Work Plan

Action / Information

Planning Manager, Kurt Chatfield, outlined the County Board adopted 2022 Planning Commission Workplan.

Item #5: Agricultural Chemical Reduction Effort (ACRE) Program Update

Action / Information

Valerie Neppel, Groundwater Protection Supervisor, and Jill Trescott, Sr. Environmental Specialist, presented this item and responded to questions. Ashley Gallagher from the Soil and Water Conservation District was also in the audience and responded to questions.

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

- Dakota County's Groundwater Plan and the ACRE program propose more stringent nitrate standards than the State of Minnesota, for what purpose? *Staff responded that the State standards are designed to prevent additional nitrate contamination. Dakota County's nitrate levels already exceed safe drinking water standards in many areas of the County, so more stringent standards are needed to reduce nitrate contamination to safe drinking levels.*
- Since conversion of cornfields to solar farms can improve water quality, why is there local resistance to these solar facilities? *Staff responded that many farm communities do not like to see land taken out of production or, in some cases, object to solar farms based on aesthetics. Some townships have adopted moratoriums to restrict the conversion of cropland to solar farms.*
- Do we have a problem with absentee landowners not using best management practices? Would it be possible to adopt regulations that would apply to absentee landowners? *Staff responded that absentee landowners are less likely to use best management practices, and this is an area that may need further study.*
- Once nitrate mitigation measures are put in place, how long does it take to see improvements in groundwater quality? *Staff responded that shallow water aquifers could see improvements rather quickly, in some instances as soon as 3-5 years. Significant change may occur within a 20-year timeframe.*
- Are farmers concerned about consuming nitrates and pesticides from their own farming operations? *Staff responded that based on surveys and focus groups, some farmers are concerned, but many others are not. There is generally a much greater concern about grandchildren drinking water that exceeds safety standards.*
- A statement was made that there are many levels of government that regulate agriculture. Dakota County needs to do what it can to reduce bureaucracy for farmers.
- The use of chloride threatens surface water and groundwater. Many cities apply too much salt to roads in the wintertime. Does Dakota County have the authority to regulate cities? *Staff acknowledged the use of road salt as an issue but stated that each city has its own program.*

- A commissioner asked if the County mails test kits to the farmers. *Staff responded that the County had launched a Community Focused Sampling program to give all residents who rely on private drinking water wells, including farmers, the opportunity to have their water tested at no cost to them over a five-year rotation. To date, almost 2000 test kits have been sent to residents so they can collect samples of their water and return the kit to a testing lab.*
- Commissioners discussed the ACRE strategies with several stating support for Strategy 2, Communication, Outreach, and Education.
- There was general discussion about the proposed ACRE strategies with detailed questions about landowner technical support, incentives for best management practices, and whether small farms and large farms have the same opportunities and access to information. *Staff responded to each of the individual questions.*
- Landowner incentives were discussed such as providing front end consultation. A statement was made that if Dakota County chooses to use financial incentives to change farming practices that there needs to be a recognition that it will take an ongoing long-term financial commitment to sustain those incentives and practices.
- A Commissioner suggested Dakota County Staff get additional feedback from the farmers on what they consider to be the “right incentive”.
- A suggestion was made to appeal to farmers’ legacy ethic by designing groundwater protection and restoration programs that farmers would embrace to pass their farms on to future generations.

In the interest of time, the Planning Commission concluded their discussion but requested that staff return to next month’s meeting to review the remaining strategies.

Item #6 All Hazard Mitigation Plan

Action / Information

Ben Rutter, Homeland Security Specialist, and Mary Jackson, Sr. Planner, presented this item and responded to questions. BJ Battig, Manager Risk Homeland Security, and Georg Fischer, Environmental Resources Director, were also in the audience and responded to questions.

- Does the plan address vulnerabilities in public utilities such as power and natural gas distribution? *Staff acknowledged that power blackouts and interruptions in service may result in significant challenges but that utilities and their distribution networks are outside the scope of this plan.*
- The plan addresses civil disobedience as a new hazard. A comment was made that the frequency of civil disobedience for suburban areas such as Dakota County should be changed from high to occasional in the risk assessment table. *Staff acknowledged the change.*
- The plan addresses protecting the public water supply with an emphasis on protecting groundwater from contamination. Should the plan also address a deliberate attack on public water distribution systems? *Staff responded that such an attack is a significant threat but would be covered under the terrorism section of the plan.*
- A recommendation was made to edit the table of comments for clarity and brevity.
- The Planning Commission discussed the need to identify vulnerabilities in the plan without making those vulnerabilities known to terrorists. *Staff described the process of how sections of the plan have been redacted to prevent the misuse of the plan.*
- A concern was raised that the plan has good content but may not be implemented. *Staff described the process through which the plan will be implemented. The methods include regular meetings with cities and emergency responders, incorporation into annual work plans, and inclusion in city and County Capital Improvement Programs.*

Chair Oxley entertained a motion that the Planning Commission recommends to the County Board that the draft Dakota County All-Hazard Mitigation Plan be released for a public review period from February 23, 2022 – to April 8, 2022.

Motion by: Commissioner Hunting

Second: Commissioner Smith

Vote: Unanimously approved.

Update on County Board Actions/Projects

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

- Authorized Joint Powers Agreement with Burnsville for Lake Marion Greenway Trailhead
- Authorized River to River Greenway public art pilot project
- Received update on Veterans Memorial Greenway, design, and memorials
- Discussed parks and greenways long-term funding

Upcoming Public Meetings – Community Outreach

CSAH 6 and CAH 73 Roundabout (Thomson and Oakdale) Open House	March 9 from 5pm-7pm West St. Paul Council Chambers, 1616 Humboldt Avenue, West St. Paul
County 46 and Diamond Path Intersection Open House	February 17, from 6:30pm-8:30pm East Lake Elementary School, Lakeville https://www.co.dakota.mn.us/Transportation/PlannedConstruction/CR33-46/Pages/default.aspx
Veterans Memorial Greenway Open House	February 23, from 4:30pm-6:30pm Veterans Memorial Community Center, Inver Grove Heights https://www.veteransmemorialgreenway.com/

Topics for next meeting:

- North Creek Greenway and Lake Marion Greenway Natural Resource Management Plans
- Veterans Memorial Greenway, design, and memorial concept update
- Complete discussion of ACRE program strategies

Planning Commissioner Announcements/Updates:

- None.

Adjourn: 9:09 p.m.

Motion by: Commissioner Reitz

Second: Commissioner Hansen

Vote: Unanimously approved.

Next Regular Meeting: Thursday, February 24, 2022, at 7:00 p.m., Dakota County Western Service Center, Apple Valley