

Inver Grove Heights Environmental Commission
Virtual Meeting via Zoom
Thursday, February 25, 2021 at 7:00 p.m.

Meeting Minutes

1. Call to Order

The Environmental Advisory Commission of Inver Grove Heights met virtually via Zoom on Thursday, February 25, 2021. Chair Trenzeluk called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

2. Roll Call

Present: Chair Ted Trenzeluk, Commissioners; Sarah Brass, Katherine Teiken, Patricia Todd, Larry Moehring, and Nichole Boehmke

Absent: Commissioner Robert Heidenreich (excused); Commissioners Matt Mills and Aditya Jayam

3. Presentations

4. Announcements

A. Next meeting – Thursday, March 25, 2021 – Virtual Regular Meeting 7:00pm

5. Consent Agenda

A. Minutes of Thursday, January 28, 2020 Environmental Commission Meeting

Motion by Commissioner Boehmke, seconded by Commissioner Teiken to approve the minutes from Thursday, January 28, 2020 as submitted.

Ayes: 7

Nays: 0 Motion carried.

6. Public Comment

7. Regular Agenda

A. Consider recommending City Council Approval of the City of Inver Grove Heights' Energy Action Plan

Ally Sutherland, Environmental Specialist, presented a powerpoint presentation to the Environmental Commission on the draft City of Inver Grove Heights Energy Action Plan developed by the City and the Energy Action Stakeholder Team. This ongoing initiative is in collaboration with Xcel Energy's Partners in Energy. Ms. Sutherland introduced the Xcel Energy Representatives on the call, Jamie Johnson (CEE), Tami Gunderzik (Xcel Energy), and Marisa Bayer (CEE). Information on the program was presented as follows:

What is Partners in Energy?

- Partners in Energy is a two-year collaboration with Xcel Energy to develop and implement a community's energy goals
- Built upon existing sustainability goals and a stakeholder engagement process
- Jamie Johnson noted that Inver Grove Heights is one of more than 30 Minnesota communities to participate in Partner in Energy, including Rosemount and Hastings.

How can it help the community?

- Further existing programming goals
 - GreenStep Cities
 - Transition to Sustainable Operations Plan
- New opportunities
 - Expand and target outreach
 - Build on existing municipal actions
 - Promote sustainability in community
 - Free technical assistance & outreach resources

IGH Partners in Energy Planning Process

- Fall 2019: Commission and Council directed city staff to apply for the program
- Feb 2020:
 - Applied and Selected
 - Stakeholder engagement recruiting. 22 Community members joined the team. Representatives of City Commissions, Committee's, City Council, local education institutes; including K-12 Schools and the local Community College, business representatives, representatives of service organizations, utilities, and residents.
- July 2020: Planning Process (~7 months)
 - Stakeholder engagement workshops
 - Community online survey to collect business and residential feedback on energy needs. Over 200 responses were collected.
- Spring 2021: Implementation Process (~18 months)
 - Energy Action Plan and MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) Draft
 - Energy Action Plan and MOU approval
- April 2021: Phase 2 begins once Plan and MOU are approved. Process will continue as long as Staff sees fit. Facilitated by Partners in Energy for the first 18 months.

IGH Energy Action Plan

- 1) Baseline Data (2017-2019)
 - Partners in Energy consolidated community energy usage data to understand how the community uses energy per sector and what the related emissions are.
- 2) Energy Vision & Goals
 - The City began the planning process by creating a Vision Statement with the stakeholder team to help the planning process by reflecting on a vision for the Community's future. The Vision Statement: "Inver Grove Heights will be an innovative and engaged Community where energy choices conserve both our natural and financial resources".
 - Goals and targets are identified throughout the Plan to help meet the Vision Statement.
- 3) Implementation Work Plan
 - Identifies three focus areas of the plan: 1) Residents, 2) Large and small businesses, schools, non-profits, and places of worship, and 3) Municipal Leadership.
 - Identifies Strategies (broad plans meant to guide action)
 - Residents and businesses
 - Education & outreach of energy efficiency, renewable energy use, efficient transportation
 - Defines targeted populations

- Municipal leadership
 - Seek opportunities for energy efficiency, renewable energy and efficient transportation
 - Demonstrate sustainability leadership
- Identifies Tactics (specific actions to achieve strategies)
 - Residents
 - Dedicated city webpage
 - New education material and events
 - New relationships with residents we may not reach through existing communication channels
 - Recognition program and share testimonials
 - Annual engagement opportunities
 - Businesses
 - Dedicated city webpage
 - New education material
 - 1:1 outreach to small businesses
 - Partner with business organizations
 - Recognition program and share testimonials
 - Annual engagement opportunities
 - Ms. Johnson stated the Partners in Energy Team will support the Community toward achieving goals set in the Energy Action Plan. Marketing support is one of the resources. Will work closely with City Staff and the Communications Department to create outreach material needed while implementing strategies. Materials will be cobranded and designed so messaging, design, and imagery resonates with residents, businesses, and the Community.
 - Municipality
 - Update code as needed
 - Connect developers to education and grants
 - Educated employees and facility users
 - Renewable energy and energy efficiency in existing and new facilities
 - Efficient fleet
- 4) Measuring Success
 - Visualizations are included in the plan to help with understanding what successful implementation of the Plan would look like. For example: By implementing actions for 2021 and 2022, the Community could avoid up to \$1.3 million dollars in energy costs and avoid 6,800 metric tons of Carbon Dioxide. The equivalent of taking 1,500 vehicles off the road for a year.

Support & Commitments

- Plan approval
- MOU for Partners in Energy support (18-months)
- Community Development and support
- Annual reporting of progress
- Energy Action Team & new community relationships

Energy Action Team Comments

- Ms. Sutherland requested comments from the Energy Action Team
 - Why you think an energy action plan is important for our community?

- Which elements of the plan are you most excited to see implemented in our community?
- Ms. Sutherland stated Dawn Gaetke, a resident of Inver Grove Heights and a member of the Energy Action Team, wished to share comments with the Environmental Commission. Ms. Gaetke noted she was grateful to be on the committee. She stated fossil fuel energy will have to be replaced, and the fastest and most cost-effective way to transition is to reduce the amount of energy needed. That is why this Energy Action Plan is so important. It focuses on the crucial first step of reducing energy use. She stated by adopting this Plan, the City points the way in reducing costs for itself and citizens. By reducing energy use, we reduce the need to purchase of additional wind turbines, solar panels, or build larger nuclear plants in the future. We also reduce our energy bills in the process. She is also in favor of the longer-term goals of the Plan such as the electric vehicle infrastructure goals. She is happy knowing the City has recognized the need to get ready for changes on the horizon and is grateful for the opportunity to work on this. She encouraged the Council to adopt the Plan.
- Commissioner Teiken noted she was also a part of the Energy Action Team and had originally brought the program to the attention of the Environmental Commission and City Staff. She requested that City Staff set up the initial Partners in Energy informational presentation. She is pleased with how the plan turned out and felt that CEE worked hard to hear from different community voices, learn different opinions and craft them into the plan. She is supportive of the plan and feels it will provide many climate, financial and equity benefits the community.
- Chair Ted Trenzeluk thanked staff, Xcel Energy and CEE for their support of the Plan. He stated he likes that the Plan strikes a balance for a diverse community with different interests and noted that whether you want to save on energy costs or take actions for their environmental benefits there are options for you to participate. He likes that the Plan is easy to read and that it was professionally assembled with data, facts, measurements, goals, and objectives.

Next Steps

- March 1: City Council Work Session
- March 8: City Council Meeting
- Approval of Plan and Memorandum of Understanding
- April 2021: Implementation Kickoff

Commissioner Boehmke noted that the Plan recommends taking advantage of opportunities that present a high return on investment. She asked if the plan includes next steps for a business, resident, or other target audience to take beyond a recommendation? Ms. Sutherland responded that she sees the plan as an initial step to engage the community in energy topics, and to showcase that the city has resources available and encourages the community to consider taking actions to improve energy efficiency. The plan also provides opportunities for peer sharing of community members who have taken recommendations actions. Ms. Johnson noted that because return on investment can vary greatly between businesses, the Plan does not include specific actions but rather recommends businesses seek actions to improve energy efficiency based on their individual circumstance. Ms. Gunderzik noted the Plan seeks to engage businesses and get their attention on the topics in order to connect them with the tools to realize their own savings such as through receiving an energy audit or knowing to look for an energy efficient appliance when they make a purchase decision. She noted the goal is to enable the community to make a change. Chair Trenzeluk also noted that the Plan promotes connecting with the Chamber of Commerce to help connect to businesses. Commissioner Teiken added

that the goal is to promote energy efficiency but also to connect residents and businesses to specific tools to be able to do so based on their individual situation. Commissioner Boehmke noted she understands the Plan is focused on increasing awareness which is important for sustainability. Ms. Sutherland also noted that through stakeholder engagement process and community surveys the city learned although large businesses are likely to have the staff available to make informed energy decisions, small business and residents do not always have the time and knowledge to do so. It is the City's goal to help develop information and outreach tools that make informed decision making easier and quicker for businesses and residents, such as through step-by-step energy efficiency guides.

Commissioner Moehring noted that it can be challenging to quantify actions and measure successful implementation of plans. He asked if we can measure participation and quantify our progress at any time so we can see our progress towards goals and keep momentum. Ms. Sutherland noted that it is a great idea to be monitoring and reporting progress throughout the year and that there is a section in the Plan that discusses specifically how progress towards goals and tactics will be measured. Ms. Johnson noted that tracking progress towards goals is important to communities and that Xcel Energy is able to provide twice annual data pulls that measure progress towards goals. She noted this is provided through the 18-months of implementation and in the future. Chair Trenzeluk noted he has asked a similar question throughout the process about how to keep momentum after the 18-months of implementation support. He noted that he has been reassured by the Plan's inclusion of how to measure success and as well as how the Plan relates to GreenStep Cities. He is hopeful that the two programs will help keep momentum for the other. He also noted the Environmental Commission can be involved by requesting progress reports.

Commissioner Moehring also noted that there was significant discussion of electric vehicle adoption but not charging infrastructure and wanted to know why this is the case. Ms. Sutherland noted that the Plan includes tactics such as applying for grant opportunities to install public charging infrastructure as well as updating our city code to help promote charging infrastructure development through private development. Commissioner Teiken noted that Xcel Energy also has electric vehicle charging programs available that will be promoted to the community through this process.

Environmental Commission Recommendation

Motion by Commissioner Teiken, seconded by Commissioner Todd to recommend City Council Approval of the City of Inver Grove Heights' Energy Action Plan.

Ayes: 7

Nays: 0 Motion carried.

8. Administrative Presentations

9. Commission Comments

10. Adjourn

Motion by Commissioner Todd, seconded by Chair Trenzeluk to adjourn at 7:53 pm.

Ayes: 7

Nays: 0 Motion carried.