

**REGULAR MEETING  
OAKDALE ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT COMMISSION  
JULY 17, 2023**

**CALL TO ORDER**

The Oakdale Environmental Management Commission (EMC) held a meeting on Monday, July 17, 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  
Hannah Dunn, Community Development Specialist and City Staff Liaison  
Andrew Gitzlaff, Community Development Director

Quorum Present: YES  NO

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**A MOTION WAS MADE BY COMMISSIONER WILSON, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER GERDING, TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF MARCH 20, 2023 AS WRITTEN.**

**3 AYES  
0 NAYS**

**MOTION CARRIED**

**A MOTION WAS MADE BY COMMISSIONER GERDING, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER WILSON, TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF MAY 15, 2023 AS WRITTEN.**

**3 AYES  
0 NAYS**

**MOTION CARRIED**

## **ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT COMMISSION REVIEW**

### **a. OLD BUSINESS**

#### **i. Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan Progress Update**

Dunn relayed that since the Environmental Management Commission's last meeting in May, the first draft of the Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan text was completed and reviewed by staff in various departments, including Community Development, Engineering, Public Works, Fire, and Police. The next step is to allow Commissioners and Council Members to review the text and provide feedback. It is anticipated that the plan text will be presented to City Council at their July 25, 2023 meeting and shared with Commissioners at that time.

Chair Miller expressed satisfaction with the progress of the Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan and shared that he is excited to see the draft. He also pointed out that items discussed in previous meetings have been addressed.

#### **ii. Washington County Recycling Grant Update**

Chair Miller explained that Oakdale has received the Washington County Recycling Grant for many years. He looks forward to using the 2023 grant funds to advance recycling in Oakdale. A priority of the funding is to decrease reliance on single-use plastics.

Dunn reiterated that one of the 2023 Washington County Recycling Grant projects is to create reusable bags to give away at community events, such as the Farmers Market. City staff has been progressing towards making the bags a reality. One of the big steps in doing so is determining graphics to use on the bag. Dunn pointed to two options found in the packet. Both options utilize the same recycling logo, but have two different slogans. Dunn emphasized that other slogans can be brainstormed if the Commission desires. She added that bag colors have not been determined and invited initial feedback from the Commission.

In response to Commissioner Wilson's question regarding whether the logo used was the universal sign for recycling, Chair Miller and Commissioner Gerding stated that it was.

Commissioner Wilson expressed that she favors "Plastic free is the way to be" due to its melodious quality. She noted that "Ditch plastic. Switch to reusable" sounds forceful. Commissioner Gerding added that "Ditch and Switch" could be a hybrid option.

Chair Miller added that he likes "Plastic free is the way to be" more due to its positive message.

In response to Commissioner Wilson's question regarding the material of the bag, Dunn stated that the bags will not be canvas because it is a more expensive material. Dunn noted that she could not remember the commonly used material for the available bags but confirmed that it was not plastic.

In response to Commissioner Gerding's question regarding grant language and number of units Oakdale committed to, Dunn informed the Commission that the grant application did not specify how many units were going to be created and handed out

**b. NEW BUSINESS**

**i. Environmental Management Commission Recruitment**

Chair Miller explained that the EMC had been operating with four Commissioners for a year. With one person not seeking reappointment, the Commission is now down to three members. The EMC has potential for seven Commissioners and only having three limits the Commission in advancing its priorities and goals. Therefore, new methods for recruitment need to be explored.

Dunn explained that City staff felt it important to look into recruitment strategies, best practices, and potential solutions to remedy the decline of EMC member appointment. She highlighted that past strategies to recruit members have included: social media, mailers, video promotion, event tabling, and electronic sign advertising. These strategies fall under what is known as a broad-based strategy, allowing the message to reach as many people as possible. Dunn then pointed out that in addition to broad-based recruitment strategies, targeted recruitment and concentric circle recruitment are other strategies to consider. She also highlighted the table in the packet memo that describes what other cities in the Twin Cities are doing on their environmental commissions. Staff identified ideas for EMC and City consideration and input to increase member participation:

- Asking current City Council and Commission members to identify potential individuals to recruit.
- Allowing non-resident business owners and representatives to join the EMC.
- Reducing the number of meetings to quarterly to reduce time commitment.
- Reaching out to neighborhood groups.
- Combining EMC with another commission to increase membership and broaden work plan.
- Identifying additional platforms, aside from Facebook and Oakdale Update, to disseminate information.

Dunn reiterated that these are simply ideas and acting on many of these would require City Council direction. She then opened up the conversation for input and feedback from the Commission.

Chair Miller highlighted that recent EMC recruitment strategies have been broad-based and have not been successful. He sees the benefit in utilizing concentric circle recruitment strategies. Chair Miller also emphasized that current Oakdale business owners and representatives are not allowed to be on the Commission. He added that a benefit of allowing business involvement is that connections can be made with the business community so that initiatives such as water consumption reduction, solar energy, etc. can be more easily implemented.

Chair Miller stated that revisiting student members once school starts in the fall would be a good idea. Commissioner Wilson added that high school National Honors Society students are requested to volunteer and this is a group that EMC could connect with.

In response to Commissioner Gerding's question regarding voting powers of students, Dunn stated that student members are unable to vote.

In response to Commissioner Gerding's question regarding follow-up strategies with people who interact with Oakdale's social media, Dunn explained that nothing is currently being done with the Facebook analytics but it is something that staff can explore.

In response to Commissioner Wilson's request to see the EMC recruitment one-pager used at the 2023 Summerfest, Dunn said that she would supply the Commissioners with it.

In response to Commissioner Gerding's idea about using residential awards for ecological and environmental investments as sources for recruitment, Dunn said that Oakdale is currently not engaging with the nominees or finalists but it is something to consider. Commissioner Gerding added that the survey groups and high school students from the Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan are another source for recruitment. Additionally, the Oakdale Area Chamber of Commerce is another source. He added that leveraging more intimate one-on-one interactions would be beneficial. Other events for these conversations could include the Arbor Day Tree Giveaway and the Spring Tree Planting. These events have partners beyond the Tree Board such as the University of Minnesota.

Chair Miller indicated that he is aware of neighbors that would be interested in serving on the EMC. Additionally, thinking about diversity is important. He added that the time commitment is not unreasonable and therefore, reducing the number of meetings is not necessary. The number of annual meetings is consistent with other cities in the metro area.

In response to Commissioner Gerding's question regarding time commitment of more targeted recruitment strategies, Dunn responded that it is easy to put together a short social media post that goes out to all subscribers. With targeted strategies, there has to be more intentionality regarding individuals who meet desired qualifications and are interested. It then takes more time and effort to reach out to them.

Chair Miller concluded the item by saying that now is the time to recruit more vigorously using targeted strategies. They will complement continued broad-based recruitment strategies.

## **ii. Fleet Electrification**

Dunn stated that the presentation would review the high-level, preliminary findings of the Electric Vehicle Suitability Assessment (EVSA) that Sawatch Labs conducted. She began by highlighting the benefits (i.e., environmental, health, economic) of fleet electrification and the City's 2040 Comprehensive Plan goals that fleet electrification accomplishes. Additionally, moving to electric vehicles (EVs) helps the EMC to accomplish 2023 Work Plan goals.

Dunn highlighted Oakdale's EV actions to date, which include:

- September 2021 - Completed EV-Ready Community Study, allowing the City to prioritize EV-ready actions to enable the use of EVs.
- February 2022 - Joined Xcel's Fleet Electrification Advisory Program (FEAP).
- May 2022 - Amended the Code of Ordinances and created EV Charging Infrastructure Guidelines document.
- September to December 2022 - Sawatch Labs conducted the EVSA.
- February 2023 - Joined the Great Plains Institute EV Smart program.

Dunn reviewed the Fleet Electrification Advisory Program through Xcel, which assists municipalities in developing electrification plans for their fleets. The program partners with Sawatch Labs, who completes an assessment of current vehicles and makes recommendations for switching gas-powered vehicles to electric vehicles. Dunn then explained the two phases of Sawatch Labs' EVSA: 1) telematics data collection and 2) analysis of telematics data and generation of report/database. Telematics were collected for 12 non-Police Department vehicles from September to December 2022. Police Department vehicles already possessed telematics devices and Sawatch pulled a year's worth of data from 14 of them. The report and database were available to City staff in Spring 2023. Sawatch Labs uses their ezEV analytics platform to score the current fleet vehicles. The higher the overall ezEV Score, the better suited the current fleet vehicle is to be replaced with an EV. The analysis then recommended the best EV to replace the eligible fleet vehicles.

Dunn explained that each of the analyzed fleet vehicles had its own one-page summary in the report. She walked through an example of the one-page summary, explaining the different sections. She then highlighted some of the EVSA limitations. Only a subset of vehicles were analyzed (26 of the possible 143 Oakdale vehicles and equipment). Additionally, technology is continually changing and the EVSA did not provide recommendations for prioritization of replacement.

Dunn then summarized key takeaways from the EVSA. Many of the vehicles (19 of 26) studied and analyzed are candidates for EV replacement. Each candidate has potential for total cost of ownership and operational cost savings if replaced with the recommended EV. Lastly, a closer look into potential charging infrastructure locations is needed.

Chair Miller commented that another benefit of fleet electrification - aside from environmental, health, and economic - is that it sets a good example for Oakdale residents.

In response to Chair Miller's question regarding idling, Dunn said that she could initiate conversations with departments about the need and reasons to idle. She will also look into how an electric vehicle might impact idling practices.

In response to Commissioner Wilson's question regarding plug-in hybrids, Dunn elaborated that the Sawatch Labs dashboard allows users to explore both plug-in hybrids and battery electric vehicles as options for replacement.

Chair Miller noted that the City could explore options for both leasing and purchasing vehicles. Leasing electric vehicles would lower the upfront cost. It would also solve the issue of technology evolution because at the end of a lease period, the City could then lease a newer model with upgraded technology.

In response to Chair Miller's question regarding whether the total cost of ownership included federal rebates, Dunn said that she was not aware and could contact Sawatch Labs for clarification.

Chair Miller concluded that leveraging grant programs and the Great Plains Institute EV Smart program for technical assistance is critical in moving forward with fleet electrification and charging infrastructure installation.

**c. OTHER ITEMS**

**i. Monthly review of the 2023 EMC Editorial Calendar**

Dunn recapped that there have been four relevant Facebook posts since the EMC's last meeting:

- June 4th Facebook post highlighting renewable energy opportunities.
- June 28th Facebook post promoting compost pail giveaways at Farmers Market.
- July 6th Facebook post soliciting photos for the Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan.
- July 16th Facebook post sharing locations in Oakdale where people can recycle plastic bags and film.

Dunn then said that water conservation is slated for August per the 2023 Editorial Calendar.

**ii. Commissioner update(s)**

Commissioner Gerding recapped his experience attending the Environment Commissions Conference in May.

Commissioner Wilson updated the EMC that Age-Friendly Oakdale has moved forward with plans to study transportation. There are two community conversations occurring in July: July 24th at 1:30 PM and July 26th at 2 PM. Both conversations will be led by the consultant, Biko Associates. These hour-long community conversations will help Age-Friendly Oakdale explore what people desire for local transportation in Oakdale.

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

Mayor Zabel recounted that it has been a busy summer in Oakdale with Summerfest, events such as the Farmers Market and the Movie in the Park series, street projects, and development projects. Additionally, the 2024 budget work is continuing.

**NEXT MEETING DATE**

The next meeting of the EMC will be Monday, August 21, 2023 in the City Council Chambers.

**ADJOURNMENT**

**A MOTION WAS MADE BY COMMISSIONER WILSON, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER GERDING, TO ADJOURN THE JULY 17, 2023 REGULAR MEETING OF THE OAKDALE ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT COMMISSION AT 8:15 PM.**

**3 AYES  
0 NAYS**

**MOTION CARRIED**

**Meeting Adjourned**

Respectfully submitted,

Hannah Dunn  
Community Development Specialist