

**Red Wing Sustainability Commission
Regular Meeting
City Council Chambers
March 24, 2026**

Members Present: Chair Maddie Brown; Commissioners Mark Berman, Hugh Brown, Dan Evanson, and Kristen Wert

Members Absent: None

Others Present: Brandy Howe, Staff Liaison; Kim Beise, Council Liaison

1. Call to Order

Chair Maddie Brown called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

2. Roll Call

Roll call was conducted. Chair Brown and Commissioners Berman, H. Brown, Evanson, and Wert, and Council Liaison Kim Beise were present.

3. Approval of Agenda

A motion was made by Commissioner Wert, seconded by Commissioner H. Brown, to approve the agenda as drafted. A vote was conducted, and the motion carried unanimously by a vote of 5:0.

4. Approval of Minutes

A. Motion to Approve Minutes.

- 1. January 27, 2026, Regular Meeting Minutes.**
- 2. February 24, 2026, Workshop Meeting Minutes.**

A motion was made by Commissioner Berman, seconded by Commissioner Wert, to approve the minutes as amended. A vote was conducted, and the motion carried unanimously by a vote of 5:0.

5. Public Comment

Chair Brown reviewed the public comment procedure.

An audience member indicated they were simply observing and had no comments.

6. Communication Items

A. Finance Report.

Staff Liaison Howe reviewed the Sustainability Commission budget. Howe reported that the 2026 approved budget is \$2,500, with \$1,500 committed to the organics drop-off container, leaving a remaining balance of \$1,000, assuming that the purchase is completed during the year.

7. Motions & General Business

A. Bee City USA Registration Renewal.

Commissioner Wert provided an update on the Bee City USA registration renewal. Wert noted the annual fee remains \$200 and that the required report was submitted on time. Wert noted that the Xerces Society was flexible regarding the payment deadline, given that the Commission needed to vote on the expenditure. Commissioner Berman asked whether the fee was annual, and Commissioner Wert confirmed it is.

Commissioner Wert identified one outstanding item from the annual report: the City of Red Wing does not yet have an approved plant list for the Xerces Society, which is intended to ensure plants are sourced without pre-applied pesticides. Commissioner Wert noted this item was left blank for the prior year's report as well and suggested the Commission work to address it in the coming year.

Commissioner Wert also shared an exciting development related to the Bee City USA program: the potential to plant the steep slope on 7th Street near the exit of Colvill Park, beneath the highway overpass. Wert noted that Public Works currently weed-whips the slope due to its grade and expressed interest in converting it to a pollinator planting. Public Works indicated enthusiasm for the project and willingness to conduct controlled burns every two to three years for maintenance, noting the site would also serve as a good training location for controlled burns given its surrounding streets.

Commissioner Wert described the site as approximately one-third of an acre, north-facing, and suitable for a mix of native grasses and flowers. The estimated seed cost through Prairie Moon Nursery is approximately \$400. The plan would involve one application of herbicide to eliminate existing grass, followed by a fall planting. Commissioner Berman asked about water access, and Commissioner Wert acknowledged that it is an open question. A discussion followed regarding the City's downtown watering equipment and whether it could be available for the first growing season. Commissioner Wert noted that seeds planted in the fall benefit from snow cover and that the first year of a prairie planting is typically slow, with the saying being: the first year it sleeps, the second year it creeps, and the third year it leaps.

Commissioner Wert noted that Wendy Johnson is leading the initiative and has experience seeding north-facing slopes. Commissioner Wert also noted that the seed mix from Prairie Moon includes a cover crop.

Chair Brown asked whether the Commission should vote on the \$200 Bee City USA fee. Staff Liaison Howe confirmed that expenditures have typically been voted on and that it would be appropriate to do so under Motions and General Business.

A motion was made by Commissioner Wert, seconded by Commissioner Evanson, to approve the \$200 registration fee to the Xerces Society for the Bee

City USA renewal. A vote was conducted, and the motion carried unanimously by a vote of 5:0.

Staff Liaison Howe raised the question of whether the Commission wished to also approve the \$400 seed purchase for the 7th Street slope planting at this meeting, given the two-month gap between meetings. Commissioner Wert indicated a preference to wait until the Bee group meets later in the week, and a clearer picture of the project scope and community support is available. Commissioner Berman suggested the item be added to the next meeting agenda. Commissioner Wert agreed and noted that a workshop could be used for discussion, but that a vote would need to occur at a regular meeting. Staff Liaison Howe confirmed the item could be added to the next agenda, with Commissioner Wert providing an update following the Bee group meeting.

Chair Brown noted that the Featherstone planting site, where trees and pollinator plantings were installed in the fall, is looking healthy. Commissioner Wert noted one probable loss: a pussy willow planted at Pottery Pond, which may have been damaged by a groundhog.

B. Organics Drop-Off Site.

Commissioner Berman provided an update on the Organics Drop-Off Site subcommittee. Berman reported that the subcommittee, consisting of himself, Commissioner Evanson, and Chair Brown, met prior to the meeting and compiled a summary of ten possible locations for the new bin, organized with satellite imagery and consistent criteria for each site. After reviewing all options, each subcommittee member identified their top three choices, and all three were in agreement that their top choice is the area near the Train Depot, Red Wing Arts, and Farmers Market.

Commissioner Berman noted that a review of the parcel map shows much of that area is owned by the Red Wing Area Fund, which would require permission. Berman suggested that a small group walk the site once the snow has melted to identify any City-owned property that might be suitable before pursuing permission from the Fund. Commissioner Evanson noted a specific area of interest at the end of Bush Street near the railroad right-of-way and the City parking lot.

Staff Liaison Howe reported that she had forwarded correspondence from the subcommittee to Public Works Director Shawn Blaney regarding the LaGrange Ramp parking garage area, and that Public Works indicated they are open to working with the Commission on placement in that vicinity. Howe noted that Public Works Director Jeff Schneider and Director Blaney are in the same department, with Blaney serving as Schneider's supervisor, and suggested the subcommittee work directly with Schneider, who would involve Blaney as needed.

Chair Brown suggested the next steps would be for three subcommittee members to walk the site, take photos, and then follow up with both Schneider and Blaney. Commissioner Berman agreed but noted he would need to see the specific location. Chair Brown indicated she could pull up the parcel map and offered to walk the site after the meeting. Staff Liaison Howe reminded the group that no more than three members may visit the site at one time to comply with the open meeting law.

A discussion followed regarding site specifications for the bin. Commissioner Evanson noted the selected unit is the FX1 model, a 48-gallon bin with foot pedal access, housed in a semi-permanent protective enclosure. Commissioner Berman noted the unit includes flat panels for vinyl wrapping and signage. Commissioner H. Brown raised the question of whether a concrete pad would be required, noting that this could add cost and complexity. Commissioner Evanson suggested a gravel pad might be an alternative and recommended asking Schneider about site specifications.

Staff Liaison Howe asked whether the bin would need to be manually rolled to the street for pickup or whether the truck would pull alongside it. Commissioner Berman and Commissioner Evanson confirmed that, based on their visit to the landfill, the process involves a staff person bringing an empty bin and swapping it for the full one.

Commissioner Wert asked whether the company providing the bin also supplies marketing materials. Commissioner Berman noted that promotional planning has not yet begun and suggested it could be addressed at a future workshop. Commissioner Evanson noted that the landfill may be able to assist with outreach and that online promotion through the City is also an option. Chair Brown agreed that promotion would be a logical next step once the location is confirmed and suggested a workshop could be used for that planning.

Commissioner Evanson noted that he had spoken with a member of the Red Wing Area Fund board and obtained a point of contact for coordinating regarding the Depot site.

Chair Brown summarized the next steps: three subcommittee members will walk the LaGrange Ramp area to assess suitability, take photos, and share findings with the full subcommittee. If the site is deemed suitable, the Commission will move forward with that location before pursuing alternatives. Commissioner Berman indicated he could not make a final recommendation until he saw the site in person. Commissioner Evanson expressed support for the LaGrange Ramp location, noting that having potential City approval already in place makes it a strong candidate.

8. Announcements

A. Topics for Future Agendas.

Staff Liaison Howe noted the following items for future agendas: a presentation by Brenda Kelly, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR), on the Lake Pepin Dredging Project; the 7th Street slope pollinator planting project; and organics promotional materials.

Staff Liaison Howe explained that the Lake Pepin Dredging Project presentation was suggested by the City's council administrator following a presentation Kelly gave to elected officials in the fall. Kelly has agreed to present in April and is expected to speak for approximately 20 minutes. Commissioner Wert asked whether the presentation would be relevant to dredging needs in Red Wing. Staff Liaison Howe noted there are occasional dredging needs in Red Wing, particularly near the slough by the former NSP plant and the bulkheads on the south and east sides of town, and offered to arrange a separate presentation from City staff on Red Wing's dredging obligations if the Commission is interested. Chair Brown noted that the Army Corps of Engineers recently held a community input meeting in Red Wing related to long-term dredging planning in the area.

Commissioner Berman raised the topic of the urban landscape regulations discussed at the prior workshop, noting he did not leave that meeting with a positive sense of the direction and suggested it may be worth revisiting. Staff Liaison Howe reported that the matter has grown beyond the Public Works Department and is now being reviewed by the City administrator to assess potential conflicts with other sections of City code and nuisance ordinances. Howe noted there is no timeline for completion and that the focus of the relevant chapter is public property, while the urban landscape section appears to address private property, creating some ambiguity about jurisdiction and enforcement responsibility.

Commissioner Wert asked whether complaint calls are documented so the Commission could assess the actual scale of the problem. Commissioner Berman noted that Public Works had indicated approximately 20 recurring problem properties. Staff Liaison Howe suggested the overall issue may be outside the scope of the Commission.

Chair Brown suggested the Commission consider formalizing its feedback in the form of a resolution to City Council, outlining the Commission's support for pollinator-friendly landscaping and its sustainability priorities, so that the Commission's voice is on record regardless of the timeline of the ordinance process. Staff Liaison Howe agreed this would be useful and suggested it could be developed at a workshop or in a subcommittee setting, noting it would remain a valuable reference even if the ordinance project stalls.

Commissioner Wert expressed support for the idea. Commissioner Berman asked who the resolution would be addressed to. Staff Liaison Howe indicated it could be directed to the City Council or to whomever the Commission chooses.

Commissioner Berman expressed some concern about the potential impact on the Commission's working relationship with Public Works, given the number of future projects that will require collaboration. Chair Brown noted that the resolution would be framed around the Commission's advisory role and sustainability mission, and that competing priorities are a normal part of City governance. Commissioner Wert agreed that having the feedback on record is important regardless of any potential friction.

Staff Liaison Howe offered to work with Commissioner Berman to draft a resolution format, with Berman providing the Commission's priorities and intentions, so that the group has a document to react to at the next workshop rather than starting from scratch. Commissioner Berman agreed and suggested the bullet points be finalized at the next workshop before Howe drafts the resolution language. Staff Liaison Howe confirmed the item would be added to the April agenda.

Commissioner Berman noted he has a copy of the urban landscape regulation document with the Commission's prior redlined edits and offered to use that as a starting point for the bullet point summary.

Chair Brown raised an additional future agenda item: a potential presentation from a Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) GreenStep Coordinator. Chair Brown noted that Red Wing is a GreenStep City and that the coordinator has offered to discuss the program, available resources, and how the Commission might identify leverage points within existing City plans, such as the Red Wing Climate Action Plan and the Red Wing 2040 Plan. Chair Brown noted the Climate Action Plan may be approaching its review date. Commissioner Wert noted she had recently presented to the GreenStep group on the Bee City USA program via webinar. Commissioner H. Brown asked whether GreenStep is expanding to a Gold Leaf tier. Chair Brown and Staff Liaison Howe recalled a prior presentation to the Commission on that topic, but were uncertain of the timing. Chair Brown suggested tabling the GreenStep presentation idea for now and revisiting it for a future workshop.

Staff Liaison Howe raised the possibility of adding summer outreach activities to a future agenda, including tabling at River City Days and the Halloween trunk-or-treat event the Commission has participated in previously. Chair Brown noted River City Days is typically in July or August and that the Commission would have time to discuss it.

Staff Liaison Howe also noted that the Jeanne Clery Award timeline should be revisited. Chair Brown confirmed the most recent award was for 2025 and suggested the Commission begin planning for the 2026 award cycle, including a timeline for the call for nominations, subcommittee review, and the award presentation.

B. Next Meeting Date: April 28, 2026.

The next meeting is a workshop scheduled for April 28, 2026, to be held at the Community Development Building. Staff Liaison Howe noted the workshop is open to the public.

9. Adjournment

Chair Brown adjourned the meeting at 6:23 p.m.