

**Red Wing Sustainability Commission  
Regular Meeting  
City Council Chambers  
April 28, 2026**

**Members Present:** Chair Maddie Brown, Mark Berman, Dan Evanson, Hugh Brown, and Brian Waters

**Members Absent:** Kristen Wert (excused)

**Others Present:** Brandy Howe, Staff Liaison, Chris Heineman, Council Administrator

**1. Call to Order**

Commissioner Maddie Brown called the meeting to order at 5:40 p.m.

**2. Roll Call**

Roll call was conducted.

**3. Workshop Items**

**A. Presentation by Brenda Kelly of WI DNR.**

Brenda Kelly, Mississippi River Wildlife Biologist for the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WI DNR), presented on the Pierce County Islands habitat restoration project in Pool 4 of the Mississippi River. Ms. Kelly noted that the Mississippi River is the only inland waterway with a dual congressional designation as both a significant ecosystem and a significant navigation system, and that her work serves both Wisconsin and Minnesota communities.

Ms. Kelly provided an overview of the project's funding through the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) and described the planning process, which included conceptual mapping and hydrological modeling to determine interventions for improving water quality, habitat depth, and terrestrial habitat. The project is funded in part by the Minnesota Heritage Fund and the City of Red Wing, which contributed a letter of support and financial dollars.

Ms. Kelly reported that construction began at the end of 2023, with three contractors working on-site from the greater Twin Cities area, Dubuque, Iowa, and La Crosse, Wisconsin. Sand material is sourced from Read's Landing under the Section 1122 beneficial use of dredge material program. The project is pushing toward a total cost of approximately \$30 million. Construction is expected to continue through 2027.

Ms. Kelly noted that the project area has been closed to public access as of March 2026 due to active construction and human health and safety concerns. Catherine's Cut, closed for two years during construction, reopened in October 2025 but remains subject to a slow-no-wake zone approved by Pierce County.

Ms. Kelly described a planned Phase 2 component, a 132-acre designated waterfowl refuge, that was removed from the current construction bid due to funding constraints. A \$1.5 million request has been submitted to the Wisconsin Governor's 2027–2029 biennial budget to fund Phase 2. Ms. Kelly indicated she would be reaching out to the Commission regarding a letter of support for Phase 2.

Ms. Kelly reported early positive wildlife responses to the project, including sightings of deer, otters, pelicans, shorebirds, and a fisher. Fisheries electroshocking surveys have also shown positive fish responses. The project's eight-foot-deep water pockets are expected to provide prime overwintering habitat for bluegill and perch.

Ms. Kelly described the revegetation plan, noting that island plantings are based on elevation and flood tolerance, with willows, silver maples, and swamp white oak among the planned species. Pollinator plantings, including perennial wildflowers and monarch butterfly habitat, are incorporated where possible. Aquatic vegetation is expected to respond naturally as water quality improves.

Commissioners asked questions regarding PFAS testing of dredge material, the waterfowl refuge restoration process, revegetation requirements, the source of dredge material, the beneficial use permitting process, the access channel dimensions, and long-term modeling of the project area. Ms. Kelly confirmed that all material moved by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers undergoes contaminant testing, that the channel is 40 feet wide, and that all features are modeled for a minimum 50-year lifespan.

Ms. Kelly offered site tours to Commission members and distributed contact information.

## **B. Organics Drop-off Promotional Materials.**

Commissioner M. Brown reported that a satellite organics drop-off site has been selected near the depot in downtown Red Wing and appears to be moving forward. The Commission co-funded the drop-off container with the Waste Campus.

Commissioners discussed promotional and outreach strategies for the new site. Key topics included PIN code access logistics, distribution of free disposable compost bags and countertop bins, tabling at the Farmers Market, a city website landing page, media outreach through The Republican Eagle and local radio, and potential container signage or wrapping.

Commissioners identified several outstanding questions for Jeff at the Waste Campus, including PIN code structure, acceptable materials, bag requirements, and availability of custom container wrapping. Commissioner M. Brown indicated

she would compile these questions and follow up with Jeff upon his return from vacation.

Staff Liaison Howe indicated she would reach out to the City's outreach coordinator to explore media opportunities.

Commissioner M. Brown proposed a subcommittee meeting the week of May 18, 2026, to regroup once more information is available. Commissioners agreed.

#### **C. Urban Landscape (Pollinator) Resolution.**

Staff Liaison Howe provided an update on the Urban Landscape (Pollinator) Resolution, noting that the City Administrator directed staff to consolidate multiple existing ordinance provisions related to weeds, nuisances, and pollinator plants into a single, consistent section with clear enforcement responsibility. A consolidated draft has been submitted to Public Works and Staff Liaison Howe's supervisor for review. No new updates are available at this time.

Commissioners agreed to table the item for a future workshop meeting pending further development of the draft ordinance.

#### **D. 2026 Jay McCleary Award.**

Commissioners discussed the 2026 Jay McCleary Award process. Commissioner H. Brown and Commissioner Berman volunteered to serve on the award subcommittee. Commissioners agreed on a proposed timeline with a submission deadline of June 30, 2026, subcommittee review in July, a Commission vote at the July meeting, and award presentation tentatively in September 2026.

Staff Liaison Howe indicated that submission materials from the prior year can be updated and that the call for submissions can be advertised the following day.

### **4. Announcements**

#### **A. Topics for Future Agendas.**

Future agenda topics include the 7th Street Slope project, the GreenStep Program, the Urban Landscape (Pollinator) Resolution, the Organics Drop-off Promotional Materials, and the Jay McCleary Award subcommittee update. Staff Liaison Howe indicated she would look into the application process for high school student commission membership and reach out to the high school sustainability club.

#### **B. Next Meeting Date: Thursday, May 21, 2026.**

The next meeting is Thursday, May 21, 2026, at City Hall. The date reflects a change from the Commission's typical Tuesday schedule due to the City Council meeting being moved for Memorial Day. The meeting will be a voting meeting.

### **5. Adjournment**

Commissioner M. Brown adjourned the meeting at 7:02 p.m.