

**City of Falcon Heights
Environment Commission
Meeting Minutes
March 12, 2012**

Present: Diane Ross, Brian Goodspeed, Nina Semmelroth, Gretel Keene, Mayor Peter Lindstrom, Deb Jones (Staff). Guest: Todd Miller, City resident

Absent: Rebecca Montgomery, Ethan Wagner, Stan Sveen

1. The meeting was called to order by Commissioner Ross a few minutes after 6:30 p.m. Commissioners did not address the minutes from February. Staff noted and will correct the error in start time – 6:30, not 7:00.
2. The Commission launched into a discussion of prairie gardens, as a result of Mr. Miller approaching the City with the hope of creating a prairie garden at his Falcon Heights home. Falcon Heights code does not overtly forbid prairie gardens or rain gardens, but it is clear the weed ordinance and other sections were written with the expectation that residents will have traditional turf grass yards.

Commissioners present were enthusiastic in principle about prairie gardens (and, by extension, “natural” landscaping including water gardens) and would like to recommend Council action that would allow them in the City. Discussion touched on options for permitting, setback, public education and other issues, but no concrete conclusions were reached on any specifics. Jones offered to prepare sample ordinances for discussion next time. Commissioners accepted the offer. Discussion will continue in April.

3. Jones reported that she and City Administrator Fischer met with Philipp Muessig from MPCA, the administrator of the GreenSteps program. Falcon Heights needs to have action on a minimum of 12 best practices, and the City has 13. According to Mr. Muessig, review of Cities’ self reporting for GreenSteps is coming up and Falcon Heights status will be reviewed at that time.
4. Mayor Lindstrom has been invited with other mayors to sign on to a letter in support of the Environmental Protection Agency’s Mercury and Air Toxic Standards for Power Plants. Commissioners gave their enthusiastic support.
5. The meeting was adjourned at approximately 7:45 p.m.



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