1. **CALL TO ORDER**
   The meeting was called to order at 6:00 pm.
   Committee members in attendance: Jade Pennig, Connie LaCombe, Nicholas Hager, Laura Zanmiller, Ken Paulman, Liz Pearson, Joshua Pryzbylski
   Non-voting members in attendance: Robyn Gulley, Dave Lynch, Dave Schletty. Lisa Stevens

2. **NEW BUSINESS**
   a. **Approve February 2, 2021 Minutes** - The minutes were approved.
   b. **No Mow May Discussion**
   Schletty related that last year the City kicked off the inaugural “No Mow May.” It went well. Hager said No Mow May is a super easy because it requires the lawn owner to do nothing. Hager designed a No Mow May sign. He suggested starting in April. Hazenson said that it is a great concept that benefits pollinators. She would also like to see wider education on native plantings for people that are resistant to pollinator-friendly initiatives. For example, showing how planting pollinator-friendly species would be cheaper than planting a traditional “English type” garden. Handing out free milkweed seeds may be a way to start. Pearson suggested modifying the sign to be simpler. Hager asked if the City would provide the signs to residents. Schletty said the City could provide a number of signs to the public. They would be made of corrugated plastic and sturdy. The City would still provide the downloadable sign on the website. It would be ideal to have people save their signs from year to year. Pearson asked if there could be a moratorium on the compliance complaints during the No Mow month. Schletty said that this was done last year. Lynch suggested a public/private partnership with Southview Garden Center. They have the expertise in this kind of effort and they could distribute signs. They could set up a demonstration plot as well. Along the lines of equity, Gulley suggested asking local businesses to offer pollinator-friendly plants at a discount. The City may be able to cover the discounted price. Pennig suggested the City have little seed libraries. She also suggested forming a subcommittee to organize content for residents. Hazenson said there should be some state level materials for this program. The state program may also donate seeds. The Dakota County Library hosts a seed exchange. The Riverview Library in St. Paul also hosts a seed exchange.

   A subcommittee was formed to formulate a resolution to designate NO Mow May every year and to gather resources to share with the City for promotion. The subcommittee members are Hazenson, Pennig and Hager.

   c. **Explore WSP Days Environmental Fair Ideas**
   Hager brought forward a worksheet to be distributed at the Environmental Fair. It listed a small change that a resident could implement every month to have a positive impact on the environment. (Hazenson said she also has a spreadsheet of resources to share with the Committee.)

   Other ideas for the worksheet included:

   Reusable bags
   Re-use it places for back to school supplies.
   Keeping leaves on the ground and adopt a drain...
   Feeding birds in January
   Mulching not raking in October
   Changing lightbulbs to LED’s
   Furnace checking in February or March
Using less water softener to reduce salt in waterways
Programmable thermostats

Pearson was going to ask her partner to make some birdhouses to give as prizes at the event. Local businesses like Cardinal Corners could also contribute to the event. She suggested having a QR code for prizes instead of raffle tickets; that way it would be paperless. Zanmiller suggested having pictures of local gardens that used native plantings at the event table. Paulson suggested Home Energy Squad or MNCE home for energy audits. Gulley said that the City needed to think of ways of making bicycle travel easier; i.e. bike repair stations. There should also be ways to incentivize people for environmental causes. Paulman said there are many systematic barriers that keep people from being environmentally friendly. Hazenson said she would like the City to recognize businesses that use environmentally friendly practices, like permeable pavers or water friendly plantings. LaCombe asked for a business card from the City so that if committee members are asking businesses for sponsorship, they have identification. Schletty will speak to the Assistant City Manager for the cards/letters.

d. Arbor Day/Bird City USA Discussion
Schletty reminded the Committee that in order to maintain the Tree City USA status, the City must have an Arbor Day celebration. The requirement for the Bird City designation is also to have a “Migratory Bird Day” declaration. Pennig said that the City could wrap the Arbor Day celebration into the WSP Days event. There is however, a problem with planting a tree late in the season. Schletty said it is not the best time to plant trees. LaCombe suggested doing the Bird City and the Arbor Day events on the same day in April. Hager said that No Mow May could also be sold at the April event. Pennig said that the first step in the process for the Bird City designation would be to create an advisory group of no less than six member of the Environmental Committee. It would make sense for the full Committee to make up the group instead of a subcommittee. The second requirement is to recognize National Migratory Bird Day. The third requirement is to complete the requirements of the bird and wildlife sanctuary program at a municipal location. Schletty said that the fees for the designation would be budgeted and paid for by the City. Pennig said that the Bird City designation advances the City in the GreenSteps program. Pennig with work with Schletty on the application.

3. OLD BUSINESS
a. Climate Emergency Resolution Update
The Committee members read the resolution aloud. Schletty said that Council would formally approve the resolution at the March 14 meeting. Pennig thanked the subcommittee for their hard work on the resolution. Gulley said that the feedback to the resolution was overwhelmingly positive. She went on to say resolutions are guiding documents and not written into City code. There are specific things the City can ask for if they are written into ordinance. For example, the City can ask developers to have storm water mitigation in their plans. Gulley asked that the Committee look at the resolution with an “equity and accessibility” lens and including all parts of our city into these types of plans. Paulman said that a lot of what the City is already doing is climate action-related but not acknowledged as such. Examples of this are building multifamily housing on parking lots and golf courses and restoring wetlands. There are also ample ways in which a small city like West St. Paul could be more action oriented, for example with heating and cooling emissions in residential buildings and commercial buildings. Hazenson said that the City needed to have more engagement and communication with disenfranchised people. Pearson asked about the Mayor’s ability to veto the resolution. Gulley said that the Mayor only votes on a resolution if there is a tie to be broken. He can veto the resolution, but Gulley’s impression was that he would not veto it. It would take five votes from Council to stop the Mayor’s veto. Pennig did speak to the Mayor. She did not get the impression that the
Mayor “would stand in the way.” Paulman said there is a West St. Paul Equity team that meets monthly with the City Manager. Paulman will “push” the topic of accessible transportation. Pennig said that the resolution is a first step in a longer-term vision. She would like to see a climate action plan to make their efforts more robust and actionable. Hazenson thanked LaCombe for bringing the resolution forward. LaCombe commented that Crystal Bay was the first city to pass the resolution and they have a population of 600 people.

b. U of MN Student’s Final Projects.
Regarding item #7, Compostable Containers, LaCombe showed the compostable packaging in which her insulin was delivered. Hager said that the projects could be used to fill in the Environmental Committees monthly calendar. Pearson said that many of the items that the City is doing currently would promote the recommendations of the student projects. Schletty said the City would use the projects for practical planning. He will keep the Committee updated.

4. UPDATES
   a. City Council-Gulley thanked the Committee members who presented the Climate Emergency resolution at the Council meeting. It was powerful. She is excited to see it pass at the March 14 meeting.
   b. Staff
      i. John Anderson (local program coordinator) of Conservation Minnesota introduced himself to the Committee with the flyer for the annual conference for City Commissions.
      ii. GreenSteps- No updates today.
   c. Planning Commission-NA-The Commission did not meet last month.
   d. Park and Recreation Committee- Lynch said that the Parks and Recreation Committee was short four members at the last meeting. The situation will change hopefully in April. The Marthaler Park redevelopment has been delayed a year. Lynch is a proponent of cleaning the sledding hills in the park; it is an opportunity to replace the plants with pollinator-friendly plants. Replacing the plants with native species will decrease maintenance as well. The committee talked about community gardens; the challenge is to find City-owned land with conditioned soil that is not near neighboring residents. Forming partnerships with multi-family housing may be a solution. Developers can put in community gardens within their properties for their tenants. It may be a more practical way to address the need. Lynch made a suggestion regarding people who like grass in their yards. He is a “grass guy.” He suggested that residents raise the level of the grass. It reduces the amount needed to water. He also suggested not bagging grass clippings.

5. OTHER-NA

6. ADJOURN
With no other business before the Committee and no objections, the Environmental Committee adjourned at 7:39 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Sharon G. Hatfield