To: Sustainability Committee

From: Scott Semroc, Sustainability Coordinator

Re: Consideration, discussion, and possible action on Resolution Designating the Month of May as No Mow May & Suspending the Enforcement of Chapter 8.36 – Noxious Weeds

Date: March 17, 2022

Background

Bees are an essential part of ecosystems and the City of Sun Prairie wishes to increase pollinator-friendly habitat by encouraging pollinator-friendly lawn-care practices and empowering citizens to make a direct and meaningful impact on their own properties. Ideal pollinator-friendly habitat is comprised of mostly native wildflowers, grasses, vines, shrubs, and trees blooming in succession throughout the growing season, is free or nearly free of pesticides, is comprised of undisturbed spaces including leaf and brush piles, un-mown fields, fallen trees, and other dead wood for nesting and overwintering, and provides connectivity between habitat areas to support pollinator movement and resilience. The formative period for establishment of pollinator and other insect species, and the many songbirds and other urban wildlife species which depend upon them, occurs in late spring and early summer when they emerge from dormancy and require flowering plants as crucial foraging habitat; and these opportunities are dramatically reduced with early spring leaf-litter removal and grass-mowing.

Discussion

No Mow May is a conservation initiative first popularized by Appleton, WI and other communities in recent years that encourages property owners to limit their lawn moving practices during the month of May to provide early season foraging resources for early season pollinators, especially when floral resources are often limited in urban areas. The Sun Prairie community has expressed great interest in the city providing education and resources related to environmental conservation, with No Mow May logistics being discussed by the Sustainability Committee to create a balanced pilot plan.

Exploring No Mow May allows the City of Sun Prairie to meet its commitments to the Mayor's Monarch Pledge, consider a future commitment to Bee City USA, while also realizing several benefits in our community and our environment along with measurable benefits to participants including reduced gasoline use, water use, and noise pollution in neighborhoods. During the 1/20/2022 Sustainability Committee staff provided an informational presentation (slides 6-9) on No Mow May for consideration.

Following the Committee's consideration and discussion, staff met to consider several program options for a No Mow May Pilot. The voluntary pilot program will be open to residents who must register in advance to participate. Once registered, residents can participate by reducing their mowing frequency or eliminating mowing entirely during the month of May. Staff have created a project outline that includes registration on the city website, education and outreach information such as fliers and yard signs, along with logistical components of June yard waste pick-up schedules and coordination with Building Inspection regarding non-enforcement during May.

Recommendation

Staff recommend the Sustainability Committee recommend to Common Council the adoption of the attached resolution designating the month of May as No Mow May & suspending the enforcement of chapter 8.36 – noxious weeds for the month of May 2022 to allow residents to participate in this pilot. This would allow the city to actively promote and educate the community about the critical period of pollinator emergence, and encourages all citizens to support these voluntary efforts to protect our pollinators.

City of Sun Prairie, Wisconsin

RESOLUTION DESIGNATING THE MONTH OF MAY AS NO MOW MAY & SUSPENDING THE ENFORCEMENT OF CHAPTER 8.36 – NOXIOUS WEEDS

Presented: April 19, 2022

Adopted: April 19, 2022

Resolution No.: 22/

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, Bees are an essential part of ecosystems and the City of Sun Prairie wishes to increase pollinator-friendly habitat by encouraging pollinator-friendly lawn-care practices, empowering citizens to make a direct and meaningful impact on their own properties; and

WHEREAS, ideal pollinator-friendly habitat is comprised of mostly native wildflowers, grasses, vines, shrubs, and trees blooming in succession throughout the growing season, is free or nearly free of pesticides, is comprised of undisturbed spaces including leaf and brush piles, un-mown fields, fallen trees, and other dead wood for nesting and overwintering, and provides connectivity between habitat areas to support pollinator movement and resilience; and

WHEREAS, the formative period for establishment of pollinator and other insect species, and the many songbirds and other urban wildlife species which depend upon them, occurs in late spring and early summer when they emerge from dormancy and require flowering plants as crucial foraging habitat; and these opportunities are dramatically reduced with early spring leaf-litter removal and grass-mowing; and

WHEREAS, No Mow May is a conservation initiative first popularized by Appleton WI and other communities in recent years that encourages property owners to limit their lawn moving practices during the month of May to provide early season foraging resources for early season pollinators, especially when floral resources are often limited in urban areas; and

WHEREAS, the Sun Prairie community has expressed great interest in the city providing education and resources related to environmental conservation, with No Mow May logistics being discussed by the Sustainability Committee to create a balanced pilot plan; and

WHEREAS, exploring No Mow May allows the City of Sun Prairie to meet its commitments to the Mayor's Monarch Pledge, consider a future commitment to Bee City USA, while also realizing several benefits in our community and our environment along with measurable benefits to participants including reduced gasoline use, water use, and noise pollution in neighborhoods.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Common Council of the City of Sun Prairie, Dane County, Wisconsin, hereby recognizes the month of May as No Mow May in the City of Sun Prairie to actively promote and educate the community about the critical period of pollinator emergence, and encourages all citizens to support these voluntary efforts to protect our pollinators.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, for the duration of the month of May, the City shall implement a pilot program to suspend the enforcement of Chapter 8.36 – Noxious Weeds, regulation of length of

lawn and grasses, or any other section that regulates the length of grass, allowing pollinator species to emerge and early flowering grasses to establish, which may result in ground-cover exceeding established ordinance height restrictions and weed growth.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, as part of the pilot program, residential properties will be invited to participate and must follow all pilot guidelines including advanced registration with the City of Sun Prairie, interested businesses and organizations may be considered on a case-by-case basis, and; following the month of May, enforcement of the Ordinance will resume on June 1, 2022.

APPROVED: _____

Paul T. Esser, Mayor

Date Approved: April ___, 2022

Date Signed: April ___, 2022

This is to certify that the foregoing Resolution was approved by the Common Council of the City of Sun Prairie at a meeting held on the 19th day of April, and was submitted for signatures on the ___ day of April 2022.

_____

Elena Hilby, City Clerk

VILLAGE OF SHOREWOOD HILLS

A PROCLAMATION RELATING TO
2022 OBSERVANCE OF "NO MOW MAY"

Whereas*,* there are more than 4,000 native bee species in North America, along with introduced honey bees; and

Whereas, bees are an essential part of ecosystems, pollinating many wild plants and allowing them to produce the seeds, nuts, and fruit that are vital food sources for wild animals; and

Whereas*,* bees are an essential part of agriculture, pollinating many of the cultivated foods people eat such that the health of bee populations directly impacts our food security; and

Whereas, bees have experienced population declines due to a combination of habitat loss, pesticides, disease, and climate change; and

Whereas*,* more than half of bee species in North America are in decline with 1 in 4 species at risk of extinction; and

Whereas*,* at least one bee species at risk of extinction, the federally endangered Rusty Patched Bumble Bee, lives in the Village of Shorewood Hills; and

***Whereas**,* municipalities have embraced their responsibility for conserving these important animals by taking steps to install and promote native and pollinator-friendly landscapes and reduce pesticide and herbicide use in their communities; and

***Whereas**,* some municipalities, such as the City of Appleton, Wisconsin, have supported pollinator conservation, in part, through a “No Mow May” community science initiative that encourages property owners to limit their lawn mowing practices during the month of May to provide vital early spring flowers for bees that emerge from hibernation; and

Whereas, in 2020, 435 Appleton property owners registered for the initiative, which ended up providing 40 additional acres of land with food resources for pollinators; and

Whereas, the City of Appleton found that No Mow May lawns had a fivefold increase in bee abundance and a threefold increase in bee diversity in comparison to nearby parkland that was mowed regularly; and

***Whereas**,* the City of Appleton found strong community enthusiasm with the majority of participants willing to continue this initiative and other pollinator friendly practices at their homes; and

***Whereas**,* the Village of Shorewood Hills participated in No Mow May in 2021 and also found strong community enthusiasm with 55 single family homes (~9% of single family homes in the Village) registering for the event and 79% saying they would participate again in 2022; and

***Whereas**,* the Village of Shorewood Hills is a leader in sustainability, recognizes that urban landscapes provide critical habitat for pollinators, and wishes to encourage its citizens to play an active role in conserving pollinators through the management of their own land; and

Now, therefore be it resolved, the Shorewood Hills Village Board hereby proclaims May 1st – 31st, 2022 as “No Mow May” in the Village of Shorewood Hills, Wisconsin, and encourages all residents, businesses and property owners to refrain from mowing their property to promote pollinator-friendly habitat and awareness; and

***Be it further resolved**,* the Shorewood Hills Village Board encourages all residents, businesses and property owners to grow a variety of native plants that bloom across the season – early spring through fall – so that food resources are always available to pollinators, leave the leaves in yards through the fall to help provide winter nesting sites for bees, and refrain from using lawn or plant pesticides and herbicides that can harm or kill pollinators.

Dated this _____ day of _____, 2022.

Village President _____

David J. Benforado