

Resolution #7-R-24
Resolution to Rescind No Mow May Ordinance Language

Date: Wednesday June 5th, 2024

Submitted By: Alderperson Christopher Croatt – District 14, Alderperson Hayden – District 7

Referred To: Municipal Services Committee

RESOLUTION SUMMARY

A resolution to act on discontinuing the No Mow May program in the City of Appleton. The full resolution specifies action on rescinding the ordinance language directly related to the No Mow May program as it relates to tall grass and weeds which is found in Section 12-58 of the City Code and restore that section to the form it was in prior to April 6th, 2022.

FULL RESOLUTION

Whereas the No Mow May initiative was made a permanent part of the city’s ordinances in 2022, largely based on the data provided in a study looking at the quantity of bees and other pollinators found in mowed vs. non-mowed lawns, and;

Whereas the study to support the new program was presented in 2022 to the Common Council as proof that non-mowed lawns in fact did show higher levels of bee richness and abundance, leading to the program being permanently adopted by Appleton and later by numerous other municipalities around Wisconsin, and;

Whereas in November of 2022 the study was retracted by the authors of the paper as well as the publisher of the journal in which it appeared, and;

Whereas the editor of the journal noted the findings of the study are “unreliable and could impact the results”, and;

Whereas the retraction guidelines for the journal note that a paper should be retracted if the findings are unreliable, or the result of fabrication or falsification, and;

Whereas as the basis for adoption of No Mow May, the science behind the study has been proven to be unreliable with faulty conclusions, and other apiologists who study bees have said that long grass provides no discernible benefit for bees and other pollinators, and;

Whereas other Wisconsin communities such as neighboring Fox Crossing have rescinded their No Mow May initiative based on a recommendation from a sustainability committee, and;

Whereas a UW-Madison Professor Emeritus recently attended a Village Board meeting in Waunakee and stated, “My take on it (No Mow May) is that it is well intentioned, but it’s probably

having little impact”, he also stated typical vegetation in a midwestern lawn is not necessarily beneficial for pollinators and suggested other, better options exist, and;

Whereas there are negative impacts of No Mow May on our neighborhoods for those that choose not to participate in it, there is some research that shows mowing actions immediately after No Mow May can have a negative impact on other insect populations, there is some research and opinion that excessively tall grass and weeds increases the likelihood of rodent/pest populations in our urban neighborhoods, and;

Whereas there is an impact to the City of Appleton Inspections Division. This impact is directly related to addressing non-compliance post No Mow May through increased workload in June of every year.

Whereas this resolution shall not be construed as a lack of support for helping pollinators. Pollinators are important and there are many other ways residents can contribute to helping pollinators and increase the livelihood and abundance of the bee population inside Appleton. The past couple of years shows many that participated in No Mow May are not taking any other significant actions to help the bee population, now;

Therefore, Be It Resolved that based on a lack of scientific evidence to support the No Mow May program and based on other Wisconsin communities’ recent actions rescinding their ordinances related to it, the City of Appleton Common Council hereby takes formal action to remove the language in the current code and rescinds the No Mow May program for 2025. This includes making it more permanent by working with the City Attorney’s Office to repeal Ordinance 26-22 adopted on April 6, 2022, and restore Section 12-58 to its form prior to that date in order to enforce the city’s long grass ordinance during the entire growing season, including the month of May.