Resolution #2-R-26
Resolution Supporting Vegetation Analysis and Advancing a Data-Informed Mowing Reduction Strategy

Date: April 1, 2026
Submitted By: Alderperson Schultz – District 9; Alderperson Meltzer – District 2; Alderperson Wolff – District 12; Alderperson Stancil-Martin – District 11
Referred To: Parks & Recreation Committee

Summary: *This resolution supports the Appleton Sustainability Advisory Panel's ongoing vegetation and invasive species analysis as a critical foundation for future land management decisions. It requests that ASAP develop data-informed recommendations for mowing reduction, native planting, and invasive species control upon completion of the analysis. It also encourages incorporation of this work into the City's forthcoming Sustainability Master Plan.*

WHEREAS, the City of Appleton is committed to responsible land stewardship, sustainability, and efficient use of public resources; and

WHEREAS, the Appleton Sustainability Advisory Panel (ASAP) is currently conducting a citywide vegetation analysis to better understand existing ground-cover conditions, including turf grass, natural areas & invasive species cover across all public managed lands; and

WHEREAS, this analysis provides a necessary foundation for evaluating opportunities related to mowing practices; improving ecological function, enhancing biodiversity, supporting and expanding pollinator habitat as well as conducting targeted invasive species remediation and long-term land management in general; must be addressed to ensure the success of pollinator habitat, native plantings, and naturalized areas; and

WHEREAS, invasive species are present within portions of the City's landscape and must be addressed to ensure the long-term success of pollinator habitat, native plantings, and naturalized areas; and

WHEREAS, the Appleton Sustainability Advisory Panel and the Park and Recreation Department have already begun incorporating low-mow pollinator habitat and naturalized area pilot projects within its parks and public spaces, demonstrating both capacity and interest in evolving traditional mowing practices; and

WHEREAS, the Appleton Sustainability Advisory Panel has expressed further interest in advancing mowing reduction and alternative ground-cover strategies and seeks direction to develop recommendations upon completion of this analysis while recognizing that such strategies must be grounded in accurate, citywide vegetation data; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Common Council supports the ongoing vegetation analysis as a critical first step in informing future land management decisions; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Common Council acknowledges ASAP's interest and request for direction to develop data-informed recommendations related to mowing reduction and alternative groundcover strategies following completion of the analysis; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that ASAP, in coordination with the Parks and Recreation Department and relevant Departments, is encouraged to develop a practical framework identifying appropriate areas for reduced mowing, native plantings, and other adaptive land management approaches; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that such recommendations shall incorporate invasive species identification, control, and removal as a key objective, particularly in areas designated for pollinator habitat or naturalization; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Common Council encourages incorporation of this work, including the resulting data, framework, and recommendations, into the City's forthcoming Sustainability Master Plan currently being developed in partnership with Pale Blue Dot; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that any future policy recommendations be phased, operationally feasible, and aligned with the City's broader sustainability goals, (see attached strategy for a 5-year phase in of conceptual plan)

Addendum A — Conceptual 5-Year Implementation Strategy
For reference and planning alignment

Year 1 — Baseline & Pilot Identification

- Complete citywide vegetation analysis
- Integrate existing datasets (GIS, land cover, invasive occurrence)
- Identify **pilot areas**:
    - parks
    - riparian corridors (e.g., Fox River)
    - low-value mowing zones
- Establish data standards and tracking metrics

Year 2 — Pilot Implementation

- Convert select pilot areas to:
    - reduced mowing
    - native/pollinator plantings
- Initiate **targeted invasive species removal** in pilot zones
- Begin community education and signage

Year 3 — Evaluation & Model Development

- Evaluate pilot outcomes:
    - cost vs savings
    - maintenance requirements
    - ecological performance
- Develop **prioritization model** for expansion:
    - invasive density
    - habitat value
    - maintenance efficiency

Year 4 — Targeted Expansion

- Expand program into:
    - additional parks
    - stormwater corridors
    - underutilized turf areas
- Continue invasive species control aligned with expansion zones
- Refine operational practices

Year 5 — Program Integration

- Establish mowing reduction and naturalized areas as a **standard land management practice**

- Integrate into:
    - Parks planning
    - Sustainability initiatives
    - Capital and maintenance planning
- Report measurable outcomes:
    - acres converted
    - invasive reduction
    - maintenance impacts