

MINUTES
CITY OF DEKALB
Citizens' Environmental Commission
February 6, 2025

The Citizens' Environmental Commission (CEC) held a regular meeting on February 6, 2025, in the Second Floor Training Room at the DeKalb Police Department.

Chair Julie Jesmer called the meeting to order at 4:31 p.m.

A. Roll Call

Roll call was recorded by City Staff Liaison Scott Zak, and the following members of the CEC were present: Chair Julie Jesmer, Commissioners Killian Becker, Shaun Langley and Linda Srygler and Council Liaison Barb Larson. Thomas Skuzinski, Robert Srygler and Ex-Officio Member Nick Newman arrived shortly after roll call. Not present was Ex-Officio Member Matt Emken.

B. Approval of Agenda

MOTION

Ms. Srygler motioned to approve the agenda, seconded by Mr. Langley.

VOTE

The agenda was approved by unanimous voice vote.

C. Public Comments

No public comments were received.

D. Approval of Minutes

1. Meeting Minutes of January 2, 2025

MOTION

Mr. Langley motioned to approve the minutes, seconded by Mx. Becker.

VOTE

The minutes were approved by unanimous voice vote.

E. Commission Reports

1. DeKalb County Health Department

With no ex-officio member appointed, no report was given. Mr. Zak shared the Health Department has hired a new Solid Waste Associate, Shaina Martin, who has been submitted for appointment as an ex-officio member.

2. DeKalb Park District

With Ex-Officio Member Emken absent, no report was given.

3. Kishwaukee Water Reclamation District (KWRD)

Mr. Newman gave his report after the City.

4. Northern Illinois University

With no ex-officio member appointed, no report was given.

5. City Staff Liaison

a. Morton Arboretum Chicago Region Trees Initiative Grant

As the Commission had previously learned by e-mail, Mr. Zak shared the City had been awarded a \$255,000 Chicago Region Trees Initiative Grant from the Morton Arboretum to plant 50 trees, prune 738 parkway trees and remove 40 large dead trees. Morton does not believe recent federal orders regarding grants will affect this program.

b. Metropolitan Mayors Caucus (MMC) Environmental Committee

Since the topic of her upcoming article is monarch butterflies, Ms. Srygler attended a recent committee meeting on the same topic. It shared information on the monarch's threatened status and what municipalities can do to support their populations. Mr. Newman offered to help the City convert property to pollinators, which he has done successfully for the KWRD. Alderwoman Larson said she would ask if pollinators can be planted on airport property and said pollinators are allowed on private property so long as they are maintained. Mr. Langley suggested the Commission could provide some guidance on pollinator planting. Mr. Newman added they should be upfront about the amount of work it takes to maintain the plants. Ms. Larson suggested a local nursery could provide a DeKalb-approved mix.

c. EV Readiness Program

Mr. Zak said the zoning amendments for the program will go before the Planning and Zoning Commission soon. These will allow electric vehicle chargers as an accessory use in all zoning districts and count spaces with chargers towards minimum parking requirements.

d. Hybrid Bus

Mr. Zak reported the City Council has approved purchasing the DeKalb Public Transit System's first electric/diesel hybrid bus. In his presentation on the purchase, Transit Manager Mike Neuenkirchen noted to the Council that transitioning to hybrid and electric buses are goals of both the City's and NIU's sustainability plans.

Mr. Newman shared the KWRD is designing another improvement project. In this project, old plant structures that were replaced in the last project will be demolished, a solar field will be installed on KWRD property, screening will be improved near the nature trail, more than 50 trees will be planted and facilities will be consolidated to a single electric meter. This will allow all building to be powered by the electricity the KWRD generates on site. Demolition for this next phase of improvements will begin as soon as this fall.

F. New Business

1. Tabling at Earth Fest & other events

The second annual Earth Fest organized by DeCarbon DeKalb and NIU will be held Saturday, April 5 at NIU's Founders Memorial Library. Mr. Skuzinski said the event will include morning presentation sessions followed by an expo with tabling and then afternoon presentation sessions. He said the Commission could participate in the expo and up to two sessions and present on the progress made on the Sustainability Plan and the DeKalb STARR Awards.

The Commission brainstormed ideas for table activities. Mr. Zak reminded that at a recent MMC Environmental Committee meeting, Will County presented on recycling education games, so Mr. Zak reached out to them. Erin Noon of Will County Green shared her recycling relay where children place different types of garbage into the appropriate containers for recycling, composting or donating. Mr. Langley suggested creating toys with recycled materials, producing pamphlets or distributing a QR code linked to the Sustainability Plan. For the table, the Commission agreed to distribute the Sustainability Plan QR code while the Sryglers will create a children's activity.

G. Old Business

1. DeKalb STARR Awards Update

For the presentation of the DeKalb STARR Awards, Mr. Zak said the City could purchase small star-shaped awards. Ms. Srygler said an NIU department could possibly make the awards, and Mr. Newman said the creator space at the library is another option. Both options will be researched. Two nominations have been received so far ahead of the March 3 deadline.

2. Next articles for Daily Chronicle

March: Planting for monarchs (L. Srygler), April: Earth Fest (Skuzinski)

The Commission reviewed the schedule and made no changes.

3. Upcoming events

Chair Jesmer shared on April 16, Matt Deitch, Director of the Northern Illinois Center for Community Sustainability Research will be the speaker for STEM Café. Mr. Skuzinski said the NIU Institute for the Environment, Sustainability and Energy will present a screening of the documentary *Plastic People* followed by a panel discussion, and there will be a climate justice teach-in in April to which the public is invited. Mr. Newman said the KWRD will be conducting another rain barrel sale with the Soil and Water Conservation District.

3. Updates on other issues

No information shared here.

H. Announcements

1. New announcements

Ms. Srygler said a group called Together for Taft has been formed to preserve the Lorado Taft Field Campus, which is being sold by the University, and Patty Ruback has formed a group

called Beyond Plastics. Resident Nick Dory said he has reached out to student groups with information on the STARR Awards and said the rain barrels sounded like a great idea.

Mr. Zak shared Tori Woolbright, the Energy Efficiency Outreach Specialist with the MMC, would like to speak to the Commission on its Home Energy Savings Program. The Commission agreed to invite Ms. Woolbright to the next meeting.

2. Next regular meeting: March 6, 2025 at 4:30 p.m.

I. Adjournment

A motion to adjourn the meeting was approved by unanimous voice vote. The meeting was declared adjourned at 6 p.m.

Respectfully submitted: Scott Zak

Approved by the Citizens' Environmental Commission on March 6, 2025.