

MINUTES
CITY OF DEKALB
Citizens' Environmental Commission
March 3, 2022

The Citizens' Environmental Commission (CEC) held a regular business meeting on March 3, 2022 in the Second Floor Training Room at the DeKalb Police Department.

Chair Steve Honeywell called the meeting to order at 4:01 p.m.

A. Roll Call

Roll call was recorded by Management Analyst Scott Zak, and the following members of the CEC were present: Chair Steve Honeywell, Rachel Farrell, Julie Jesmer, Clare Kron, Kyle Moore, Nick Newman, Council Liaison Barb Larson and Ex-Officio Member Sarah Fox. Not present were Ex-Officio Members Dakota Burke, Matt Emken and Mike Holland.

Also present was Management Analyst Scott Zak.

B. Approval of Agenda

MOTION

Mr. Newman moved to approve the agenda, seconded by Ms. Farrell.

VOTE

The agenda was approved by unanimous voice vote.

C. Public Comment

No public comments were received.

D. Approval of Minutes

1. Regular Monthly Meeting Minutes of December 2, 2021

MOTION

Ms. Jesmer motioned to approve the minutes, seconded by Mr. Moore.

Chair Honeywell made a correction to the minutes, noting he called the meeting to order.

VOTE

The corrected minutes were approved by a unanimous voice vote.

E. Commission Reports

1. DeKalb County Health Department

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

2. DeKalb Park District

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

3. Kishwaukee Water Reclamation District

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

4. Northern Illinois University

Ms. Fox shared that NIU now has a sustainability coordinator, Cortney Gallaher, who is tasked with working on environmental sustainability for the campus and could be helpful with sustainability projects. She added her environmental law students could also assist the Commission.

5. City Staff Liaison

Mr. Zak congratulated the Commission on their well-attended public forum on the Sustainability Plan update on Feb. 24. He shared that City Engineer Zac Gill and Assistant Public Works Director Andy Raih helped with the accomplishments section of the presentation and that the event was successfully streamed on Facebook.

Mr. Zak delivered the PRIDE Award certificate for the Trash Squirrels to Ms. Jesmer. The remaining two certificates will be mailed.

F. New Business

1. Earth Day event

Mr. Newman reported that NIU's Care Day is being expanded to a community-wide trash pick-up the morning of April 22 and that organizers are looking for areas to clean up. Ms. Jesmer said the Trash Squirrels are participating. Chair Honeywell said he has contacted the high school about possible letting students out of class for a few hours to help. He said the Commission should support the event, at least through promotion.

Responding to questions, Mr. Zak said this event could be shared on the Commission's webpage and the City's social media accounts and an events section could be added to the webpage. Chair Honeywell suggested a tagline promoting the webpage could be added to the end of the Commission's Chronicle articles. Mr. Newman notes the events section would have to be straight-forward information. Chair Honeywell said he would bring a promotional piece for Earth Day to the next meeting.

Ms. Jesmer asked if there is a way to be informed about issues coming before the City Council. Mr. Zak said the public can sign up on the City's website to receive notification when Council agendas are posted.

2. News on possible new CEC members

Alderwoman Larson reported she has attempted to contact Fotis Pappas twice but has not heard back. Chair Honeywell said he talked with Aaron Schwab, who will not be able to join the Commission, but offered another recommendation, who will be contacted by Chair Honeywell.

3. Tree planting initiative

Mr. Honeywell said there was strong support at the Feb. 28 public presentation for the planting of more trees in the City. He said he would like to see edible landscaping, but Ms. Kron said she believes planting fruit trees on City property is not allowed. Ms. Jesmer notes there are landscaping requirements for commercial developments but not residential.

Mr. Zak shared that after a tree in the parkway is cut down because of disease or death, the tree is replaced with the homeowner's permission so long as there is funding remaining in the forestry budget. He said a cost-sharing program for tree plantings is being considered and that Assistant Public Works Director Andy Raih suggested placing this program in the Sustainability Plan would be helpful. Ms. Jesmer asked if composting was available. Ms. Farrell noted that can already be done with yard waste. It was suggested that information could be shared on the webpage or in an article.

4. Possibility of a CornFest table

Chair Honeywell asked if the City would fund a table at Corn Fest for the Commission. Alderwoman Larson said while she understands the CEC is proactive, City commissions do not have budgets and the CEC's role is to gather information to present to the City Council. She said having a table would be the role of an activist group, and while that activist group may be needed, it is not the role of the Commission. She said it is best to work on issues with Council support, such as a countywide ban on plastic bags.

Ms. Farrell asked how a Monarch Festival could be held. Mr. Zak said a group would have to plan the event and go through the City's event application process, which requires proof of insurance and fees. Ms. Kron said that rules out the Commission holding the event since it does not have a budget. Alderwoman Larson suggested the Park District may be a better organization through which to plan the festival. Mr. Newman said he would contact Mr. Emken. Alderwoman Larson suggested the Monarch Festival could be part of a larger event, which Commissioners agreed would be a good idea.

G. Old Business

1. February presentation on Sustainability Plan

No information was presented here.

2. Sustainability Plan updates and ideas

Chair Honeywell said a lot of ideas were received at the Feb. 24 presentation and a lot of information would be coming from the NIU students assisting with the update. He said it is time to start removing items so new ideas can be added. Ms. Kron noted Mark Schuller's students are working to gather input from underrepresented areas.

Mr. Newman shared ideas that were suggested at the public meeting. They included:

- Improve simplicity and readability
- Give teeth to plan
- Add climate change as a goal with climate justice as a pillar
- Include decarbonization commitment for City
- Improve outreach
- Make air quality reports available
- Increase planting of native trees
- Increase access to recycling
- Pursue countywide plastic bag and bottle ban
- Improve awareness of Huskie Bus line
- Promote infrastructure for non-personal automobile transportation, including Metra

Chair Honeywell said difficulties of extending Metra passenger train service to DeKalb include implementation of a tax and a requirement that a minimum number of people live near the station. However, Alderwoman Larson noted few people live near the La Fox station, and Chair Honeywell said the extension makes sense since DeKalb is a college town. He said it could be included as a blue-sky idea in the plan. Ms. Fox said there is interest at NIU in seeing a Metra extension and that interest could provide previously untapped support. Alderwoman Larson said now is the perfect time for the extension with the opening of Ferrara, Amazon and the Meta Data Center.

3. Decarbonization Presentation

Chair Honeywell encouraged Commissioners to review the slides from the Kishwaukee350 presentation for possible inclusion in the Sustainability Plan.

4. Future 2022 CEC presentations

Ms. Kron suggested contacting Dan Kenney again about a presentation on a community bee hive and another presentation about the best trees for backyard planting, including trees resistant to climate change. It was agreed to hold a presentation on tree planting on May 19 at the DeKalb Public Library. Ms. Kron said she would begin research.

Ms. Jesmer left the meeting.

5. Next articles for Daily Chronicle

Ms. Jesmer will be asked to move her article on trash pick-up to April so it can be used to promote the Earth Day event.

6. Grant possibilities

Chair Honeywell said this item will be removed from future agendas until new information is received.

7. Building guidelines and guidelines for solar farms

This item will be removed from future agendas.

8. Budget considerations

This item will be removed from future agendas.

9. Updates on other issues

Ms. Kron shared she will begin focusing again on the Commission's share-a-bag program in mid-May. She also shared her feedback from the Sustainability Plan presentation. She said a community garden in University Village has been tried before and failed. Regarding electric vehicles for the City, she noted the City is now leasing vehicles instead of purchasing them. And she noted trying to attract a grocery store to northwest DeKalb has been attempted before. Alderwoman Larson said the chances may be better now noting there is a population base and that several larger apartment buildings are changing ownership.

Chair Kron said the Daily Chronicle does not own the Commission's monthly article since they are written for free. Chair Honeywell said he will ask the editor if the articles can be posted to the Commission's webpage after they are published in the newspaper.

H. Announcements

1. New announcements

No information was shared here.

2. Next meeting: April 7, 2022 at 4:00 p.m.

I. Adjournment

MOTION

Ms. Kron motioned to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Ms. Farrell.

VOTE

The motion was approved by unanimous voice vote. The meeting was declared adjourned at 5:31 p.m.

Respectfully submitted: Scott Zak, Management Analyst

Approved by the Citizens' Environmental Commission on April 7, 2022.