

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

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

Chair Julie Jesmer called the meeting to order at 4:33 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 Shaun Langley, Thomas Skuzinski and Linda Srygler, and Ex-Officio Member Shaina Martin. Commissioner Robert Srygler arrived shortly after roll call. Not present were Commissioner Killian Becker, Council Liaison Barb Larson, and Ex-Officio Members Matt Emken and Nick Newman.

B. Approval of Agenda

MOTION

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

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 February 6, 2025

MOTION

Mr. Skuzinski motioned to approve the minutes, seconded by Mr. Langley.

VOTE

The minutes were approved by unanimous voice vote.

E. Commission Reports

1. DeKalb County Health Department

New Solid Waste Associate Shaina Martin was introduced as the Commission's Ex-Officio member from the Health Department. Ms. Martin shared she has been in the public health field for three years, most recently at the Kendall County Health Department.

Ms. Martin reported a recycling collection will be held at DeKalb Airport on March 29 from 9 a.m. to noon. It is open to all county residents, and there will only be a fee for paint recycling.

2. DeKalb Park District

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

3. Kishwaukee Water Reclamation District (KWRD)

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

4. Northern Illinois University

Mr. Skuzinski shared the Institute for the Study of the Environment, Sustainability and Energy will be presenting a free showing of the movie “Plastic People” at the Egyptian Theatre on April 2. The University is planning a month of sustainability events in September, concluding with a conference. The conference, to be presented by the Illinois Sustainability Network, will include a walking and bus tour, possibly featuring what’s happening in DeKalb.

5. City Staff Liaison

a. Elburn Metra bus service

Mr. Zak reported that in response to rider requests, the number of weekend trips to and from the Elburn Metra station has been increased. Also, minor modifications have been made to Route 19, which serves several large employers, to make sure buses arrive on time and the route remains a reliable transportation option for employees.

b. EV Readiness program

Mr. Zak reported amendments to the Unified Development Ordinance required for the readiness designation were recommended for adoption by the Planning and Zoning Commission on March 3 and will go before the Council on March 10. The amendments add definitions related to electric vehicles, allow EV chargers as an accessory use in all zoning districts and allows parking spaces with chargers to be counted toward minimum parking space requirements. Mr. Zak is also working on a charger permitting packet and an EV webpage, and the Fire Department will be attending specialized training.

Mr. Zak said the renaming of the P.R.I.D.E Award to the DeKalb STARR (Sustainability Through Action, Resiliency and Responsibility) will go before the City Council on March 10.

F. New Business

1. Home Energy Savings Program presentation

Tori Woolbright, the Energy Efficiency Outreach Specialist for the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus, presented on the program, which is done in partnership with ComEd and Nicor. It offers free energy assessments of homes and free energy-efficient products to reduce carbon emissions while improving the housing stock. Both homeowners and renters can participate. Households making less than 80 percent of Area Median Income receive an in-person assessment and free installation of the products, while those making above that amount can perform an online self-assessment and install the products themselves. Ms. Woolbright said the program does not share the personal information of participants with third parties.

2. DeKalb STARR Award nominations

The Commission discussed the merits of the four nominations received from the community and agreed they would only make a nomination in categories in which no community nominations were received. Since no community nominations were received for Youth Sustainability Leader, Ms. Srygler nominated Saige Ruback. Ms. Srygler shared that Ms. Ruback helps her mother with local sustainability initiatives, including the Beyond Plastics group, created a survey for data collection, attends sustainability events, and makes time for environmental work while competing on a travel hockey team.

MOTION

Mr. Skuzinski motioned to present awards to the following nominees, seconded by Mr. Langley.

ALDI
Corporate/Institutional Environmental Leadership

Sweet Life Garden Group
Green Business of the Year

Nick Dory
Individual Sustainability Champion

Rooted for Good School Gardens
Sustainable Community Project

Saige Ruback
Youth Sustainability Leader

VOTE

The award recipients were approved by unanimous voice vote.

G. Old Business

1. Earth Fest participation

Mr. Skuzinski said the Commission will have one 75-minute presentation session at Earth Fest that will conclude with the presentation of the STARR Awards. Mr. Zak said he will give a presentation on the Sustainability Plan followed by Transit Manager Mike Neuenkirchen on the Metra extension feasibility study. Mr. Langley said the presentations should end at the 50-minute mark to be sure there is time for the award presentations. Mr. Zak shared fliers on the Sustainability Plan and the 50/50 Parkway Tree Program that have been created for the table, and Mr. and Ms. Srygler demoed an online game that children will be invited to play to learn about recycling.

2. Next articles for Daily Chronicle April: Earth Fest (Skuzinski)

The Commission confirmed Mr. Skuzinski will write the April article while for May, Ms. Jesmer will write on what happens to trash.

3. Upcoming events

Ms. Skuzinski shared the Institute for the study of the Environment, Sustainability and Energy will be recognizing its students' accomplishments on Earth Day.

3. Updates on other issues

Following up on a conversation from the previous month, Mr. Zak shared residents are allowed to plant trees in the parkway outside of the City's 50/50 program. They are asked to fill out an application to be sure the species is native.

H. Announcements

1. New announcements

Ms. Srygler shared Rooted for Good lost a large amount of funding due to changes in grant terms and hopes to replace it through fundraising. Mr. Srygler has been invited to speak locally on government and environmental issues.

2. Next regular meeting: April 3, 2025 at 4:30 p.m.

I. Adjournment

MOTION

Mr. Skuzinski motioned to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Mr. Srygler.

VOTE

A motion to adjourn the meeting was approved by unanimous voice vote. The meeting was declared adjourned at 6:06 p.m.

Respectfully submitted: Scott Zak

Approved by the Citizens' Environmental Commission on April 3, 2025.