

MINUTES
CITY OF DEKALB
Citizens' Environmental Commission
April 1, 2021

The Citizens' Environmental Commission (CEC) held a regular business meeting on April 1, 2021 at DeKalb City Hall and virtually on Teams.

Chair Clare Kron called the meeting to order at 4:02 p.m.

A. Roll Call

Roll call was recorded by Management Analyst Scott Zak, and the following members of the CEC were present: Chair Clare Kron, Vice Chair Steve Honeywell, Rachel Farrell, Kyle Moore, Nick Newman, and Sharon Skala. Adrian Lopez was absent at the time of the roll call.

Also present were Ex-Officio Member Mat Emken, Ex-Officio Member Sarah Fox, Mayor Jerry Smith and Management Analyst Scott Zak.

B. Approval of Agenda

Chair Kron requested a motion to approve the agenda.

MOTION

Ms. Skala moved to approve the agenda, seconded by Mr. Honeywell.

VOTE

Motioned carried on a 6-0 vote. Aye: Kron, Honeywell, Farrell, Moore, Newman, Skala. Nay: None. The agenda was declared approved.

Commissioner Adrian Lopez joined the meeting at 4:06 p.m.

C. Public Comment

No public comments were received.

D. Approval of Minutes

1. Regular Monthly Meeting Minutes of December 3, 2020 and March 4, 2020

Chair Kron explained additions that had been made to the Dec. 3 minutes.

Chair Kron requested approval of the Dec. 3 minutes.

MOTION

Mr. Honeywell motioned to approve the minutes, seconded by Ms. Skala.

VOTE

Motioned carried on a 7-0 vote. Aye: Kron, Honeywell, Farrell, Lopez, Moore, Newman, Skala. Nay: None. The minutes were declared approved.

Chair Kron requested approval of the March 4 minutes.

Ms. Skala motioned to approve the minutes, seconded by Mr. Honeywell.

Motioned carried on a 7-0 vote. Aye: Kron, Honeywell, Farrell, Lopez, Moore, Newman, Skala. Nay: None. The minutes were declared approved.

E. Commission Reports

1. DeKalb County Health Department

With the health department's ex-officio position vacant, no report was given. Chair Kron directed Mr. Zak to contact the health department about filling the vacancy.

2. DeKalb Park District

Ex-Officio Member Mat Emken reported the Park Board has adopted the Watershed Improvement Plan for the Upper South Branch of the Kishwaukee River. The Park District will be hosting an Earth Day Clean-up at Hopkins Park on April 22, a garlic mustard pull on May 1 in Prairie Park and a dames rocket pull on June 5.

3. Kishwaukee Water Reclamation District

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

4. Northern Illinois University

Ex-Officio Member Sarah Fox reported that most students will be back on campus in the fall and that NIU has hired a sustainability coordinator.

5. City Staff Liaison

Management Analyst Scott Zak had no report.

F. New Business

1. New CEC commissioner

Commissioner Kyle Moore was introduced. He believes it is important to have clean air and water, and he enjoys gardening.

2. Supporting the Trash Squirrels

Chair Kron said Mayor Smith had shared with her a letter from a resident concerned about the amount of trash in the City and asking why stores are not required to clean up their lots. Letters have been written to stores in the past and Kishwaukee College classes conducted cleanups. Asked if enforcement action could be taken against stores regarding trash, Mayor Smith said the

City would call stores if complaints were received and that the City depends on the public to learn about problems.

Chair Kron read a letter from Julie Jesmer, organizer of the Trash Squirrels, a community group that has been picking up trash around DeKalb and has grown by nearly 200 members in the past three weeks. The group is looking for areas of cooperation with like-minded organization such as the CEC.

Mr. Honeywell said he would write the June Daily Chronicle article about the Trash Squirrels. Ms. Farrell suggested the Trash Squirrels as a PRIDE award nominee. Mr. Newman suggested encouraging support for the Trash Squirrels on the City's Facebook page and the Commission's webpage.

3. Request for additional trash and recycling cans

Mr. Moore is concerned about the amount of trash in the Annie Glidden North neighborhood. He said the only trash cans are in front of businesses. Mayor Smith said he did not believe the City provides trash cans in neighborhoods and would encourage neighborhoods, organizations and other taxing districts to put out their own trash cans. Mr. Zak volunteered to bring back more information on the topic from city staff.

G. Old Business

1. First CEC presentation scheduled

The first presentation of 2021 will be "Celebrate Butterflies." It will be virtual and cover how to create natural habitat for butterflies.

2. Year-end report

The Commission's year-end report was shared at the City Council's March 22 meeting.

3. Leaf-burning ordinance vote by city council

Chair Kron shared portions of her letter written after the City Council's unanimous vote against the CEC's proposal to ban leaf burning. She said the vote showed the Commission failed to educate the public about the health problems caused by burning and that the public is more likely to speak out about something they oppose, noting three people addressed the Council in opposition to the proposal while she was the only person to speak in support of it. She said the alderpersons felt the citizens had spoken and that they were responsible for voting based on the citizens' input. She said the Commission failed to present its case more assertively. Chair Kron went on to say the Council favored the will of the people instead of the needs of the most vulnerable and the Council could have requested more information from the Commission.

Going forward, Chair Kron said it would be unwise for the Commission to propose beekeeping legislation or other proposals without significant public relations activities beforehand.

Commissioners then discussed ideas for building support for proposals. Ms. Skala said the Commission needs to encourage people to come to Council meetings and speak up. Daily Chronicle articles were suggested as a way to educate the public, and doing two articles a month

was also suggested. Mr. Honeywell also said commissioners could interact with people at a community center planned in the new Common Grounds coffee shop. Mayor Smith cautioned that Commissioners would have to share their positions as an individual and not a representative of the Commission or the City.

4. Bee-keeping ordinance plan

Nothing further was presented on the bee-keeping ordinance.

5. Light intrusion

Mr. Newman said his report discusses DeKalb's lighting infrastructure and the City's lack of recommendations on LED lighting, over lighting and color temperature. He has also done research on the effect of lighting on wildlife and human health, and his report includes lighting suggestions for the City.

Chair Kron said the Commission will also have to educate the public that the negative effects of light are not just from outside but also the blue light people are exposed to inside.

Ms. Farrell asked if any articles were found that were written in laymen terms. Mr. Lopez said while he has not found articles like that, that could be something the Commission produces.

Mr. Newman and Mr. Lopez agreed to create a list of articles on light intrusion.

6. Daily Chronicle articles

Chair Kron complimented Ms. Farrell on her recent article and said she was pleased with the placement of the article and inclusion of the editor's preface and a photo.

7. Other updates on previously discussed items

Chair Kron said new streetlights going up in the Annie Glidden North neighborhood will be dimmable and will have motion detectors so they can go off when not needed. Also, 200 to 400 lights in the City being converted to LED will follow the Dark Skies Association's guidelines.

Ms. Farrell is to pick the design for the Monarch City USA sign.

The 5G presentation may be replaced with another topic such as beekeeping.

A letter of support was written for a grant for another downtown EV charger.

H. Announcements

1. New announcements

Mr. Honeywell said an update on the Common Grounds community center would come in June.

Chair Kron said the City knows to put the bee-keeping ordinance on hold; although, Mr. Honeywell noted that if it is not approved by the end of the year, it will not be done in time for the 2022 season.

2. Next meeting: May 6, 4:00 p.m.

I. Adjournment

MOTION

Ms. Skala motioned to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Mr. Lopez.

VOTE

The motion was carried on a 7-0 vote. Aye: Kron, Honeywell, Farrell, Lopez, Moore, Newman, Skala. Nay: None. The minutes were declared approved. Nay: None. Chair Kron declared the meeting adjourned at 5:54 p.m.

Respectfully submitted: Scott Zak, Management Analyst

Approved by Citizens' Environmental Commission on May 6, 2021.