

MINUTES  
CITY OF DEKALB  
Citizens' Environmental Commission

April 3, 2025

The Citizens' Environmental Commission (CEC) held a regular meeting on April 3, 2025, in the Second Floor Training Room at the DeKalb Police Department.

Chair Julie Jesmer called the meeting to order at 4:30 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, Linda Srygler and Rob Srygler. Council Liaison Barb Larson and Ex-Officio Member Shaina Martin arrived shortly after roll call. Not present were Commissioner Tom Skuzinski and Ex-Officio Members Matt Emken and Nick Newman.

**B. Approval of Agenda**

MOTION

Mr. Langley 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 March 6, 2025**

For item H-1, New announcements, Ms. Srygler asked that the reason for the funding loss be changed to "due to a change to grant terms."

MOTION

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

VOTE

The minutes were approved by unanimous voice vote.

**E. Commission Reports**

**1. DeKalb County Health Department**

Ms. Martin reported 325 people attended the recent hazardous waste and recycling collection at DeKalb Airport, which was a good turnout despite poor weather. She shared that Waste Management will be opening a facility to reuse its landfill gas on Earth Day.

## **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**

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

## **5. City Staff Liaison**

Mr. Zak reported that as part of the Morton Arboretum grant received by the City, the City's tree ordinance must be updated to Morton's standards. Morton staff has done a review of the ordinance. Mr. Zak will incorporate the amendments and bring back the ordinance to the Commission.

## **F. New Business**

### **1. EV Readiness webpage**

As part of the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus' (MMC) and ComEd's EV Ready program, in which the City is enrolled, Mr. Zak has created a webpage on the City's website designed to be a one-stop-shop for local information on electric vehicle ownership. Mr. Zak walked the Commission through each of the webpage's sections, which are Benefits, EV Charger Permitting, Public Charging, Buying & Leasing, information for EV owners and the City's pledge to become EV Ready. Ms. Srygler suggested adding to the permitting section the list of registered electrical contractors maintained by the City which can install EV chargers.

### **2. Monarch City USA**

As part of a recent MMC Environmental Committee meeting attended by Mr. Zak and Ms. Srygler, the Mayors' Monarch Pledge program was discussed. The Commission previously had enrolled the City in a similar program, Monarch City USA, and Mr. Zak researched if the City could use this existing membership to support efforts to benefit monarch butterflies. Mr. Zak reported Monarch City USA has been acquired by Wingsrising in late 2024. No response was received to an email asking if Monarch City USA would be continuing. Instead, the pledge program will be explored.

### **3. ComEd/Openlands**

As part of earlier discussions on monarchs, the Commission discussed converting City-owned properties into native plant areas supporting pollinators. A partnership between ComEd and the Openlands organization offers grants for these projects. Mr. Zak reported while the application for this year's grants is due too soon to apply, this will be on the Commission's radar for early next year.

## **G. Old Business**

### **1. Finalize Earth Fest participation**

Mr. Langley shared the schedule of presentations for Earth Fest on April 5 at NIU's Founders Memorial Library. The City's presentation will be on the first floor at 10:45. Mr. Zak said slide decks have been prepared on the Sustainability Plan and an update on the proposed Metra extension to DeKalb. Those will be followed by the presentation of the DeKalb STARR Awards for which four of the five recipients have confirmed they will be attending. Additionally, Youth Sustainability Leader recipient Saige Ruback has sent an acceptance video. After the presentation, the Commission will participate in the expo with a video game to teach children about recycling.

#### **a. Next events for recycling education**

Mr. Zak shared a list of community events at which the Commission could continue its recycling education. These are Fun Jam in the Park beginning in June, Family Fun Fest in July, National Night Out in early August and Corn Fest in late August. The Commission agreed these would be good events to attend and more teaching methods could be developed.

### **2. Next articles for Daily Chronicle**

#### **May: What happens to trash (Jesmer)**

The Commission confirmed Ms. Jesmer will write the May article and discussed ideas for later articles. Mr. Langley said there are sustainability myths that need to be addressed such as that sustainability is expensive and one person cannot make a difference. Alderwoman Larson shared she recently read an article on how difficult it is to live without plastic for just one day. Mr. Srygler suggested an article with ideas for energy efficiency. Ms. Srygler said Mr. Newman's previous article on light pollution and the effects on bird migration is due to be revisited. A member of the public suggested sharing information on the benefits of trees and the City's 50/50 cost sharing program to plant parkway trees. The Commission agreed Mr. Srygler will write on the 50/50 program in June, Mr. Langley will debunk sustainability myths for July and light pollution will be saved for the fall.

### **3. Upcoming events**

Matt Deitch, the Director of the Northern Illinois Center for Community Sustainability, will be the speaker for STEM Café on April 16. Chair Jesmer and Mr. Zak attended the screening of the documentary *Plastic People*.

### **3. Updates on other issues**

Chair Jesmer said the Trash Squirrels group will be partnering with other organizations for its trash pick-ups and will be contacting stores which generate litter about volunteering. Ms. Srygler said she suggested attendees at a recent NIU shared governance meeting contact Trash Squirrels and asked what the City can do about trash from rental buildings. Alderwoman Larson said while the City does not have a large enough Code Division to go out and look for trash violations, they will respond to complaints made by residents. She suggests residents bring two bags, including one for litter pickup, when they walk their dogs, and Mr. Langley suggested neighborhood trashcans that residents maintain.

## **H. Announcements**

### **1. New announcements**

No additional information was shared here.

### **2. Next regular meeting: May 1, 2025 at 4:30 p.m.**

## **I. Adjournment**

### **MOTION**

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

### **VOTE**

A motion to adjourn the meeting was approved by unanimous voice vote. The meeting was declared adjourned at 5:51 p.m.

Respectfully submitted: Scott Zak

Approved by the Citizens' Environmental Commission on May 1, 2025.