

MINUTES  
CITY OF DEKALB

Citizens' Environmental Commission

May 1, 2025

The Citizens' Environmental Commission (CEC) held a regular meeting on May 1, 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 Nick Newman. Not present were Commissioner Tom Skuzinski and Ex-Officio Members Matt Emken and Shaina Martin.

**B. Approval of Agenda**

MOTION

Mr. Srygler motioned to approve the agenda, seconded by Mx. Becker.

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 April 3, 2025**

MOTION

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

VOTE

The minutes were approved by unanimous voice vote.

**E. Commission Reports**

**1. DeKalb County Health Department**

Mr. Zak read Ms. Martin's report. Waste Management held the grand opening of its renewable gas facility on Earth Day. Ms. Martin recently worked with University of Illinois Extension staff during KinderFest at Russell Woods Forest Preserve in Genoa to educate students from different schools in the county about recycling.

## **2. DeKalb Park District**

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

## **3. Kishwaukee Water Reclamation District (KWRD)**

Mr. Newman reported the design is 95 percent complete on the KWRD's latest campus project which includes installation of a solar farm and restoration of 12 acres to native prairie. He said the goal of KWRD is to run its operation on 100 percent renewable energy.

## **4. Northern Illinois University**

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

## **5. City Staff Liaison**

Mr. Zak reported the City continues its transition to more energy-efficient street lighting. Public Works electricians recently replaced the lighting in street poles along East Lincoln Highway between Fourth and Eighth Street with LED retrofit kits. Also, SunVest Solar has begun work on its five-megawatt solar farm on City-owned property on Pleasant Street.

## **F. New Business**

### **1. Tree ordinance**

As part of a grant from the Morton Arboretum to improve the City's tree canopy, the City must revise its tree ordinance. Mr. Zak said the City plans to make both the required revisions and recommendations, and he walked the Commission through the proposed revisions. These include adopting the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) standards for tree sourcing, planting, care and pruning; making property owners responsible for care of new parkway trees; prohibiting invasive species from being planted on City property; adding common invasive species to the list of examples of prohibited trees; and removing four pear trees that will soon be banned by the state from the list of recommended trees for under utility lines. Along with follow-up questions from the Commission, Mr. Newman said he was pleased the City was adopting the ANSI standards. Mr. Langley suggested more specificity on residents' responsibilities for tree care, including prohibiting volcano mulching, which can kill a tree. Alderwoman Larson suggested creation of a one-page flyer on tree care, which the Commission will pursue.

### **2. EV Ready Permitting Packet**

As part of the EV Ready program, Mr. Zak has created an EV Charger resources guide which will be available on the City's EV Readiness website and in the Building and Code Division. The draft was shared with the Commission. It includes a step-by-step checklist for getting a City permit for installing a charger in a home or at a business or multi-tenant residential building and a checklist for the inspection process. Ms. Srygler suggested a Spanish version and recommended adding that using an electrician with the Illinois Commerce Commission is required to qualify for rebates.

## **G. Old Business**

### **1. Earth Fest & DeKalb STARR Recap**

The Commission was complimentary of the EarthFest event hosted by DeCarbon DeKalb and NIU last month. Alderwoman Larson said it was great day, and Ms. Jesmer pointed out it was well attended. Commissioners felt the timeline for soliciting nominations for the DeKalb STARR Awards, which were presented at the event, worked well.

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

**June : 50/50 Parkway Tree Program (R. Srygler), July: Sustainability myths (Langley), Fall: Light pollution**

Mx. Becker suggested the light pollution article be written for August, before the fall bird migration, and volunteered to write it. Mr. Srygler suggested the benefits of volunteering as another topic. Alderwoman Larson added the holidays would be an appropriate time for this article since it's the season of giving, and Chair Jesmer said there might be enough material on volunteering that the topic could span both November and December.

## **3. Upcoming events**

No information was shared here.

## **4. Updates on other issues**

As a next initiative, Mr. Zak asked if the Commission would be interested in creating a recognition for businesses that have adopted sustainability practices. He noted Mr. Langley had previously shared information on NIU's green office initiative and the *Plastic People* documentary featured a city with a business recognition program. The Commission supported the idea, and Mr. Langley will draft a framework.

## **H. Announcements**

### **1. New announcements**

Chair Jesmer shared that the League of Women Voters is lobbying in support of the statewide ban on single-use plastic bags.

### **2. Next regular meeting: June 5, 2025 at 4:30 p.m.**

## **I. Adjournment**

MOTION

Ms. Srygler 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 6:03 p.m.

Respectfully submitted: Scott Zak

Approved by the Citizens' Environmental Commission on June 5, 2025.