

MINUTES

CITY OF DEKALB

Citizens' Environmental Commission

May 4, 2023

The Citizens' Environmental Commission (CEC) held a regular meeting on May 4, 2023, in the Second Floor Training Room at the DeKalb Police Department.

Chair Steve Honeywell called the meeting to order at 4:34 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 and Clare Kron, Ex-Officio Member James Carlin and Council Liaison Barb Larson. Commissioner Shaun Langley joined the meeting at 4:46. Not present were Commissioners Kyle Moore and Nick Newman, and Ex-Officio Members Matt Emken, Sarah Fox and Mike Holland.

Also present was Management Analyst Scott Zak.

B. Approval of Agenda

MOTION

Ms. Kron motioned to approve the agenda, seconded by Ms. Farrell.

VOTE

The agenda was approved by unanimous voice vote.

C. Public Comments

Resident Tom Riley said he is interested in environmental issues as a gardener and member of DeKalb County Community Gardens and DeKalb Area Garden Club. He said he is concerned about the improper disposal of motor oil. Mr. Zak recommended contacting the Building and Code Department.

A group of students from Northern Illinois University advocated for the Commission to include in the Sustainability Plan projections for prairielands, wetlands and farmlands if a new train station is built for the possible extension of Metra service to DeKalb. The students noted prairie and wetlands provide plant diversity which prevents surface runoff and soil erosion, while prairieland reduces atmospheric carbon dioxide. They asked that language be added that any construction be done in an environmentally friendly way and any disturbed prairielands be remediated or restored. Chair Honeywell said use of brown space, which has already been built on, could be ideal for the station, and the students agreed brown spaces should be considered when the station location is chosen. The Commission discussed passing a resolution in support of the extension of Metra service. Alderwoman Larson said that would be premature and there would be time after the release of the feasibility study on the possible extension.

D. Approval of Minutes

1. Meeting Minutes of April 6, 2023

MOTION

Ms. Jesmer motioned to approve the minutes, seconded by Ms. Kron.

VOTE

The minutes were approved by unanimous voice vote.

E. Commission Reports

1. DeKalb County Health Department

Ex-Officio Member Carlin shared the Health Department will become a drop off site for recyclable materials by the end of the month. Commissioner Langley asked if there was a recycling option for large diabetic items containing sharps. Mr. Carlin and Ms. Kron said they will bring back research.

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

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

5. City Staff Liaison

Mr. Zak shared a cost-sharing program for new parkway trees is being prepared for public release and the downtown flower planters will include mostly perennials this year.

F. New Business

1. Earth Act to stop climate pollution recap

Chair Honeywell reported he was part of a group that met with an assistant of U.S. Rep. Lauren Underwood to advocate for the Earth Act; although, it was acknowledged it will be difficult to pass in the House. Concerns were raised about the effects of climate change on low-income residents.

2. NIU Climate Justice teach-in

Chair Honeywell said this meeting showed to him that NIU students are an untapped resource to help with environmental issues. Commissioner Langley noted the University also provides access to researchers who are experts in climate science.

3. Sustainability Plan discussion and update

Mr. Langley said he has completed a review of the work already done on the Sustainability Plan update and incorporated everyone's ideas into a spreadsheet. He proposed dividing the plan into 11 categories which will be divided up among Commission members. The categories can include

goals, action items, how performance is measured, timelines, funding source and impact. The Commission discussed passing a climate pact, and Mr. Zak said that could be passed at the same time as the update. Mr. Carlin suggested setting a cap on how long the Commission will spend on the update, and Ms. Larson noted the City's budget process begins in August. Mr. Langley noted implementing the plan should not rest solely with the City but also the community, businesses and individuals, so it should be a broader document than what can be done by City officials alone. Ms. Kron said she liked the idea of including a land acknowledgment.

G. Old Business

1. Next articles for Daily Chronicle

June—E-waste collection; July—Forever chemicals

Ms. Kron said Mr. Newman had shared recommendations for non-toxic herbicides and she would write an article on what should be sprayed on your plants for July.

2. Upcoming monarch event

Given the approaching end of the school year, Chair Honeywell said monarch education outreach at elementary schools would likely happen in the fall.

3. Future presentations—monarchs, fusion, home efficiency

Ms. Kron said she was unsure if the Commission should host any presentation without partnering with STEM Café since the solo presentations have not been well attended. Mr. Honeywell suggested also partnering with Kishwaukee350. Ms. Kron said she will reach out to them about a presentation on energy efficiency since the topic deals with climate change.

4. Updates on other issues

No information was shared here.

H. Announcements

1. New announcements

No information was shared here.

2. Next regular meeting: June 1 at 4:30 p.m.

I. Adjournment

MOTION

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

VOTE

The motion was approved by unanimous voice vote. The meeting was declared adjourned at 6:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted: Scott Zak, Management Analyst

Approved by the Citizens' Environmental Commission on June 1, 2023.