

MINUTES  
CITY OF DEKALB  
Citizens' Environmental Commission  
May 5, 2022

The Citizens' Environmental Commission (CEC) held a regular business meeting on May 5, 2022, in the Second Floor Training Room at the DeKalb Police Department.

Chair Steve Honeywell called the meeting to order at 4:00 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, Clare Kron, Kyle Moore, and Council Liaison Barb Larson. Not present were Commissioner Nick Newman and Ex-Officio Members Dakota Burke, 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. Jesmer.

VOTE

The agenda was approved by unanimous voice vote.

**C. Public Comment**

The Commission heard a review and the findings of a public survey on an update of the City's Sustainability Plan conducted by students of NIU Professor Mark Schuller. The presentation was made by students Austin Schroeder, Clara Barbier, Erin Cronin, Grace Searles, Deja Randle, Emma Hazen and Juliana Casner.

The students said to solicit participation in the survey, they tried to reach those normally not reached by the Commission, particularly those living in areas that experience low food access. Social media, posters, e-mails to minority community group leaders and personal contacts were used.

The students felt they did not have much success attracting minorities to the public input meeting held on the Sustainability Plan. 101 people completed an online survey from March 9 to April 28. The demographics of those who completed the survey were mostly young, female and white. The students felt this was a good representation of DeKalb but not a good representation of the minority population they were trying to reach.

The survey results included 52 respondents who want DeKalb to be more sustainable, 79 who are not familiar with the Genoa Area Food Hub, 35 who were enthusiastic about banning plastic bags and 42 who were excited about banning leaf burning.

The students said the findings of the survey included:

- strong interest in sustainability practices,
- a lack of knowledge of services offered in DeKalb,
- no access to recycling at Suburban Apartments and Eco Park,
- a desire for more familiarity with the Commission,
- more work needed to reach minority populations and
- support for adding climate change and climate justice sections to the plan.

The students shared how the survey work can be replicated. All the documents used have been shared via a Google work group and should be downloaded. The Commission can also continue connections made through the project with NIU's Center for Nonprofit and NGO Studies and Environmental Studies Department, Sunrise DeKalb and local churches.

Based on the survey results, the students proposed future actions, including:

- becoming a nonprofit organization to help ease restrictions on the Commission and allow for activism,
- addressing a lack of diversity on the Commission,
- addressing a lack of awareness about the availability of the services offered by DeKalb County Community Gardens,
- moving the Commission's meetings to a time outside the normal working hours,
- moving the Commission's meetings to a location other than the Police Department and along a bus route,
- create relationships with NIU as the University updates its sustainability plan,
- track people who come to Commission meetings who may be able to help with projects,
- reach out to other City commissions,
- allocate responsibilities to all Commission members and frequent meeting attendees and
- set specific and attainable goals.

The students then received comments and questions from the Commission.

Responding to a question about the difficulty reaching minority populations, the students said asking more people in person to participate in the survey could be a way to help improve the survey's reach. Regarding the Commission's diversity, Ms. Kron said recruiting members has been very difficult, noting only six of the Commission's eight positions are currently filled and people who have been asked to join have refused. Chair Honeywell and Ms. Kron said they would not be opposed to changing the meeting time. Ms. Kron said becoming a nonprofit would take work and money.

The students suggested putting out more information on the Commission, including more information on the Commission's website and creating a pamphlet on the Commission's role.

In response to questions from Ms. Farrell and Mr. Moore, the students said the CEC could team up with other City commissions on projects and events, and that they would have liked to put up more posters in apartment complexes and inside buses.

Professor Schuller said he will contact Qualtrics, which hosted the survey, to keep the data online and accessible.

Chair Honeywell said the information provided by the students was the kind they were hoping to receive.

Professor Schuller and his students left the meeting at 4:41 p.m.

Regarding the recommendation to share more information about the Commission, Chair Honeywell said a Bitly address, [bit.ly/DklbCEC](https://bit.ly/DklbCEC), has been created to direct to the Commission's webpage. It will be added to the end of all Daily Chronicle articles.

Following the survey, Ms. Kron said the Commission will work with Courtney Gallaher's students on writing the Sustainability Plan update.

#### **D. Approval of Minutes**

##### **1. Regular Monthly Meeting Minutes of April 7, 2022**

MOTION

Ms. Kron motioned to approve the minutes, seconded by Mr. Moore.

A correction was made to Courtney Gallaher's name on page four.

VOTE

The minutes were approved by a unanimous voice vote.

#### **E. Commission Reports**

##### **1. DeKalb County Health Department**

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

##### **2. DeKalb Park District**

With Ex-Officio Member Emken absent, Chair Honeywell read Mr. Emken's report. There will be a garlic mustard pull on May 7 and a Dame's Rocket pull on June 4, both in Prairie Park.

##### **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 reported five City Hall employees, Chair Honeywell and community members picked up litter in the downtown on April 29 as part of the Communitywide Clean-Up organized by NIU. The Trash Squirrels picked up in Hopkins Park. Ms. Jesmer asked for an update on possibility putting up litter fine signs. Mr. Zak will ask City staff. Ms. Jesmer also invited clean-up site suggestions for the Trash Squirrels.

## **F. New Business**

### **1. STEAM event**

Chair Honeywell shared there was an NIU STEAM event the previous week where middle school students created plans for a community center and that he contacted the head of the group in hopes of working with them in the future.

### **2. Bee City designation**

The Commission had been provided information previously on the requirements for being designated a Bee City. Ms. Farrell said she would look into joining the organization.

### **3. Earth Day recap**

Having been discussed earlier, no further information was shared on the Communitywide Clean-up.

## **G. Old Business**

### **1. Sustainability plan updates and ideas**

Chair Honeywell said after a few more months of collecting data, the Commission should hold a meeting dedicated to the Sustainability Plan update with little other business. He suggested September or October for the rewriting. Ms. Kron said this will be coordinated with Courtney Gallaher's class.

### **2. Future 2022 CEC presentations—May 19<sup>th</sup> event on trees**

The Yusunas Meeting Room at the DeKalb Public Library has been reserved for the presentation. Chair Honeywell asked the Commission to look at the options for and provide feedback on the setup of the room.

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

Ms. Kron suggested an article on the accomplishments of the NIU students on the Sustainability Plan survey while promoting additional participation. Chair Honeywell will make that the topic of the June article and then write an article on food banks in July. Ms. Farrell said she will write an article on the Bee City designation if it is approved.

### **4. Bees/information from Dan Kenney**

Ms. Kron will share contact information on bee cooperatives received from Dan Kenney with Chair Honeywell.

## **5. Littering ordinance ideas**

The Commission discussed the idea of posting littering fine signs. Ms. Jesmer said the signs would send the message that littering is not okay. Mr. Zak will check with City staff.

## **6. Monarch festival**

Chair Honeywell said having the monarch festival as part of the Park District's movie nights is a good idea since the events attract a lot of kids and people come early. Alderwoman Larson announced she will be donating one month of her City Council pay to the Commission, which can be used to purchase supplies for the festival. Ms. Kron will work the monarch table at the June 10 movie, Chair Honeywell will attend the July 10 movie and Ms. Farrell will attend the Aug. 12 movie. Ms. Kron said coloring pages will be created with information on milkweed on the backside.

## **7. Weeding schedule for Park District**

A weeding schedule has been distributed to Commissioners. Chair Honeywell shared the Park District will be planting its flower beds in the next two weeks.

## **8. Updates on other issues**

No information was shared here.

## **H. Announcements**

### **1. New announcements**

Ms. Kron said she met with Mayor Cohen Barnes to discuss pursuing a countywide ban on plastic bags. It was suggested it would be best to go to other governments as a citizen concerned about the litter problem and not as a Commission member. Ms. Kron said she will do so as a member of the Trash Squirrels. Ms. Jesmer said she will join Ms. Kron in meeting with other governments. Ms. Kron shared that DeKalb Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Matt Duffy suggested starting with businesses that would be likely to support the idea and then approaching Cortland. Since Ms. Kron will be pursuing the ban as a private citizen, this will be her final report on the matter to the Commission.

Chair Honeywell reported he followed up on a possible new Commissioner suggested by Ms. Jesmer but he lives outside of the City, and that Dean Johnson from the DeKalb County Soil and Water Conservation District will speak at the Commission's next meeting.

### **2. Next meeting: June 2, 2022, at 4:00 p.m.**

## **I. Adjournment**

MOTION

Ms. Jesmer motioned to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Mr. Moore.

VOTE

The motion was approved by unanimous voice vote. The meeting was declared adjourned at 5:39 p.m.

Respectfully submitted: Scott Zak, Management Analyst

Approved by the Citizens' Environmental Commission on June 2, 2022.