

MINUTES  
CITY OF DEKALB  
Citizens' Environmental Commission  
June 2, 2022

The Citizens' Environmental Commission (CEC) held a regular business meeting on June 2, 2022, in the Second Floor Training Room at the DeKalb Police Department.

Chair Steve Honeywell called the meeting to order at 4:05 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. Farrell.

VOTE

The agenda was approved by unanimous voice vote.

**C. Public Comment**

No public comments were received.

**D. Approval of Minutes**

**1. Regular Monthly Meeting Minutes of May 5, 2022**

MOTION

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

VOTE

The minutes were approved by a unanimous voice vote.

**E. Commission Reports**

**1. DeKalb County Health Department**

With Ex-Officio Member Burke absent, Chair Honeywell read the report. The DeKalb County Health Department is hosting a hazardous waste pick-up at DeKalb Airport on June 4.

## **2. DeKalb Park District**

With Ex-Officio Member Emken absent, Chair Honeywell read the report. There will be a Dame's Rocket pull in Prairie Park on June 4. There will be a woody invasive cleanup near the Ellwood Mansion with details to come later.

## **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 said he had information to share later in the agenda.

## **F. New Business**

### **1. Dean Johnson, DeKalb County Soil and Water Conservation District**

Chair Honeywell said Mr. Johnson, executive director of the DeKalb County Soil and Water Conservation District and coordinator of the DeKalb County watershed, was invited to explain how the Commission can assist with the watershed plan.

Mr. Johnson explained the different watersheds within the County. 95 percent of the City of DeKalb is located in the Upper South Branch of the Kishwaukee River, and the City has approved the watershed plan.

The plan is online at [dekalbcountywatersheds-il.org](http://dekalbcountywatersheds-il.org) and also includes water quality data collected by Northern Illinois University students. Chapter 6 shows the tasks that need to be completed to improve the watershed. Johnson said the tasks in red are those with the most value.

In response to questions from Commissioners, Mr. Johnson said while money is not allocated for the tasks, having the watershed plan allows eligibility for grants where the federal government provides a matching share. He doubts many organizations in the County know about the plan but said that is why he is doing presentations. He said it would be helpful if the County's Stormwater Planning Committee adopted parts of the plan since municipalities need to follow the County's stormwater plan. He said the Illinois EPA could help determine if the Commission could seek grants.

Chair Honeywell asked what the Commission should include in the update to the City's Sustainability Plan. He said the City code should align with the watershed plan so the tasks can happen. He encouraged completing small projects that will catch people's attention and spur discussion in the community on what more can be done. He notes NIU students would likely want to be involved in a local project.

Ms. Farrell said the watershed plan would make a good Chronicle article.

Mr. Johnson left at 4:52 p.m.

## **2. Tree presentation recap**

Ms. Kron said the presentation on May 19 on native trees was attended by six people who were very interested in the subject. She noted the news release was not printed until the day of the presentation and the library never posted flyers. Chair Honeywell said the Commission needs to do a better job of promotion. Ms. Kron said the work should be spread out among the Commission members and she would like to give the presentation again with more promotion in advance.

## **3. Potential change of meeting times**

Regarding a suggestion by the NIU students who conducted the sustainability plan survey that the Commission meet outside of normal working hours, Chair Honeywell said any time change will have to wait until next year after the new master meeting schedule is published. The Commissioners debated different start times. 5:30 was proposed but Alderwoman Larson noted that does not give people time to eat dinner first. 6:30 was proposed but Management Analyst Zak shared that City Manager Bill Nicklas wants meetings to start no later than 6 p.m. for City staff who work a full day before attending Commission meetings. The Commission will take more time to consider a new start time; however, it was agreed that public comments could be moved later in the meeting for those who come late because of work.

### **MOTION**

Ms. Kron motion to move public comments between new business and old business on future Commission agendas, seconded by Mr. Moore.

### **VOTE**

The motion was approved by unanimous voice vote.

## **4. Presentations as “special meetings”**

Ms. Kron objected to the City’s decision that the recent Commission presentation on native trees be posted as a special meeting. This requires five Commission members to be present for a quorum. The presentation can also continue if no more than two members are present since that is less than a majority of a quorum and not a violation of the state’s Open Meetings Act (OMA). Ms. Kron said this requirement prevents Commissioners interested in the topic from attending and noted a past City administration said the meetings did not need to be posted as special meetings. Management Analyst Zak said while that may be the case, City Manager Nicklas and City Attorney Matt Rose, who determined the presentation should be a special meeting, are the current City administrators responsible for ensuring the City follows state law. He added the City will incur legal costs if the presentations are not posted and a member of the public feels OMA has been violated and makes a Request for Review with the Illinois Attorney General’s Office. Debate concluded with Alderwoman Larson agreeing to consult with City Attorney Rose.

## **5. Press releases**

Ms. Kron said the Commission needs to get news releases out further ahead of events. Chair Honeywell said that will be helpful even though the Commission cannot decide when they are published.

## **6. DeKalb Tree planting program**

Ms. Kron noted residents said they wanted a City tree program during the Sustainability Plan meeting. Management Analyst Zak has discussed this idea before with Assistant Public Works Director Andy Raih. Mr. Raih said he would like the Commission to include the program in the Sustainability Plan update. Mr. Zak said he will ask Mr. Raih if any further details should be included.

## **G. Old Business**

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

It was determined that Mr. Honeywell will write the July article on food banks, and Ms. Farrell will do the August article on bees. Mr. Newman can write the August article on proper disposal of grease or another Commissioner can write on the watershed plan.

### **2. Littering ordinance idea**

Management Analyst Zak shared City Manager Nicklas has approved the Commission's idea to post littering fine signs. Three signs will be posted below the existing three anti-littering signs in the downtown.

### **3. Monarch events**

Ms. Kron shared the following has been purchased for the monarch education booth at the upcoming Movies in the Park: milkweed seeds, boxes of orange crayons for coloring pages, a flannel cloth for the table covering and monarch curtains to serve as a background.

### **4. Printing information**

Chair Honeywell shared DeKalb residents are allowed to print 100 black-and-white copies a day at the DeKalb Public Library and suggested this be used to print the monarch flyer for the upcoming education booth. Ms. Jesmer noted the library also allows the production of 10 buttons a day and this can be used to make butterfly buttons.

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

Chair Honeywell said the Park District flower beds have been planted so Commissioners should start weeding.

### **6. Updates on other issues**

Ms. Kron said Mark Schuller's class may be interested in helping with watershed projects. She noted that the NIU students who conducted the Sustainability Plan survey had many suggestions

including moving Commission meetings out of the Police Department. Management Analyst Zak said the Training Room is the largest the City has available and is the best for accommodating the public. Another suggestion is to work with other City commissions. Alderwoman Larson said she could see the CEC working with the Planning and Zoning Commission on green building initiatives.

## **H. Announcements**

### **1. New announcements**

Ms. Kron presented an example of excessive plastic packaging used for a food item at Aldi. She said the Commission should address the ecological cost of packaging.

### **2. Next meeting: July 7, 2022, at 4:00 p.m.**

## **I. Adjournment**

MOTION

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

VOTE

The motion was approved by unanimous voice vote. The meeting was declared adjourned at 6:07 p.m.

Respectfully submitted: Scott Zak, Management Analyst

Approved by the Citizens' Environmental Commission on July 7, 2022.