

MINUTES  
CITY OF DEKALB  
Citizens' Environmental Commission  
June 3, 2021

The Citizens' Environmental Commission (CEC) held a regular business meeting on June 3, 2021 at in the Second Floor Training Room at DeKalb Police Department.

Chair Clare Kron called the meeting to order at 4:03 p.m.

**A. Roll Call**

Roll call was recorded by Management Analyst Scott Zak, and the following members of the CEC were present: Chair Clare Kron, Vice Chair Steve Honeywell, Rachel Farrell and Nick Newman. Not present were: Adrian Lopez, Kyle Moore and Sharon Skala.

Also present were Management Analyst Scott Zak.

**B. Approval of Agenda**

Chair Kron requested a motion to approve the agenda.

MOTION

Mr. Honeywell moved 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 April 1, 2021**

Chair Kron requested approval of the minutes.

MOTION

Ms. Farrell motioned to approve the minutes, seconded by Mr. Newman.

VOTE

The minutes with a few minor changes were approved by a unanimous voice vote.

## **E. Commission Reports**

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

Chair Kron shared that Solid Waste Associate Emily Sitkie has been nominated to Mayor Cohen Barnes to serve as the Commission's ex-officio member from the DeKalb County Health Department. The mayor's appointment would also need the consent of the City Council.

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

Ex-Officio Member Mat Emken was not present but provided a written report. Encap Inc. has been hired to oversee the establishment of the Pollinator Project areas at Hopkins and Rotary Park (approximately 16 acres in total). During a kickoff meeting, Encap said that everything is looking as expected for the first season after planting. The District will be hosting a volunteer dame's rocket pull at Prairie Park on June 5.

Commissioners discussed the start of this year's participation in the Adopt-A-Park program and concluded no changes in the schedule were needed.

### **3. Kishwaukee Water Reclamation District**

Commissioner Newman reported that along with the Park District's pollinator habitat, the KWRD has planted another three acres of habitat.

### **4. Northern Illinois University**

With Ex-Officio Member Sarah Fox not present, no report was given.

### **5. City Staff Liaison**

Management Analyst Zak shared that an open house is planned on June 15 for a 1,800-acre solar and battery facility being proposed for just south of the City.

Mr. Zak also brought back more information on the Commission's role in the community following a conversation with City Manager Bill Nicklas. Mr. Zak reported, in part, that "I believe we agree that it is not the role of the Commission to lobby community members nor rally them to attend City Council meetings in support of a Commission recommendation. Listening to the community is a role of the Commission, and it is appropriate to say you are a member of the Citizens' Environmental Commission during these types of conversations. Educating the public is appropriate, but the educational activities should be on topics that are under the purview of the City and City Council. It is on this point that City Staff recommends that the Commission reconsider holding a presentation and writing an article in the Daily Chronicle on the health effects of 5G," since the City has only zoning purview over 5G, cannot ban the technology and has little control over its implementation.

## **F. New Business**

### **1. Second CEC presentation: 5G technology**

Following the previous comments, Chair Kron said the Commission would not do a 5G presentation and that she would pursue the presentation with another group.

## **2. Third CEC presentation: Beekeeping**

Chair Kron suggested the Commission first ask Mayor Barnes if they should pursue a beekeeping ordinance before preparing a presentation. The conversation turned to how to best promote the presentations. Mr. Honeywell said he would contact the Chronicle again about doing more articles and suggested using community calendars, including the Orange Peel Gazette. Mr. Newman said he would contact the NIU Environmental Studies Department. It was agreed the beekeeping presentation would happen in September.

## **3. Working with the new city administration**

Chair Kron reported that she and Mr. Honeywell would be meeting with Mayor Barnes on Friday, June 4 to discuss updating the sustainability plan. Mr. Honeywell suggested that the update be done as a separate Commission meeting and that a public presentation be done on what was accomplished from the last plan and future goals for the updated plan.

Chair Kron asked for a motion that the Commission not do a presentation on electric vehicles this year and instead do a presentation on the sustainability plan, its successes and goals.

### **MOTION**

The motion to hold the sustainability plan presentation was made by Mr. Honeywell and seconded by Ms. Farrell.

### **VOTE**

The motion was approved by unanimous voice vote.

## **4. Building expansion in DeKalb**

Pointing out that there are several developments happening in the City, Chair Kron questioned if the Commission should ask the City Council if it should provide input on sustainable architecture. It was noted that the redevelopment of the Hunter Hillcrest property could be an opportunity for permeable parking areas, sustainable heating and cooling and sustainable landscaping. The topic will be discussed with Mayor Barnes on Friday.

## **5. 5G information and program**

Nothing further was discussed on this topic.

## **6. Kiwanis Club presentation in July**

Former Mayor Jerry Smith has invited Chair Kron to speak to the Kiwanis Club on environmental issues in the City. Chair Kron is planning to focus on community health issues related to the environment and concerns over the use of plastic bags. Chair Kron said it was discussed in the past that she would solicit input from box stores and restaurants on switching from plastic to paper bags, but she was no longer sure if this would be an appropriate function of the Commission. Mr. Zak said he would ask City Manager Nicklas to attend the Commission's meeting in July to provide more clarity on the Commission's role.

## **7. Review and assign work on CEC Goals for 2021**

The Commission discussed this year's goals:

- Update sustainability plan: This will be discussed with Mayor Barnes.
- Recommend second electric vehicle charging station: Completed
- Support the Upper South Branch Kishwaukee River Watershed Plan: The Commission previously recommended its adoption by the City Council.
- Recommend light pollution and light trespass legislation: Commissioners have collected research.
- Submit a monthly article to the Daily Chronicle: This is being done.
- Prepare Monarch Butterfly Festival: This could not be done this year but NIU STEM Outreach will be getting children involved for 2022.
- Help establish sustainable guidelines for projects using public funds: This will be discussed with Mayor Barnes.
- Proposed mitigation of fireworks: While it was agreed fireworks are harmful to the environment, Chair Kron said this was a “dream” item since it is unlikely to happen given the popularity of fireworks.
- Promote ComEd's free energy assessment: This will be the topic for the July Chronicle article.
- Promote citywide recycling program that includes apartment buildings: Chair Kron will write a letter to the City Council encouraging the adoption of this program.
- Initiate home conservation program: Mr. Newman will write a Chronicle article on home conservation tips for August.
- Co-sponsor at least three public presentations: A presentation on butterfly habitat has been done, and presentations on beekeeping and the sustainability plan are being planned.

### **G. Old Business**

#### **1. Daily Chronicle article on feral cats**

Chair Kron complimented the article on feral cats.

#### **2. Adopt-A-Park**

No further information was presented on this topic.

#### **3. Coffee with the CEC**

Management Analyst Zak shared that these meetings can take place without City staff so long as the Commission follows an agenda, calls roll, and prepares written minutes afterwards. The meeting should also be held in person so tech support is not required. Chair Kron said she would look into the DeKalb Public Library as a possible meeting location.

#### **4. Grant for dual charging station**

Management Analyst Zak said he would check on the status of the grant application for a second electric vehicle charging station.

### **5. Light intrusion**

Chair Kron said she will be looking at information on the topic, and Mr. Honeywell agreed he would ask the Chronicle about doing a series of articles.

### **6. Other updates on previously discussed items**

Revisiting the topic of more trash cans in neighborhoods, Mr. Honeywell said he would include the topic in his Trash Squirrels article.

Chair Kron said she would add plastic bags and whether the Commission should pursue a ban to the topics to be discussed with Mayor Barnes, noting the mayor wants to focus on economic development. Mr. Honeywell said he agreed with Mayor Barnes that the Commission should work on winnable topics; although, he also agreed with Chair Kron, that that should not be the case all the time. Mr. Honeywell added that the Commission will need to prioritize.

Chair Kron reminded the Commission to continue looking for an eighth member.

Chair Kron said the Chronicle article on Mayor Barnes highlighted his accomplishments. Mr. Newman appreciates that he is a local graduate, and Mr. Honeywell says it is important that the mayor has shown interest in their work.

## **H. Announcements**

### **1. New announcements**

Chair Kron reminded that important environmental articles can be shared at this point in the meeting.

### **2. Next meeting: July 1, 4:00 p.m.**

## **I. Adjournment**

Chair Kron asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

MOTION

Mr. Newman motioned to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Mr. Honeywell.

VOTE

The motion was approved by unanimous voice vote. The meeting was declared adjourned at 5:56 p.m.

Respectfully submitted: Scott Zak, Management Analyst

Approved by the Citizens' Environmental Commission on July 1, 2021.