

MINUTES  
CITY OF DEKALB  
Citizens' Environmental Commission  
June 5, 2025

The Citizens' Environmental Commission (CEC) held a regular meeting on June 5, 2025, in the Second Floor Training Room at the DeKalb Police Department.

Chair Julie Jesmer called the meeting to order at 4:32 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 Shaun Langley, Thomas Skuzinski, Linda Srygler and Rob Srygler and Ex-Officio Members Shaina Martin and Nick Newman. Not present were Commissioner Killian Becker, Council Liaison Barb Larson and Ex-Officio Member Matt Emken.

**B. Approval of Agenda**

MOTION

Mr. Skuzinski motioned to approve the agenda, seconded by Ms. Srygler.

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 May 1, 2025**

MOTION

Mr. Srygler motioned to approve the minutes, seconded by Mr. Skuzinski.

VOTE

The minutes were approved by unanimous voice vote.

**E. Commission Reports**

**1. DeKalb County Health Department**

Ms. Martin shared another recycling event is coming up at DeKalb Airport on June 21 in which clothing, textiles, electronics and paint (for a fee) will be accepted.

**2. DeKalb Park District**

With Ex-Officio Member Emken absent, no report was given. Commissioners asked that Mr. Emken be contacted to see if he will be able to resume attending meetings.

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

Mr. Newman reported this summer, the KWRD will be performing sanitary sewer basin rehabilitation around Fourth and Taylor Streets. He explained this area is usually the first that needs to be pumped during heavy rainfall, sending untreated water into the river. The project will help correct this.

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

Commissioners shared that native paw paw trees and seeds were recently planted in the North 40. Also, installation of solar systems on campus has begun. Mr. Zak noted he attended a session at Earth Fest that included student projects with municipalities. He asked if students could create a tree inventory for the City. Mr. Skuzinski said this was an option along with employing an intern.

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

Mr. Zak reported tree trimming funded by the Morton Arboretum grant has begun. He also provided follow-up to questions asked during the Commission's review of the City's tree ordinance, which is being updated under the grant requirements. The Public Works Director shared that pine trees are not included on the list of trees allowed to be planted on City property since they are very susceptible to wind damage, newly planted trees have a one-year warranty and easements regulate trimming by ComEd around powerlines.

## **F. New Business**

### **1. Green business recognition**

The Commission began discussions on what a program recognizing businesses for adopting sustainable practices would look like. Mr. Lange said along with recognition at the business, the accomplishment should also be included on the City's website. Mr. Newman said a tiered system might encourage competition; although, achieving the bottom tier should be easy to encourage participation. Mr. Skuzynski said there should perhaps be an annual renewal process to make sure the sustainable practices are still being followed. The Commission agreed to research similar programs in other municipalities for models for the Commission's initiative.

### **2. Flyer on new tree care**

Mr. Zak noted during the Commission's review of the tree ordinance, it was suggested that a one-page flyer should be given to the property owners who are responsible for caring for trees planted by the City for the first year. Mr. Newman said he would provide the top five tips for tree care. Mr. Langley said it should be explained not to volcano mulch around the tree base but rather apply mulch no more than two inches thick to the end of the tree's canopy. He said information on the availability of waterbags should be included. Mr. Zak will draft a flyer for the Commission's review.

## **G. Old Business**

**1. Next articles for Daily Chronicle (July: Sustainability myths (Langley), Aug.: Light pollution (Becker), Sept.: Green business program, Nov. & Dec.: Benefits of volunteering)**

Ms. Srygler shared an idea from resident Patty Rubeck who feels public education is needed on stormwater remediation, including the need to clear out blocked storm drains. It was recommended this be a possible topic for September since the green business program may not be implemented by then. The rest of the schedule was unchanged.

**2. Upcoming events**

Mr. Zak said the Chamber's Family Fun Fest in Hopkins Park is coming up on July 16 when the Commission will offer monarch butterfly education activities. Ms. Martin, Mr. Newman and Mr. Langley said they may be able to participate with Mr. Zak.

**3. Updates on other issues**

Mr. Zak shared the state legislature did not pass a plastic bag ban before the spring session adjourned. He added this and other sustainability-related bills seem to be gaining traction and action is still possible in the fall veto session.

Mr. Newman reported the KWRD partnered with the Soil and Water Conservation District for a rain barrel sale in which 65 units were sold, meaning more homes using less water.

**H. Announcements**

**1. New announcements**

No information was shared here.

**2. Next regular meeting: July 3, 2025 at 4:30 p.m.**

Given limited commissioner availability for the next regular meeting date, which falls on the afternoon before the Independence Day holiday, the July meeting will be cancelled.

**I. Adjournment**

MOTION

Mr. Srygler motioned to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Ms. Srygler.

VOTE

A motion to adjourn the meeting was approved by unanimous voice vote. The meeting was declared adjourned at 5:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted: Scott Zak

Approved by the Citizens' Environmental Commission on Aug. 7, 2025.