

Memorandum

TO: Sustainable Environmental Advisory Commissioners

FROM: _____

Andrew D. DeCanniere, Commissioner, Sustainable Environmental Advisory Commission

DATE: February 16, 2023

**SUBJECT: January 24, 2023 Sustainable Environmental Advisory Commission (SEAC)
Meeting Minutes**

Meeting was called to order at 7:03 PM in the Council Chambers at Skokie Village Hall. This meeting was also streamed live on YouTube. A recording may be viewed online by visiting the following web address: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NpPCO9Sw0xk>

Present: Chairperson Jennifer Grossman, Vice Chair Jim McNelis, Commissioners Andrew DeCanniere, Michael Gershbein, Lisa Gotkin, Alma Likic, Olivia Mahoney, Rick Moskovitz, Emily Okallau, Charles Saxe, Trustee Liaison Khem Khoeun, Director of Public Works / Staff Liaison Max Slankard, Assistant to the Director of Public Works / Staff Liaison Elizabeth Zimmerman

Absent: Commissioners Christopher Buccola and Robert Render

I. Approval of minutes

Minutes from the December 27, 2022 meeting of the Sustainable Environmental Advisory Commission were unanimously approved.

II. Old Business

a. Refuse and composting update

Staff Liaison Zimmerman said that everything is going well with the compost sites. She was able to get together with representatives from the Skokie Park District, and noted that she did some research through Evanston's program in terms of what works. She also spoke with Erlene Howard of Collective Resource regarding the proposed sites and some changes to site locations have been made after hearing that the best sites are at a location that also has a facility and that has people around to monitor things. She now thinks that things are in a good place where the site locations are concerned. Locations of composting sites are to be formally announced in the Spring 2023 edition of the Village's quarterly print newsletter, *NewSkokie*. She noted that there will be designated compost drop-off areas at Village Hall, Public Works and the Skokie Fire Department's headquarters (Station 16). She also said that they wanted to provide access to these sites for the multifamily population. The Public Works facility serves that function for the Bronx area/neighborhood, and Oakton Park is another great location for that. Devonshire will serve the north side of the community well. We are on track to have a robust number

of composting sites, as we will have five different compost drop-off sites. She said that she is also really happy about the Village Hall location, as it is well-positioned to serve a lot of the Farmers Market-goers in the summertime. They are still open to further changes/adjustments, but they hope to get started in about a month. Signs for these sites just came in recently, and need to be installed. Announcements about this composting service will also be made via Skokie's electronic newsletter, *SkokieNews*, and via social media.

Commissioner Mahoney inquired as to what people will use to transport the compost to the sites.

Staff Liaison Zimmerman stated that they're working on this. It will be an incentive program for Collective Resource. They want to get out to some events this year, just as was done last year, but with some type of compost caddy that would be available to the public, free of charge. People will be able to come up to a table that is set up at an event, and they can learn about the drop-off compost sites or Collective Resource's curbside compost program. That is just being priced out right now, and there has been discussion of which type of caddy would be the best. While a final decision has not been made as of yet, it is budgeted for and they will be purchasing something of that sort. There also are plans to provide additional information about composting at home in future editions of *NewSkokie*.

Vice Chair McNelis inquired where the compost is taken after it has been picked up.

Staff Liaison Zimmerman stated it goes to a facility that is pretty nearby. She is aware that Ms. Howard and her company is careful to make sure that it is not going anywhere that is too far away, so as to minimize emissions. She went on to clarify that Collective Resource is the vendor that will be collecting the compost from the compost drop-off sites and transporting it. She noted that Collective Resource is the Village's franchise hauler right now. She did do research through Purchasing, and the Village believes that is the agreement that they need to follow.

Commissioner Okallau asked if there are any updates when it comes to Collective Resource's curbside composting program, particularly with regards to participation in that program.

Staff Liaison Zimmerman indicated that, going forward, some type of discount will be offered. She said she hesitates to discuss the details just now, as they are still working out some of the details. It will be based off an annual subscription. The challenge they are facing at the moment is that if you go to the Collective Resource website, that page is shared with Park Ridge and Evanston. They are working with somebody to address this issue, but if it turns out that they really have some sort of problem working this out, it may be turned into some sort of rebate program or something like that instead.

Chairperson Grossman stated that she thought that it would end up being more of a subsidy than a discount. With a discount, a little bit is taken off of the total cost, whereas

with a subsidy, most of the cost would be covered. She was wondering what the current thinking, on the part of the Village, may be where this is concerned.

Staff Liaison Zimmerman said that the current thinking is that the Village would like to offer an incentive for new sign-ups. Current proposal is for 15%. They wanted to get it below \$200, at the very least. Additionally, there will be the compost drop-off option, consisting of five sites around town, as well.

Commissioner Okallau said that it is a little disappointing that this is where the Village is landing when it comes to this issue, based on the conversations we'd been having and the options that we were exploring. Chairperson Grossman concurred. Additional discussion ensued.

Commissioner Okallau stated that we talked about how we want to promote waste diversion. However, if diverting your waste by composting is expensive, then that sends a complicated message.

Staff Liaison Zimmerman noted that this is the first year, as well, and so a lot of what is going on in the Sustainability Plan is determining budget. They have to determine the costs and get things rolling. There is a team on the Sustainability Plan working on a variety of revenue options. She went on to say that she is happy that they were able to get this much going in the short amount of time that they did. However, that does not mean that they're not going to make this program more robust in the future. She also noted that Solid Waste Agency of Northern Cook County (SWANCC) disposal fees will be increasing this year. These inflationary years (last year and this year) have been particularly challenging. Right now, they are trying to work through that, but we are heard loud and clear.

Staff Liaison Zimmerman stated that she thinks that, with the discount, they've been thinking we are going to get about 10 new customers per month. She actually thinks that we will get a little bit more than that. They're uncertain what will happen where the drop-off portion of things is concerned. They will be evaluating that and see what is going on. She said that she just applied for a grant, and we will find out in April whether the Village will be awarded that grant. That is funding for outreach.

Commissioner Saxe asked how many people are participating now. Staff Liaison Zimmerman stated that 300 to 400 people are currently participating in the household compost pick-up program.

Commissioner Saxe inquired how we would evaluate whether it is working, given that this is the starting point. At what point would we say that we need to do something differently, or determine whether we want to continue on this path?

Staff Liaison Zimmerman said she has the math worked out to reach out goal at the end of eight years. She stated that they are aware that the program will have to get increasingly robust. Goals are lofty but attainable.

Staff Liaison Slankard said that the Village is still finalizing the details of the launch and rollout of the once-a-week refuse collection service. Therefore, he does not have the finalized announcement and date details as of yet, but they should have them soon. They are working to finalize the communication plan, in advance of the rollout of the changes. That portion of things is virtually complete. He expects that the communication process will unfold in the next week to ten days. The intention of the communication plan is to reach out to the community on a weekly basis, utilizing social media, print media, and other communication vehicles that the Village has, and begin what really is an educational process. It will range from providing residents with the backstory of how we arrived at this point, the public hearing that was held before the Sustainable Environmental Advisory Commission, the deliberations that took place, the rationale for transitioning to this once-a-week refuse collection service, messaging with respect to the environmental benefits of this change, etc. Food scrap composting will also be covered. As we get closer to the launch date, there will be messaging and information with respect to what they expect to be concerns residents will have about making this transition (e.g. how does a resident deal with various issues), so that they start putting information out in front of residents in advance of this service transition, to try to anticipate and head off concerns, and help them understand some of what we think are the important issues (thinking about reduction of waste, alternatives to generating waste in the first place).

He went on to say that, from an operational standpoint, they have put in place the routes and how they will run those things. The other thing they need to have coordinated is their approach to the requests that they know they will receive for second toters (e.g. what the protocol will be for how they respond to those requests, ensuring there are enough toters available in the Village's inventory to be able to respond to those requests), and any other logistics pieces that they will need to have in place for that service transition. There will definitely be more information provided to Commissioners shortly, and we will see the beginnings of that messaging very soon.

Vice Chair McNelis inquired if Staff Liaison Slankard is suggesting that there will be a launch date known by next month, and whether he is correct in that understanding. Staff Liaison Slankard confirmed that is correct.

b. ESP Staff Update

Staff Liaison Zimmerman said that, as a recap, what had happened is that the Village Manager identified key staff for each of the different sectors. There is a point lead for each sector, and then Staff Liaison Slankard and Assistant Village Manager Nick Wyatt serve as the leads for the overall plan. Staff has been meeting regularly, and she is really impressed at the quantity of work that has been coming out of this group of staff people in such a short span of time. They just got started. Essentially, they have been working on the budget. They had to get some pricing from vendors and figure out what the costs were, and then get that in the budget, which takes some time. While this does not constitute everything that they talked about in their meetings, some of the highlights for each of the sectors include the following:

Transportation and Mobility:

- Working on submitting an Illinois Transportation Enhancement Program (ITEP) grant. Staff Liaison Zimmerman stated she believes this grant is to update the Village's Transportation Plan.
- Working on the sidewalk gap program near Highland School.
- Have engaged Chairperson Grossman on trying to get some advocates.
- Want to come up with a flyer that would be used by block advocates, who would go door-to-door doing this advocacy work, which would highlight the benefits of sidewalks (e.g. reduced emissions, potential increase in home values, etc.)
- Metropolitan Mayors Caucus Electric vehicle (EV) Readiness Program has launched. The Village of Skokie is proud to be part of first cohort that they put together.

Land Use and Housing:

- Village of Skokie recently held a seminar on affordable housing in the community.
- A map is being put together to highlight the underutilized paved areas in town. They will be looking at where they are located, and what the different options may be for those locations that have been identified.
- Parking requirements review is underway.

Buildings and Energy:

- Waiting for new State of Illinois Code update to come out, and then the Village wants to implement that in our Code.
- Village staff is looking for a SEAC member to help with Action Item BE-1 in the Environmental Sustainability Plan. Staff Liaison Zimmerman said that if anyone is interested, they should take a look at this, and then let her know if they want to be a part of that group.
- Aiming to have a green building policy done by end of the fiscal year (around May 2023).

Green Spaces:

- Staff Liaison Zimmerman noted that she is the Sector Lead for this sector.

- One of the things they are working on is, as Village equipment ages, they are replacing those pieces with equipment with electric ones that are powered by battery. Staff Liaison Zimmerman said that this is something that they have spent a lot of time on, and the last couple of weeks have been about pricing out the cost difference between the old equipment and the new equipment. Commissioner Okallau inquired as to her experience with that. Have they used it? Staff Liaison Zimmerman said that they are confident that they can make this new equipment work for their operations, based on charging time and the like. She said she doesn't know how many of us may have driven past Public Works, but they have been using a zero-emission robot mower all year. They have some good staff members who are on top of it, and are excited about it, and they think they can make it work. Additional discussion ensued.
- Staff Liaison Zimmerman noted that they just went out to bid on their tree planting contract, and one of the things that they added to that contract was a wholesale cost option for businesses or large-scale properties. They will be picking out a section of town that has a lower canopy, and they will be working on one section at a time, in order to make it more efficient in terms of watering. For example, when the Village is planting in a parkway, they will go to a business and see if they would be interested in jumping on the Village's contract, which will probably end up being about half the cost of what it would be to do on their own. The Village will not pay for the trees, but will be offering them a very reasonable cost option to participate. Commissioner Okallau inquired who will be doing the watering. Is it part of the contract? Staff Liaison Zimmerman stated that they are working on that. They have a watering contractor in town that tends to the Village's hanging baskets. She thinks that would be her first call, to see if they're interested in doing that, because they've found that if they do not follow up with the watering, or include it in the price, then the trees will die.

Green Economy:

- Staff Liaison Zimmerman noted that she asked Commissioner Render if he would like to join the Green Leadership Award team. They are looking for one more SEAC member to work on Green Economy, so if anyone is interested in that, they should let her know. She went on to note that this would be a daytime commitment. Additional discussion ensued.

Cross-cutting Goals:

- Staff Liaison Zimmerman said that a group of Village staff members will be meeting with the Superintendents of the various school districts. It is not just going to be about sustainability, but sustainability will be a portion of the program that the Village will be presenting. This will be the first outreach to schools in the community as a part of this plan.

Commissioner Gotkin inquired what may be on the agenda when it comes to the meeting with the Superintendents. She went on to note that she was very interested in the Safe Routes to Schools stuff, as well as bikeability and walkability to schools. Is that going to be a part of the agenda? Staff Liaison Zimmerman said that it is more that the Village Manager provides a general update on many different issues. She said that she has seen some of the slides that will be a part of the presentation, and she is almost positive that she did see Safe Routes to Schools will be part of that. The Village Manager's Office pulled out different Action Items that specifically mention either school participation or different Action Items that in some way pertain to the schools. There are many of them in the plan. Commissioner Gotkin inquired whether they will just be presenting the issues in the plan that pertain to schools. What is the goal of this meeting? Staff Liaison Zimmerman said that it is an annual meeting that they hold, and the Village Manager presents a lot of different slides on, for example, things like economic development in the different school districts. So, it is like the State of the Village, specifically as it relates to schools. Therefore, they do not have the entire time to speak solely about the Environmental Sustainability Plan. However, there were three or four slides on the plan that are meant to introduce the Superintendents to the plan. There also is a list of the different Action Items that relate to the schools, which they will be providing to the Superintendents. Commissioner Gotkin asked whether there are follow-up meetings that will be held, or is this just a regular meeting that is held every year and there aren't more planned? Staff Liaison Zimmerman said she would have to get back to her about that.

Commissioner Saxe said that, as far as the affordable housing is concerned, there will be a series of meetings. Following up on the first presentation, he thinks that there is another meeting that will take place on February 2nd. It is to solicit more input for the Plan Commission. Apparently, they will have some recommendations for the Village Board in March, for them to approve. He noted there is an announcement in a recent *SkokieNews*, for those who are interested. He said that they have also set up an email address for people to provide feedback. He went on to say that one of the things about the housing stuff is that many times, when people talk about affordable housing, they are talking about housing specifically for those who are lower-income / those who are most vulnerable. Viewed through a sustainability lens, the housing issue cuts across the entire housing stock. That's something to keep in mind in terms of moving to promote sustainability in the housing stock in the Village of Skokie — not just for the lowest income, but creating market context, where there can be an increase in supply and an increase in adaptability in housing in the Village, so that people can adapt existing housing to meet changing needs. One example is work from home, which changes the whole dynamic of the market. There also are some demographic changes in the Village, which he does not think we have a full handle on, but it seems to him, anecdotally, that there are many more intergenerational households in the Village. He hopes that whatever comes out of this in March is a starting point, rather than a presumed completion, because he thinks that this is a pretty big issue that will have some ongoing concerns. Staff Liaison Zimmerman stated that she can pass that along. Commissioner Saxe said it was good to see the initiative, where the Plan Commission is reviewing this, and then the Staff will be putting together some ideas on this. He said that it is a pretty significant

issue, and he would encourage people to follow it and participate. Staff Liaison Zimmerman did note that, if anyone is interested, she did notice a nice write-up about this in *SkokieNews* today as well.

c. Library seminar update and Citizens Utility Board (CUB)

Commissioner Saxe said that tomorrow evening, January 25th, there will be a presentation on decarbonization and energy efficiency in the home. The presentation will be taking place at the Skokie Public Library at 6:30 PM in the Radmacher Room, and will also be on Zoom. To be able to take part in the event, you need to register on the library's website, www.skokielibrary.info. You can go to the Events page, find the event, register for it, and they will email you a Zoom link.

Commissioner Saxe went on to say that part of what he wants to do with these presentations is to give a brief update as to where things are when it comes to the Environmental Sustainability Plan, to try to encourage to public engagement. Additional discussion ensued. He also said that one idea he had is the idea of some sort of Community-wide Zero Waste Challenge, to encourage people to employ some strategies to reduce their waste. He said that there are some pretty good informational materials out there, and it could be a fun thing to do. There doesn't have to be a presentation, but that might be an idea for a public program as well.

d. SEAC workplan update

Staff Liaison Zimmerman noted that she had noticed Commissioner Gershbein had been able to access the document that Commissioner Saxe had sent out to the entire group. Commissioner Gershbein stated that he had put his initials next to some of the Action Items, in the spreadsheet provided, and noted that other Commissioners could do the same if they are so inclined.

Vice Chair McNelis said that he sent Staff Liaison Zimmerman a list of the Action Items he would be interested in.

Similarly, Commissioner DeCanniere noted that he also had reviewed the spreadsheet provided to the group, and had identified some Action Items of interest.

Staff Liaison Zimmerman asked Commissioners if they all were able to access the document that Commissioner Saxe sent out via email. All those present indicated they were able to do so.

Commissioner Saxe said that we had the subcommittee structure in the past, and so he was thinking that we could start by using that as a model. If you were on a subcommittee, you might identify Action Items that might relate to that subcommittee. Then, each subcommittee could take a chunk of those and, working with Staff Liaisons Slankard and Zimmerman, as well as with other Village staff, we could figure out what the subcommittee could be involved with. Staff Liaison Zimmerman stated that the way it is

structured through the Village is that she would have to put us in touch with whomever is in charge of that particular sector, and then take it from there.

Commissioner Saxe noted that, during our December meeting, Staff Liaison Zimmerman had mentioned that many of these Action Items are very much related to internal staff functions. That said, there are some areas where the SEAC could be involved. Additional discussion ensued.

Staff Liaison Zimmerman also advised Commissioners that, as they are going through the list of Action Items, they should think about the time commitment required for each of these items. Obviously, they want everyone to participate, but they would like us to consider the time commitment that would be required for each, and how many Action Items we are able to commit to.

Commissioner Saxe said that, when Commissioners are selecting from among the Action Items, they could first look at the major categories / areas and see what might be of interest (e.g. Buildings and Energy, Land Use and Housing). You can start there, and then just work with that one section. That might help make it a little more digestible.

Staff Liaison Zimmerman said that they could also consider the phases. Staff looked at all of the phasing, because there might be something that they need to start on now in order to be able to complete it in eight years. In general, however, most on the Staff have started on the Phase 1 Action Items. So if, when selecting from among the Action Items, you were to limit yourself to Phase 1 Action items, that could be a nice way to limit it as well.

Commissioner Okallau said that it would also be helpful for us to hear from Village Staff in terms of where they think we could be helpful. Additional discussion ensued.

Staff Liaison Zimmerman said that she thinks what would be helpful, for now, is to put any Action Items we have an interest in helping out with into the document that Commissioner Saxe provided. She will then be able to provide team leads with contacts.

Commissioner DeCanniere noted that, when it comes to Action Item WM 2-4 in particular, it seems to him that he may have some of what they are looking for already done. For example, they seem to want to put information regarding biking, walking and public transit together, and then make that information available to the public. He said that he already created brochures, which could be made available as PDFs on the Village website, regarding biking and public transit in the community. Those just haven't been used. Then, of course, there is the brochure about refuse and recycling, which has been available for some time now.

Staff Liaison Zimmerman noted that the Village's new Sustainability webpage is scheduled to launch around February 1st. One of the cross-cutting actions she is aware Meredith Gioia (Communications Manager for the Village of Skokie) is looking

for help on is if we have any resources that are good enough, he could then add links to the webpage. She wants those links to be vetted by the Commission, so that we don't have too many, and so that we don't have competing information, or the like.

Commissioner Saxe said that he thinks that part of our role is to serve as liaisons, to be in communication with the community. Even though some of the Action Items that are listed do happen to be outside the scope of what we, as a Commission, are able to do directly, we can be cognizant of them and of what is going on. He noted that he has many conversations where people will ask him about what is going on. He can certainly take that information, and he is able to communicate what is happening, and is able to spell out what can be expected. For example, we can let people in the community know what the staff is doing, some of the things that are currently in the pipeline, etc. Similarly, we could provide feedback as to what we are hearing in the community. He said that he has always seen this as part of an advisory commission's role — having more ears and eyes out in the community, in order to be able to have that kind of exchange.

Commissioner Gershbein noted that perhaps there is also the potential for us, as a Commission, to work with other interested parties within the community. Staff Liaison Zimmerman noted that Commissioners Mahoney and Render showed interest in the Green Leadership Awards.

Vice Chair McNelis noted that the Skokie Park District is doing things that are consistent with the Village's Environmental Sustainability Plan. He said he thinks there could be a good opportunity there, if we were able to coordinate with them on certain things. Staff Liaison Zimmerman said that we have started to do just that. For instance, they have already been a good partner when it comes to the compost drop-off sites. She went on to note how everybody has been great, and how there is just a lot of momentum within the community right now — not only among the Village staff, but also the when it comes to Skokie Park District, the schools, etc.

III. Public Comment

No public comments were received.

IV. Next Meeting

Based on the expected availability of Commission members, the next meeting will be held on Tuesday, February 28, 2023.

V. Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 8:02 PM.