

Memorandum

TO: Sustainable Environmental Advisory Commissioners

FROM: _____
Andrew D. DeCanniere, Commissioner, Sustainable Environmental Advisory Commission

DATE: May 18, 2022

**SUBJECT: April 26, 2022 Sustainable Environmental Advisory Commission (SEAC)
Meeting Minutes**

Meeting was called to order at 7:05 PM in the Council Chambers at Skokie Village Hall

Present: Chairman Jennifer Grossman, Commissioners Christopher Buccola, Andrew DeCanniere, Michael Gershbein, Lisa Gotkin, Jim McNelis, Rick Moskovitz, Emily Okallau, Robert Render, Charles Saxe, Assistant to the Public Works Director / Staff Liaison Elizabeth Zimmerman

Absent: Commissioners Alma Likic, Olivia Mahoney

I. Approval of March meeting minutes

Minutes from the March 30, 2022 meeting of the Sustainable Environmental Advisory Commission were unanimously approved.

II. Old Business

a. Skokie's Spring Greening

Staff Liaison Zimmerman gave a brief update on how Spring Greening went this year. She said that the event went pretty well. Traffic flowed after about the first 30 minutes. This was the first year in which we had this new arrangement, with the additional recycling vendors on-site. There was something of a learning curve, in terms of how to make that work. There were 1,150 cars that came through this year, which was a record. There were 12 tons of electronics collected, along with 13 tons of paper. She said that she didn't get all of the stats from the vendors, but is aware that they did collect 250 pounds of batteries. The event was a pretty successful one overall, with decent weather and great volunteers. She mentioned that Commissioner McNelis was there. Additionally, Trustee Klein was there, doing traffic control, as well as Commissioner Saxe. She said that, for next year, they plan on sending out tips for those who will be going, in which they will mention that the event tends to be very busy for that first half hour, in order to help spread out the cars a little bit more. She said that she will also suggest that the volunteers arrive 15 minutes early, so that they are able to begin queueing cars, because they didn't have the volunteer staff to do that this year. The cars began showing up an hour early, so they are trying to get that part organized a little bit better. She also noted that the Skokie Police officers who were there were great.

Commissioner McNelis stated that his only observation would be that they had a lot of people who didn't have paper with them come through. They only had electronics, yet they had to wait in that same line. In future, there should perhaps be a way for people to get to the electronics recycling station, bypassing the paper recycling station.

Commissioner Gotkin asked whether any of the Niles North High School students volunteered.

Commissioner McNelis stated that they did. He noted that he saw a bunch of students from Niles North H.S. in the morning.

Staff Liaison Zimmerman noted that there were some great volunteers from the Skokie Chamber of Commerce as well. There also were a whole bunch of volunteers from Notre Dame High School. She also noted that for next year, Spring Greening is tentatively set to be held on the same weekend. Nothing has been finalized, but as soon as it has been she will let Commissioners know.

Additional discussion ensued.

b. Earth Day

Staff Liaison Zimmerman said that Commissioner Render sent her some pictures. She is aware that he got together with the Village's Forester, Cathy Stevens, and they did a few events. He said they were great, and she got great feedback from Cathy as well. Commissioner Render did some recycling education and spoke about this Commission.

Staff Liaison Zimmerman also stated that she hopes we're aware that the Village did a five-day marketing blitz, and that we saw it on Facebook. They also had a piece for Earth Day in the Village's electronic newsletter, *SkokieNews*. She said that she felt the piece about composting gained some traction, and she did receive calls about the composting program. She said she's excited to see if the total number of memberships increased this past month. She should have that information by early May.

Additional discussion ensued.

c. 30th Annual Chicago River Day

Staff Liaison Zimmerman reminded Commissioners that Chicago River Day is coming up on May 14th. She said she is aware that the Village Manager, John Lockerby, is going to go, Staff Liaison Slankard is also going to attend a Chicago River Day event. Commissioner McNelis noted that he will attend one of the events. He signed up for the Skokie event. If Commissioners are interested, they should RSVP. If any Commissioners go, and if anyone takes pictures during the event, they should keep Staff Liaisons Slankard and Zimmerman posted.

III. New Business

a. Sustainability Plan Update - paleBLUEdot selected as consultant

Staff Liaison Zimmerman noted that they have been really busy. Staff Liaison Slankard and Chairman Grossman went to the Village Board.

Chairman Grossman discussed how they told the Village Board that paleBLUEdot had been selected as the consultant, and opened things up for questions. There were a couple of questions as to how that particular firm had been selected over the other finalists. They also talked a bit about how they had also looked at Delta Institute, which was the firm selected for the Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Inventory. One of the things that they really like about paleBLUEdot is that they are focused on community engagement, and on working with the Commission, as well as how their process seems to be very collaborative. They aren't local, but they seem like they will be a very good firm to work with.

Staff Liaison Zimmerman stated that she began to work with Ted Redmond of paleBLUEdot in the last week or so. He sent her the toolkit, the team development and the survey. Ted specifically asked for input on a number of items. First, what are Commissioners thoughts on the Social Media Toolkit? He also asked her to ask Commissioners if there would be any interest in printing some posters. They could be put up in local places of worship, schools, businesses that we have a good relationship with, etc. If there is an interest in doing so, she just needs to know how many would need to be printed.

Commissioner Gotkin said that she sent Staff Liaison Zimmerman and Chairman Grossman her comment about the Social Media Toolkit. She has only one issue. She felt that the low-color one, with the pictures of the smokestacks giving off pollution, seemed very negative. She would like to see a more hopeful, positive image used. Chairman Grossman concurred with that assessment.

Commissioner DeCanniere stated that he does feel that, overall, the Social Media Toolkit seems to be pretty well done. He stated he feels it's great to have these kinds of tools, given that so many people are spending so much time on various social media platforms. He also inquired whether we will be placing any information regarding the update to the Village's Environmental Sustainability Plan, or the survey, on NextDoor. While he is not on NextDoor, he is aware that there are residents who are on the platform, and so he had been thinking that it could be good to advertise the Environmental Sustainability Plan update / survey on NextDoor as well. It seems as though it may be a good way for the Village to have a presence on the platform, and to engage people there as well. Staff Liaison Zimmerman stated that she can check into that. She would have to get that approved.

Commissioner Saxe inquired as to who will be doing these social media posts and who will be distributing these materials. Staff Liaison Zimmerman stated that the Village will take the lead on that. However, Ted really wants this to be shared. He basically

said to give the social media posts to whoever wants it. We are welcome to put it on our personal social media accounts. Same goes with the posters. They want to reach / include everybody in our population, so that this process is done in an equitable manner.

Staff Liaison Zimmerman did note that Ted plans on attending our May 24th meeting in person. He is coming in from Minnesota, and would like to do a first kickoff meeting on that same day. However, it would be during the daytime.

Commissioner Okallau inquired as to whether the information that we will be providing to the community (e.g. the materials from the Social Media Toolkit) will be translated into other languages.

Staff Liaison Zimmerman stated that if it is put onto the Village website in a certain format, then the Google Translate feature will work. She will be discussing this with Ann Tennes, Director of Marketing and Communications for the Village of Skokie.

Chairman Grossman asked whether we know how many people go to the Village's website who don't speak English. Staff Liaison Zimmerman stated that the Village is not able to obtain the statistics for how many people that visit the Village's website are using Google Translate.

Commissioner DeCanniere subsequently inquired whether we have some more general demographic data, in terms of which languages are most commonly spoken in Skokie. Staff Liaison Zimmerman stated that we certainly have information on the languages most commonly spoken within the Village.

Commissioner McNelis inquired as to how "Meeting-in-a-Box" works, as well as who it is intended for. Staff Liaison Zimmerman said that Ted will likely speak more about this during our first meeting. Basically, people can host their own meetings, and they are able to talk about this plan. For example, if you want to host a meeting at the library, the information is all right there and available to you. They had not had much of a chance to discuss it, as they were focused on the next two weeks. However, we can obtain more information about it.

Staff Liaison Zimmerman spoke about the plan team development. She spoke with Ted, and he had very specific suggestions. He has picked out the various Village departments where there ought to be about two representatives at these meetings. Goal is to have 20 to 30 people on this planning team, which will meet five to seven times throughout the course of the project. He essentially selected every department except for Legal, Finance and the Clerk's Office. She spent some time creating an invitation for those departments, which is currently under review with the Village Manager's Office. He also identified the various Boards & Commissions that he felt should be involved in the process as well. There were about five Boards & Commissions he identified, which would have up to three members representing them. The same goes for our Commission as well. He would like to invite three Commissioners to be a part of that core team. If someone cannot make it to one of those meetings, they'd be looking for an alternate to do so. Rather than having

just this Commission involved, this arrangement ensures a wider cross-section of people are involved in the process. Representatives go back to their Commissions, and they spread the word in terms of what we're doing with the plan. That is how the word will get out on the plan, and how there is good participation in the process. Further discussion ensued.

Staff Liaison Zimmerman said she will create a group email list and then send out a Doodle Poll to see when most Commissioners are available to attend.

Staff Liaison Zimmerman added that they are also looking for community members to participate in the process. She would imagine that they will be reaching out to organizations like Go Green Skokie, the Skokie Public Library, and the Skokie Park District. There were some businesses that showed interest in the Refuse Listening Session (held October 26th). The Village is trying to involve a diverse group in the process.

Staff Liaison Zimmerman asked whether Commissioners had a chance to review the Environmental Sustainability Plan Update Survey, and whether any Commissioners have any input. She said that one thing she had seen was a question on community solar, asking whether residents would be willing to pay \$5.00 or \$10.00 more. She thought that was confusing, given the existing program is typically \$5.00 to \$10.00 less than the normal bill. So, she was going to speak with Ted about changing that question. Further discussion ensued.

b. Invitation from CUB to host Grow Solar Chicagoland forum

Commissioner Saxe spoke a bit about the Grow Solar Chicagoland program. It is a program to do rooftop solar installation. They try to organize groups of interested individuals that want to have this done, so that they can get their rooftop solar system installations done at a discounted price.

Staff Liaison Zimmerman said that the question here is whether there is anyone who may be interested in hosting a meeting about this. It doesn't seem to involve a huge time commitment. They just ask that we are the ones who promote it, arrange the venue, and have a some sort of presence at the meeting.

Commissioner Saxe said that he can follow up with them and see what their requirements are. He said that this would probably occur sometime over the next couple of months / over the summer.

c. Commissioner Saxe update on Development Review

Commissioner Saxe delivered a PowerPoint presentation. He stated that he had a discussion with Matt Brandmeyer, Director of Community Development, about developing some criteria that could be used to evaluate future projects/development. He had suggested that they could have a conversation, along with Carrie Haberstitch (Planning Supervisor) and Chairman Grossman. He and Chairman Grossman

subsequently met with Carrie and Matt to discuss the Plan chapter, and this idea of developing some sort of criteria with which to methodically review projects in terms of their sustainability criteria. He said that he had been looking at some things with which to do that, and how we might be able to incorporate that, and has been evaluating how we might be able to develop some sort of prototype. He went on to say that he wanted to let everyone know what is going on and what conversations they have had with Matt. They are to have a follow-up conversation, likely within the next couple of weeks.

Commissioner Saxe said that throughout the community, people have been asking whether some of the recently approved projects/developments had been reviewed by the SEAC, and what the environmental review entails. A number of people have been suggesting that the SEAC ought to review proposed projects/developments, or that perhaps somebody from SEAC should be on the Plan Commission and would review them. This has come out of that general interest. The purpose of this proposed tool would be to take recognized standards / criteria, and to incorporate them into the review process. Therefore, what he is proposing here is not a separate review process, which had been suggested. Rather, he proposes to create a more robust review process, with very specific criteria, and a method for doing that. This tool would evaluate projects based upon established Village priorities. It would incorporate the Environmental Sustainability Plan, along with the Village's other review criteria.

It would use a systematic and methodical approach, and would be consistent. Additionally, as developers come to the Village to propose projects, they would know what these criteria are. This is not intended to be a decision-making instrument, but rather is meant to help inform decision-making. Could potentially adapt some of the LEED certification criteria to incorporate into this process. Other criteria / frameworks that could be adapted / included are those from the Greenest Region Compact (GRC), as well as the Climate Action Plan for the Chicago Region, and eventually the updated Environmental Sustainability Plan as well. The tool would initially take a checklist with these criteria that were drawn from the various frameworks, and then developed in consultation with Village staff. When a Staff Report is done, Village staff would weigh the project and score the project, and then each of the criteria would get a weighted score. There would be minimum requirements, along with additional items that could be incentivized, as well as things that are encouraged. Score would be based upon priority, complexity and impact. Scores would be mapped to sustainability goals and priorities. A Staff Report would then be presented. Further discussion ensued.

d. Arbor Day - April 29th at Gleiss Park, 9301 Keystone, at 10:00 AM

Staff Liaison Zimmerman reminded Commissioners of the Arbor Day event taking place this Friday, April 29th, at Gleiss Park at 10:00 AM. Commissioners are invited to attend.

IV. Other Business

Commissioner Gershbein asked whether we might be able to have a presence at the Farmers' Market this year. While there, we could promote/provide information about the Environmental Sustainability Plan survey. Chairman Grossman stated that the only issue could be timing. Staff Liaison Zimmerman stated that is a good question, as she feels as though the survey portion of the Environmental Sustainability Plan update could be complete prior to the Farmers' Market beginning this year. However, she said that she could speak with Ted, as it could be worth pushing the end of the Environmental Sustainability Plan Survey period until after the first Farmers' Market day of the year.

Staff Liaison Zimmerman pointed out that we also have the Festival of Cultures coming up. Chairman Grossman suggested that there perhaps could be an advertisement or poster at the Village's table at that event as well.

Chairman Grossman inquired as to the status of the "Refuse Report." Staff Liaison Zimmerman stated that, last she heard, it will be given to the consultant. They would like for it to be incorporated into the updated Environmental Sustainability Plan. Further discussion ensued.

V. Public Comments

No public comments were received.

VI. Next Meeting

Based upon the expected availability of Commission members, the next meeting will be held on Tuesday, May 24, 2022.

VII. Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 8:45 PM.