

Village of Skokie Beautification and Improvement Commission



Commissioners Present: William (Tony) Barney, Ross Del Rosario, Vernell Ellison-Smith, Joseph Hasten, George Hubchak, Charles Levine, Mike Madalinski, Frederick Lisiewicz, William Oney-Paige, Edward Potash, Bob Quane (Chair), Mitchell Sandler (Vice Chair), Valerie Shuman, Brooke Sprague

Commissioners Absent: Ann Goldsahft (leave of absence), Dalya Horowitz, Bahram Khazni (leave of absence), Rachel Rosenberg, Mitchell Sandler

Staff Present: Cathy Stevens, Staff Liaison; James Johnson, Trustee Liaison

I. Approval of March 2023 Minutes

Chair Quane called the meeting to order at 6:35 PM and requested that a new commissioner take minutes following the end of Commissioner Sprague's 6-month term. Commissioner Lisiewicz volunteered. The commission welcomed three new members.

II. Awards Night, Budget Hearing, and Arbor Day Recap – Bob Quane

Chair Quane said that April had been a very full month and expressed gratitude for all who participated. He asked if there were any recommendations for improving any of the events in future years. Commissioner Shuman mentioned that at the Awards Night gathering it might have been nice to announce that there were education materials available. Chair Quane added that the check-in process could be streamlined as well.

Commissioner Sprague shared the success of the library's first native landscaping education presentation and mentioned that there were quite a few people who signed up for the emailing list at the event. Chair Quane said that the commission now has the ability to directly email people using our email list.

Chair Quane shared that the commission has the opportunity to table the Festival of Culture, either in the community tent with community organizations and nonprofits or in the village tent. He shared a sign-up sheet for the event and said that the primary purpose of having a presence would be to share information about the awards program as well as information on the commission in general. If enough people are interested in coming, he said he would get in touch regarding time slots. There was a discussion about what should be offered to festival attendees to draw them into the event, including ideas such as a wheel

of prizes, seed packets with bio-degradable pots, and raffle items for a rain barrel or two. Commissioner Madalinski suggested drawing people in with the biodegradable pots and then offering a rain barrel raffle.

Liaison Stevens shared new awards program brochures with the group.

III. Report: Beautification Education Subcommittee - Chair Rachel Rosenberg
Subcommittee Chair Rosenberg was absent.

IV. Report: Beautification New Initiatives Subcommittee - Chair Valerie Shuman
Subcommittee Chair Shuman shared the purpose of the New Initiatives Subcommittee (NISC) to the new members. She said that the committee had been working on determining its focus for 2023 and had decided on a native tree canopy campaign. She shared slides on the 2023 tree campaign goals and strategies, including helping the forestry team with working with owners of large corporate properties that have space for lots of trees. The goal is to reach out during the fall and get trees in the ground next spring. Commissioner Madalinski shared that he's on the Board of Directors for the Chamber of Commerce and could assist with liaising with them in order to get the word out. Commissioner Oney-Paige said it would be great to do a white oak campaign since that's the state tree. Liaison Stevens shared that she'd planted several white oaks the previous week.

Chair Quane said that when we start scouting properties, we can log good places for adding trees. Block captains can also be deputies to encourage people to have trees planted in their parkway and on their property. Liaison Stevens shared that she's been getting a lot more feedback from new residents moving in who want trees, but there are a lot of industrial areas that don't have trees and the commission could make a big impact in those areas. For the planting project in the fall, the commission could plant a grove of trees at an open spot in a school.

Commissioner Shuman said that the plan was to make sure the group was cool with the NISC doing this, and it sounded like the commission improved.

V. Fourth of July Parade – Chuck Levine

Commissioner Levine shared the float design for the 2023 4th of July parade float. The design has a gazebo but not a lot of space for signage. An alternative design the commission may want to consider for 2024 has more signage space. The commission can use the same signage from previous years for this year's float, but Chair Quane will see whether it's possible to modify the signage and, if so, what the deadline is. The old signage includes the city seal, which is being phased out and would preferably be removed. The commission discussed the possibility of handing out seeds at the parade. Liaison Stevens said she would share a link to the catalog with available seed types. Chair Quane shared a picture of monarch costumes and safety vests for the parade as well as other official commission business. The commission decided to order roughly half a dozen monarch costumes and safety vests for the whole commission.

Chair Quane said that the commission wants to spend \$200 on embroidered tablecloth and requested a motion for \$1450 for float rental. The motion was seconded and approved.

VI. 2023 Awards Program Planning – Bob Quane

Chair Quane explained the property nomination, approval, and judging process to new members. Commissioner Shuman shared that with the new criteria, fewer properties would likely qualify this year. With the new timeline, there will need to be an early June/July push for nominating properties. Commissioner Hubchak reminded people that businesses, churches, etc. are also eligible, and that only front yards are eligible. Commissioner Shuman said we could make sample packets for people to use for judging. These will be shared with commission members at the next meeting. Chair Quane said he liked the idea of getting kangaroo pockets for holding the materials when leaving them on doors.

VII. Report by James Johnson, Trustee Liaison

Liaison Johnson reported on the budget proposal for fiscal year 2024, which includes 75% more for tree planting. He said that the village is hiring a sustainability coordinator who can hopefully help augment work across the village, including on the Beautification Commission.

VIII. Old Business

Chair Quane shared that there were website updates and that the village staff was still working on updating the education section for the website. He asked what topics the commission would like to include in the village newsletter for upcoming editions and commissioners agreed that the reward program, organic lawncare, information on trees, and mowing should all be included.

IX. New Business

Commissioner Sprague noted that there was information in the recently-posted sustainability plan update about a native plant talk to be given by the village's native plant contractor to coordinate a summer native plant walk on the Skokie Valley Trail. She asked whether the Commission could do anything to contribute to this event, and Liaison Stevens said that she would follow up.

X. Adjournment

Commissioner Quane moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:00 PM. Commissioner Sprague seconded the motion and it was approved.

Meeting minutes submitted by Brooke Sprague.